JYU DISSERTATIONS 483

Thaddeus Chijioke Ndukwe

Immigrant Political Integration in Finland

The Perspectives of Black African Immigrants at the Municipal Level

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Okorinta Eugene, and Nwajabia Justina, Ndukwe, who did not live to see it completed.

ABSTRACT

Ndukwe, Thaddeus Chijioke
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Research in Finland in municipal/local politics, especially municipal elections, has shown that immigrant participation has been consistently low. Several reasons have been given for this in the existing research such as duration and location of residence, age, education, knowledge of language and society, political party mobilization, previous experience in political participation, availability of information, failure of immigrant candidates at the polls, etc. Most of these are immigrant-/individual-specific. Only a few are societal. But more important is that most of the studies are general in nature. Only a few are empirical.

This study investigates the political integration of Black African immigrants[1] at the municipal/local level. This group has never been researched as a comprehensive group in this regard. By political integration, I mean political mobilization, participation, and representation. The aim is to know if any of the above factors apply and to what extent. Specifically, the study aims to examine all the opportunities and barriers to their political integration at the local level, not only in municipal elections/other forms of politics (e.g., protest politics) but also in other elections/politics such as in labor and student unions as well as in various associations. The study draws on qualitative in-depth interviews with 80 of them (men: N=60 and women: N=20) legally residing in the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Jyväskylä, and Tampere where many of them live. It also draws additionally from interviews with some 15 Finnish public officials (men N=5 and women N=10)[2] whose work/office is related to immigrant civic integration in these cities, during the period 2013 to 2016.

Questions that guided the interviews with African immigrants include whether they participate in any of the above-mentioned elections/politics or not. If so, how and to what extent. If not, why? Questions to the Finnish officials include those related to their work and also those with regard to certain claims made by some African immigrants in relation to such work.

To examine all the relevant opportunities and barriers to immigrant political integration in Finland especially at the local, the study theoretically draws from the society's political opportunity structure approach following two main theories of the institutional channeling and the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS), as well as a third/support theory of immigrant identity formation. The institutional channeling analyzes the influence of the society's institutional or political opportunity structures on immigrant opportunities and barriers to participate in the political processes of the host society. In this study, it is used to analyze these structures

[1] Black Africans in this study are those from the south of the Sahara, so-called sub-Saharan Africa. Also, the term Black African or African immigrants is interchangeably used in this study because they virtually mean the same thing.
[2] The number of women outweighed that of men because, in our area of study, there are more women officials than men.

at the local level in Finland for immigrant political participation. On the other hand, the DMIS is an intercultural theory that analyzes the attitudes of the host society towards immigrants and also vice versa in the latter's integration journey in the society. In this study, it is used in a similar way between the Finnish society and black African immigrants. The theory distinguishes between two stages in this regard, namely: ethnocentric and ethnorelative. The ethnocentric is the stage where immigrants mainly experience hostility, in the form of xenophobia and racism in the society, usually at the time of arrival but could also be continuous, such that attempts or efforts to integrate become frustrated resulting in lack of integration. On the other hand, the ethnorelative is the stage where the society or some of its members are welcoming and hence immigrants experience little to no hostility/racism, resulting in their integration, and in some cases, some experience assimilation instead, in the society. These experiences are additionally analyzed also from the point of view of immigrant identity formation in which the two distinct groups are grouped according to different identities following their societal experiences. The identities are integrated, assimilated, separated, or marginalized. The integrated and assimilated belong to the ethnorelative, indicating integration (or assimilation) while the separated and marginalized belong to the ethnocentric, indicating a lack of integration.

Findings reveal that those at the ethnocentric stage or those with separated and marginalized identities have low and lowest political participation respectively especially in elections due mainly to their high degree of socioeconomic exclusion, or specifically, experiences of racism and discrimination in socioeconomic life. Conversely, those at the ethnorelative stage or those with integrated and assimilated identities have high political participation especially in elections due mainly to their high degree of socioeconomic inclusion, or experiences of little or no racism and discrimination in socioeconomic life. Some factors (in the existing research in Finland) such as duration and location of residence, age, education, and language played little to no role in this. Other factors such as natural (dis) interest in politics, political party mobilization, (lack of) previous experience in political participation, availability of information, and location of residence played some role but not as significant as that of an important new factor - the society attitude - which directly influenced such actors as social relations and job acquisition, and indirectly on some other factors such as (dis)interest in elections/formal politics, interest in protest/informal politics, failure of African candidates at the polls, municipal election not important, racist threats during elections, and translocal mobility. Some factors that seemed independent of the society attitude but nevertheless significant are dislike for politics and politicians, (lack of) previous political participation, political party mobilization, religion (church & mosque), (dis)connection with ethnic and social group, lack of time and problem of laziness. However, some of these are still indirectly linked to the society attitude.

Overall, this study contributes through these findings, especially on the society attitude, to the literature on immigrant political participation in Finland. Although the study is not aimed at finding solutions to the issues found, particularly racism and discrimination, some solutions are however proffered at the end.

Keywords: Black African immigrants, Finland, society attitude, socioeconomic participation, political integration

TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

Ndukwe, Thaddeus Chijioke
Maahanmuuttajien poliittinen integraatio Suomessa: Tapaustutkimus afrikkalaisista maahanmuuttajista kuntatasolla
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Suomessa paikallispolitiikkaa, erityisesti kunnallisvaaleja, koskevat tutkimukset ovat osoittaneet, että maahanmuuttajien osallistuminen on ollut jatkuvasti vähäistä. Tähän on näissä tutkimuksissa esitetty useita syitä, esimerkiksi maahanmuuttajien Suomessa asumisen kesto, sijainti, ikä, koulutus, kielen ja yhteiskunnan tuntemus, puolueen mobilisaatio ja aikaisempi kokemus poliittisesta osallistumisesta sekä tiedon saatavuus ja maahanmuuttajaehdokkaiden epäonnistuminen vaaleissa. Suurin osa näistä syistä on yksilökohtaisia, ja vain harvat ovat yhteiskunnallisia. Merkityksellistä on kuitenkin se, että suurin osa tutkimuksista on luonteeltaan yleisiä ja vain harvat ovat empiirisiä.

Tämä tutkimus käsittelee mustien afrikkalaisten maahanmuuttajien poliittista integroitumista paikallistasolla, ja tältä osin heitä ei ole aiemmin tutkittu kattavana ryhmänä. Poliittisella yhdentymisellä tarkoitan poliittista mobilisaatiota, osallistumista ja edustusta. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää, päteekö jokin ensimmäisessä kappaleessa mainituista tekijöistä ja missä määrin. Tarkemmin sanottuna tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tarkastella laajasti maahanmuuttajien poliittisen integraation paikallistason mahdollisuuksia ja esteitä; ei vain kunnallisvaaleissa tai muissa politiikan muodoissa (esimerkiksi protestipoliitiikka), vaan myös muissa vaaleissa tai politiikassa, kuten työvoima-, opiskelija- ja yhdistysvaaleissa. Tutkimus perustuu laadullisiin syvähaastatteluihin, joissa maahanmuuttajista 80 (miehet N=60 ja naiset N=20) asuu virallisesti Helsingin, Espoon, Vantaan, Jyväskylän ja Tampereen kaupungeissa, joihin useimmat maahanmuuttajat Suomessa ovat sijoittuneet. Lisäksi tutkimus perustuu noin 15 suomalaisen viranomaisen (miehet N=5 ja naiset N=10) neljään haastatteluun. Näiden viranomaisten työ liittyy maahanmuuttajien kansalaisintegraatioon edellä mainituissa kaupungeissa vuosina 2013 - 2016.

Afrikkalaisille maahanmuuttajille haastatteluissa suunnattuja kysymyksiä ovat muun muassa seuraavat: Osallistuvatko he paikallispolitiikan vaaleihin tai poliittiseen toimintaan vai eivät? Jos he osallistuvat, miten ja missä määrin he osallistuvat? Jos he eivät osallistu, miksi he eivät osallistu? Suomalaisille viranomaisille esitettyjä kysymyksiä ovat muun muassa heidän työhönsä liittyvät kysymykset sekä joidenkin afrikkalaisten maahanmuuttajien suomalaisesta viranomaistyöstä esittämät väitteet.

Tutkimus tarkastelee useita olennaisia mahdollisuuksia ja esteitä maahanmuuttajien poliittiselle integraatiolle Suomessa erityisesti paikallisesti. Tutkimus pohjautuu teoreettisesti yhteiskunnan poliittisten mahdollisuuksien rakenteen lähestymistapaan seuraavasti: ensinnäkin seuraamalla kahta pääteoriaa institutionaalisesta kanavoinnista ja kulttuurienvälisen herkkyyden kehitysmallista (DMIS) sekä toiseksi seuraamalla tukiteoriaa maahanmuuttajaidentiteetin muodostumisesta. Institutionaalinen kanavointi analysoi yhteiskunnan institutionaalisten tai poliittisten mahdollisuuksien rakenteiden vaikutusta maahanmuuttajien mahdollisuuksiin ja esteisiin osallistua vastaanottavan yhteiskunnan poliittisiin prosesseihin. Tässä tutkimuksessa sitä käytetään analysoimaan näitä rakenteita paikallistasolla. Toisaalta DMIS on kulttuurienvälinen teoria, joka

analysoi vastaanottavan yhteiskunnan asenteita maahanmuuttajia kohtaan ja myös päinvastoin maahanmuuttajien asenteita heidän integraatiomatkallaan yhteiskuntaan. Tässä tutkimuksessa sitä käytetään samalla tavalla suomalaisen yhteiskunnan ja mustien afrikkalaisten maahanmuuttajien välillä. Teoria erottaa tässä suhteessa kaksi vaihetta: etnosentrisen ja etnorelatiivisen. Etnosentrisessä vaiheessa maahanmuuttajat kokevat pääasiassa vihamielisyyttä muukalaisvihan ja rasismin muodossa, yleensä saapumishetkellä, mutta se voi myös olla jatkuvaa, jolloin kotoutumisyritykset tai -pyrkimykset turhauttavat, mikä puolestaan johtaa integraation puutteeseen. Etnorelatiivisessa vaiheessa yhteisö tai jotkut sen jäsenistä ovat tervetulleita, ja siten maahanmuuttajat kokevat vain vähän tai eivät ollenkaan vihamielisyyttä tai rasismia, mikä johtaa integroitumiseen tai joissain tapauksissa assimiloitumiseen yhteiskuntaan. Näitä kokemuksia analysoidaan myös identiteetin muodostumisen näkökulmasta, jolloin kaksi erillistä ryhmää jaotellaan eri identiteettien mukaan yhteiskunnallisten kokemusten perusteella. Identiteetit ovat integroituneita, assimiloituneita, erotettuja tai marginalisoituneita. Integroituneet ja assimiloituneet kuuluvat etnorelatiiviseen vaiheeseen, mikä osoittaa integraatiota (tai assimilaatiota), kun taas erotetut ja syrjäytyneet kuuluvat etnosentriseen vaiheeseen, mikä osoittaa integraation puutetta.

Löydökset paljastavat, että etnosentrisessä vaiheessa tai eristäytyneillä ja syrjäytyneillä identiteeteillä on alhaisin poliittisen osallistumisen esiintymistaso erityisesti vaaleissa, mikä johtuu pääasiassa vahvasta sosioekonomisesta syrjäytymisestä tai rasismista ja syrjinnästä sosioekonomisessa elämässä. Sitä vastoin etnorelatiivisessa vaiheessa tai integroituneilla ja assimiloituneilla identiteeteillä on korkea poliittisen osallistumisen esiintymistaso erityisesti vaaleissa, mikä johtuu pääasiassa korkeasta sosioekonomisesta osallisuudesta tai koetusta vähäisestä tai esiintymättömästä rasismista ja syrjinnästä sosioekonomisessa elämässä. Suomalaisissa tutkimuksissa mainituilla tietyillä tekijöillä (asumisen kesto ja sijainti, ikä, koulutus ja kieli) ei ollut juurikaan merkitystä. Muut tekijät, kuten luonnollinen kiinnostumattomuus politiikkaa kohtaan, poliittisten puolueiden mobilisaatio, aiemman kokemuksen puute poliittisesta osallistumisesta, heikko tiedon saatavuus sekä asuinpaikan merkitys, vaikuttivat jonkin verran, mutta eivät yhtä merkittävästi kuin tärkeä uusi tekijä - yhteiskunnan asenne – joka vaikutti suoraan tiettyihin tekijöihin, kuten sosiaalisiin suhteisiin ja työnhankintaan, ja välillisesti joihinkin muihin tekijöihin, kuten kiinnostumattomuuteen vaaleja tai virallista politiikkaa kohtaan, kiinnostuneisuuteen protestipolitikkaan tai epäviralliseen politiikkaan, afrikkalaisten ehdokkaiden epäonnistumiseen vaaleissa, kunnallisvaaleilla ei ole merkitystä, rasistisiin uhkauksiin vaalien aikana ja translokaaliseen liikkuvuuteen. Joitakin yhteiskunnan asenteesta riippumattomina vaikuttavia, mutta kuitenkin merkittäviä, tekijöitä ovat vastenmielisyys politiikkaa ja poliitikkoja kohtaan, aiemman poliittisen osallistumisen puute, poliittisten puolueiden mobilisaatio, uskonto, suhteiden puuttuminen etniseen ja sosiaaliseen ryhmään sekä ajanpuute ja välinpitämättömyys. Jotkut näistä liittyvät kuitenkin edelleen epäsuorasti yhteiskunnan asenteeseen.

Kaiken kaikkiaan tämä tutkimus myötävaikuttaa näiden havaintojen kautta maahanmuuttajien poliittiseen osallistumiseen liittyvään kirjallisuuteen Suomessa. Vaikka tutkimuksen tarkoituksena ei ole löytää ratkaisuja löydettyihin ongelmiin, erityisesti rasismiin ja syrjintään, joitain ratkaisuja kuitenkin tarjotaan tutkimuksen lopussa.

Avainsanat: Mustien afrikkalaisten maahanmuuttajien, Suomi, yhteiskunnan asenne, sosioekonominen osallistuminen, poliittinen integraatio.

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From the City of Vantaa, Finland,
On this cold Winter Day, the 3rd of December 2021.

Chijioke Thaddeus Ndukwe

FIGURE

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PART I

CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

In my publication (Ndukwe 2015a) which is part of the results of my fieldwork for this study, I argued that acceptance or rejection of people, or otherwise multiculturalism and conservatism, are two opposing realities in human society, especially in the world of today where people freely migrate and settle across countries and continents. This freedom of movement is especially easier in the European Schengen countries that allow migrants with residence permits or visas of the countries to move relatively easily from one Schengen country to another without further restrictions. This has made relatively unknown countries like Finland, to be known and quite accessible to many immigrants, including African immigrants, to the extent that it eventually became the final destination of many - thanks to its stable economy and notwithstanding its long and harsh winter. When immigrants migrate, especially to such a culturally homogenous country as it is, there is often the tendency of fear from some natives in the mainstream and the political circles, about the "cultural disruption" immigrants could bring to the society. There is also the fear of pressure on the economy, especially that such arrival might lower the competitiveness of the natives in the job market (See also Ervasti 2004). These kinds of fear, for example, first welcomed the arrival of Somali refugees and immigrants in the 1990s whose coming is said to have coincided with an excruciating Finnish economic recession (Valtonen 1997). Consequently, such fears have unfortunately followed the subsequent arrival of other (African) immigrants even when the economy has rebounded, triggering some xenophobia in the mainstream, and in some cases, transforming into outright racism. The natives whose actions/reactions are mostly severe could be called right-wingers or conservatives, while those whose actions/reactions are less severe could be called liberals or multiculturalists. Also, the government's actions or reactions in this situation, whether in terms of policy or law enactment towards immigration/immigrants, could be grouped into the above two categories (Ndukwe 2015a). Such actions and/or reactions have had effects on

the socioeconomic inclusion and integration of migrants, which also affect their other participations especially in the political, as research has found (Ireland 1994, Just and Anderson 2014, 2012). In Finland, the first has also been noticed by various research (Tiilikainen & Ismail 2013, Forsander 2008, 2003, Valtonen 1997, Ervasti 2004, Ndukwe 2015a, 2017, to mention a few) but little has been known about it in the political space, specifically in the (low) political participation and integration of immigrants.

The aim of this study, therefore, is to examine the political integration of Black African immigrants in Finland at the local or municipal level both in the formal and informal political sectors especially in the light of the above. By political integration, I mean political mobilization, participation, and representation (Martiniello 2005). Another aim is to *explain* their situation in the context of the study, and *not* necessarily to find any solution to it. However, some solutions are proffered at the end.

The **research question** then is:

> *Are African immigrants in Finland politically integrating or integrated especially at the local or municipal level where many have political rights? If so, how and to what extent. If not, why? Which specific factors constitute the opportunities and barriers for this integration at this level?*

This question examines the nature and extent of African immigrants' political engagement at the local level as well as the specific factor(s) behind this engagement or lack of it. In answering the question, rather than follow the immigrant characteristic approach that has featured prominently in much existing research in Finland, leading to a repeated emphasis on certain factors as responsible for immigrants' low political participation (such as poor language proficiency, low education, small and young population, duration of residence, etc) which I nevertheless consider stereotypical and highly politicized, I approached the issue from the *society's institutional structure* perspective, or specifically, its *political opportunity/barrier structures*. This is because interviews with African immigrants indicate that this is where their *main* reason is. That is to say, their political participation or lack of it, and the forms it takes mostly depends on the positive or negative attitudes of the host society towards them especially when these attitudes are continuous. In other words, their being active or passive, regular or irregular, or anywhere in-between, or totally absent, in whichever political form or platform, or specifically, their support for a candidate in an election, or engagement in a protest (save for issues of home country), stems mostly from the positive or negative attitude of the society towards them. This attitude especially occurs at the socioeconomic space (i.e., the social life[3] and the labor market) from where it serves as a linking and mobilizing body (if positive) or a delinking and demobilizing body (if negative) to their political integration.

[3] The cultural is also included in this social life since culture mostly manifests in the social. In fact, culture in the most part influences social life. This could also be vice versa. So, in this study, whenever the socioeconomic is used or referred to, it also refers to the cultural unless stated otherwise or when the context of discussion shows so.

For example, African immigrants who (luckily) mostly meet non-racist natives in everyday life especially at the socioeconomic spaces, mainly experience positive attitudes with little or no discrimination and racism. Even when they experience some form of racism, they often have the ability/willingness to cope or ignore it. Often, they have good jobs/incomes and good social life mostly as a result.[4] The experience makes them have a great sense or feeling of belonging and institutional completeness in Finland which helps them identify with the society. This also motivates their interest in society's politics, especially municipal elections (but including also in the elections of their associations, labor and student unions) where they often prefer candidates based on what they can do for the society, and not solely for immigrants. On the other hand, they are slightly low in protest politics especially protests against racism and poor labor conditions, and when they participate, it is either because such protests were organized by their associations or unions or because they are participating in sympathy with the victims, or because some of them were once (or irregularly) victims, or all of the above.

On the other hand, African immigrants who (unluckily) mostly encounter racist natives in everyday life especially in the labor market and social life, are usually poorly employed with low income and poor social life as a result, regardless of their academic qualification. This makes them have little or no sense of belonging and institutional completeness in the society and deprives them of identification with the society. This consequently affects their disposition to participation in the local political processes, especially municipal elections (but also labor and student unions' as well as associations'.) And when some participate, they often prefer African and non-white immigrant candidates to native and other white candidates because they believe that the former are likely to do something to better their marginalized situation than the latter. On the other hand, they are more regular/active in protest politics, especially protests against racism and poor work conditions as a way of venting their anger against a society they consider hostile.

Also, their political representations follow a similar trend, with representatives with positive experiences more likely to raise and/tackle issues of society interests only, with a few exceptions, than those with negative who tend to raise and/tackle issues of immigrant interests only, especially issues of racism and discrimination.

This makes the society attitude a very strategic concept in this study, and hence changes the focus from immigrant/individual characteristics to society characteristics or conditions (without however neglecting any relevant immigrant/individual characteristics or factors African immigrants may have that could influence their political participation). Jaworsky et al. (2012, 78), drawing from Reitz (2002), argue that the characteristics of host society can influence immigrant (political) integration much more than any individual characteristics (see also Ireland 1994; Martiniello 2005; Just and Anderson 2014;

[4]This means that some do not have good jobs however but are determined to succeed in getting one, encouraged by the good relations they (largely) enjoy.

Phinney et al. 2001; Tyrberg 2020). This will also help us to know (in this study) whether the integration of African immigrants in the Finnish society has been a two-way process involving the immigrants and the host society in order to enhance social inclusion and cohesion as some research has suggested (e.g. Ahokas 2010, European Commission 2011, International Organization for Migration 2019, Lillie and Ndomo 2021) as well as also the Finnish law on immigrant integration (as we would see later in this study), or a one-way traffic involving only the immigrant while the society looks on.

In the rest of this introduction, I will link the discussion to the background of the study below and highlight the research gap(s) in the existing research and then show how this will be filled up in this work. Next, I will clarify some key concepts of the study, and finally, give an overview on the rest of the chapters and their contribution to the study.

1.1.1 Background of the study

Research on immigrant political involvement has gained significant attention in many countries (Ireland 1994; Martiniello 2005; Katsiaficas 2014; Fanning and O'Boyle 2009; Bäck & Soininen 1998; Austin et al. 2012; Roger 2006; Kazmierkiewicz & Frelak 2011; Watts Smith 2014; Carter 2019; de Rooij 2012; Pilati and Herman 2020; Koopmans et al. 2005; Aleksynska 2011; de Rooij 2012; Gonzalez-Ferrer 2011; Morales and Pilati 2011; Heath et al. 2013; Pilati and Herman 2020; Voicu and Comşa 2014; Fennema & Tillie 1999; Just & Anderson 2012, 2014; de Rooij 2012; Morales & Giugni 2011; Jacobs & Tillie 2004; Greer 2013; Thomas & Tesfai 2019; Ruoxi & Jones 2019; Tyrberg 2020, to mention a few). Some have examined immigrant political participation and behaviors in local administrative elections (such as the municipal, county, mayoral), political contacting and/or protest actions, while others have examined in other elections such as the presidential, parliamentary, state/regional, or in political participation in general, regardless of which. Overall, it is found that immigrant participation is in many cases usually lower than that of the native population (de Rooij 2012; Maxwell 2010; Chui et al. 1991; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001). However, Pettinicchio & de Vries (2017) compared participation in different forms of political action between natives, immigrants, and non-citizen immigrants using data from thirteen European countries across six waves of the European Social Survey, and found that when political action is disaggregated and relative participation between groups is examined, immigrants' patterns of participation are not substantially different from those of natives. In Australia, it is even discovered, using the 2013 Australian Election Study data, that Chinese immigrants participate higher than the native-born (Sheppard et al. 2020).

Nonetheless, immigrant participation is said to vary from country to country. In some countries, it is said to be active while in some others it is said to be passive. Within countries, there are also variations, especially between immigrant groups. For example, in the Netherlands, Malwina Kozlowska (2018) drawing from (Nicholson, 1997) finds that Turks tend to participate higher than the Moroccans, Surinamese, and Antilleans (see also Kranendonk et al. 2015, and

van Heelsum 2005 for some little differences). In the US, among immigrant groups, Logan et al. (2012) find that blacks tend to register and vote at higher rates than whites, Latinos, and Asians, while Latinos register and vote at higher rates than Asians. Drawing from the Pew Research Center data (2017), Caroline Brettell (2020) made a similar discovery. However, Pei-te Lien et al. (2001) counterargue that Asian voter turnout, for example, is actually higher than that of Latinos, and similar to that of non-Hispanic Whites in midterm elections, but lower than that of non-Hispanic Whites, especially in presidential elections. Some research however affirms that both Latino and Asian immigrants historically show depressed levels of political participation in all elections (Citrin and Highton 2002; Leighley 2001; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995).

Within immigrant groups also, there are variations, as is for example seen among the Maghrebians in France (Bousetta 2010), Moroccans' and Capeverdians' respectively in the Netherlands (Kozlowska 2018), Iraqis in Sweden (Hadi Al-Yassiry 2018), black immigrants in the US (Roger 2006; Watts Smith 2013, 2014; Austin 2018; Austin et al. 2012), to mention a few.

Overall, it is found that besides certain individual-level factors (e.g., natural political interest or disinterest, education, time, age, etc.) the extent to which immigrants participate often largely depends on the type of institutional structures existent in their host society at any given time (Martiniello 2005. See also Ireland 1994). Martiniello (2005) specifically argues that the state has a significant role to play in this regard because by granting or denying voting rights to foreigners, facilitating or impeding their access to citizenship and nationality, granting or constraining freedom of association, ensuring or blocking the representation of their interests, it opens or closes avenues of political participation for them and provide them with more or fewer opportunities to participate in the management of collective affairs.

The socioeconomic is also said to be part of these opportunities (Ibid; see also Ireland 1994; Just and Anderson 2012, 2014; Verba & Nie 1972; Shingles 1981; Tolgeby 1999; Roger 2006; Austin et al. 2012; Austin 2018; Zingher & Thomas 2012; Watts Smith 2013; Rahman 2007). In countries with more opportunities, immigrant participation is said to be higher, while in those with lesser, it is said to be lower (Just and Anderson 2014). In addition, participation is also said to depend on, among others, the level of immigrant assimilation[5], or integration in the society, or being born in the country, or having migrated at a younger age[6], or duration of residence in general, and/or the acquisition of political

[5]In one of the Sage books on immigrant assimilation, Fernández Kelly and Schauffler (1996) see assimilation as the expectation that foreigners should shed, or at least contain, their native cultures while embracing the mores and language of the host country. Lalami (2017) also argues that the word 'assimilation' has its roots in the Latin ''simulare,'' meaning to make similar. Lalami further argues that immigrants in America are expected, over an undefined period, to become like other Americans, a process metaphorically described as a melting pot. It runs deeper and involves relinquishing all ties, even linguistic ones, to the old country. Lalami further argues that for some Americans however, the whole idea of assimilation is wrongheaded, and integration — a dynamic process that retains the connotation of individuality and the culture of the immigrant — is seen as the better model.

[6] It is argued that those who were born in the country, or who migrated as kids, usually participate higher than those who migrated as adults (Ruoxi & Jones 2019).

citizenships (especially where it is needed for electoral participation), or in the general sense of belonging to the society (Logan et al. 2012; Uhlaner, Cain and Kiewet 1989; Klok et al.2017; Ruoxi & Jones 2019; Chui et al 1991; de Rooij 2012; Wambu and Nkabinde 2016; Hellsten & Martikainen 2001; OECD 2012). For example, the Asian low level of political participation in the US is attributed mainly to their low level of assimilation to the society, since despite their more favorable socioeconomic position than most immigrants, they still show low levels of voting (Citrin and Highton 2002; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995; Logan et al. 2012). At the same time, the Hispanic low level of participation in the US is attributed mainly to 1) poverty, mostly owing to socioeconomic discrimination and exclusion that results in a low sense of belonging (Garcia 1996; Lopez et al. 2018); 2) political exclusion (including lack of US citizenship required for voting) and 3) many youth populations (Garcia 1996; Citrin and Highton 2002; DeSipio 2021).

However, Blacks in the US are also said to experience the same or similar thing, especially socioeconomic, even in a worse manner, despite some being citizens (Roger 2006; Solomon et al. 2019; Austin 2018; Austin et al. 2012; Bleich et al. 2019; Bonacich 2014; Bertrand & Mullainathan 2004; Watts Smith 2013, 2014; Carter 2019), but which is said to have transformed into a consciousness among them, leading to a rise in political engagement to fight the situation politically (Logan et al. 2012; Austin et al. 2012; Austin 2018; Roger 2006; Watts Smith 2014; Greer 2013; Brown and Atske 2021; Thomas & Tesfai 2019). For instance, Logan et al. (2012) argue that blacks' high rates of voting in the US, despite deficits in socioeconomic and other resources, is attributed to group consciousness and mobilizing institutions specific to black communities.

Also, in "The effect of racial group consciousness on the political participation of African Americans and Black ethnics [such as Africans, Afro-Caribbean Americans, Afro-Cuban Americans, and Haitians] in Miami-Dade County, Florida", Sharon Austin and colleagues (2012), using an original survey of over one thousand respondents, find that they have a common consciousness despite their in-group differences (see also Roger 2006; Watts Smith 2013, 2014; Austin 2018) because of their skin color, experiences with discrimination, common interests, similar ideological views, and leadership preferences, and that however while group consciousness has more of an impact on African American political participation, socioeconomic status heavily influences black ethnics (see also Austin 2018; Watts Smith 2013, 2014; Nelson 2000; Paschel 2016).

Furthermore, Reuel Roger in *Afro-Caribbean Immigrants and the Politics of Incorporation* (2006), closely analyzes how racial discrimination, bias, and stereotyping shape black politics and the group's political integration patterns in New York City and the United States. Drawing on extensive field interviews with elites and immigrants, a study of census data and voting statistics, and analysis of historical episodes, he finds that contemporary immigrant political incorporation resembles neither a pluralist model based on earlier European-origin ethnic experience nor a minority model based on earlier African American migrant experience. Instead, race continues to shape the process as Afro-

Caribbean and other blacks confront issues of discrimination and exclusion in America which tends to influence their political behavior (see also Chong and Rogers 2005; Carter 2019; Lober 1998; Baker-Bracy 2004; Richards and Marshall 2003 on blacks in the UK; Laniyonu 2019 on a comparative study of blacks in the US & the UK; The Electoral Commission, UK, 2005, on other minority immigrants).

Overall, however, Sharon Austin,[7] argues that

> In America, [different] immigrants have [recently, on average] increased their participation as a way for upward mobility. At first, white European immigrants (Irish, Italians, Polish, etc.) were successful in Midwestern and Northeastern American cities like Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York City. In later years, black and Hispanic immigrants increased their participation and now dominate cities in South Florida as well as some California and Texas cities. An increasing number of Asian immigrants have also been successful in Western cities. Now Boston is on the verge of electing its first female woman of color (and daughter of immigrants) as its mayor in a city once known for its exclusion of and hostility toward people of color. Immigrants still are rejected, discriminated against, and feel that they don't belong in America, but are overcoming these barriers by gaining citizenship, voting, joining organizations, and participating in politics (Informal communication, 20 October 2021).

In Finland, the political participation of immigrants especially at the local level, and particularly in the municipal elections, has not yet received adequate attention. Existing research shows that immigrant participation is still very low (Statistics Finland 2017; Srai 2012; Ahokas 2010; Weide 2008, 2010; Valtonen 1997; Ronkainen 2009; Sagne et al. 2005; Koskela 2010; Saarinen & Jappinen 2014; Tiilikainen & Ismail 2013; Wilhelmsson 2004, 2015; Roon in Yle online English news 2012, October 24; Centre for European Studies & Suomen Toivo 2012; Yle online English news 28 March 2019). This is despite the full local suffrage given to them by the state, which allows them to vote and be voted for in municipal elections. They are also allowed to join political parties and other associations/unions and/or establish their own if need be. All of these are as long as they have resided in Finland for at least 2 years and also have a registered municipality as well as be at least 18 years of age (cf. Finnish Local Government Act 410/2015). This is to ensure what Wenden (2003) calls the political accommodation of migrant groups at the local level. It is expected that the more they participate in the democratic process of their host country, the more they get used to its democracy (Ahokas 2010; see also EU Common Basic Principles 2004: #9).

Currently, their political participation rate in municipal elections is said to be about 20% in recent years (cf. Statistics Finland 2017, Yle online English news 1 March 2017). The table below shows this participation from 1996 to 2017 - the latest municipal election year at the time of writing this work.

[7] Austin is a professor of political science at the University of Florida, who has written substantially about immigrant, especially black, political involvement, in America.

Table 1. Turnout in Finnish Municipal elections (1996 – 2017)

Year	Overall	Non-Finns (i.e., immigrants[8])
1996	61.3%	20.7%
2000	55.9%	20.8%
2004	58.6%	15.3%
2008	61.3%	19.6%
2012	58.3%	19.6%
2017[9]	58.9%	20%

Sources: Yle municipal election statistics 2017; Statistics Finland 2017)

This continuous low participation rate is said to be a result of "lack of political integration" (Sagne et al. 2005; Andre et al. 2014) or lack of integration in general since (immigrant) voting in elections is said to be connected to (their) integration in the host society (Hellsten and Martikainen 2001; Kariuki 2012).

Meanwhile, different research has respectively singled out certain reasons or factors that are (or could be) responsible for this low turnout or lack of political integration in Finland. For example, Valtonen (1997) Sagne et al. (2005), and Wilhelmsson (2015) respectively argue that it is because immigrants are still relatively new in Finland since Finland has for long been an emigration rather than an immigration country, and so, only a few foreigners have been resident until now (see also Centre for European Studies & Suomen Toivo 2012). Koskela (2010, 2) also explains that the reason is that, during the baby-boom generation of the post-war period, the struggling Finnish economy made it very unnecessary and unattractive for foreigners to come since this generation was more than enough for the struggling economy. Some researchers however argue that even when immigrants started coming in increasing numbers, their number was still too small to be mobilized for political participation (Sagne et al. 2005). In other words, if their number increases, they are likely to be mobilized. Allison Shertzer (2013) for example finds in her study of immigrant political mobilization in the US that immigrants are more likely to be successfully mobilized when their group's share of the electorate grows larger.

Furthermore, Wilhelmsson (2004) also argues that immigrants with Finnish citizenship particularly tend to participate more in the political process than those who do not have it (see also Roon in Yle online English news, 1 March 2017). This has to do with longer residence which the Finnish Aliens Act (301/2004, amendments up to 1152/2010 included) requires in citizenship acquisition. Srai (2012: 28) argues in a similar line, pointing out that immigrants with longer residences (not only with citizenships) tend to be more politically active than those with shorter residences. However, she did not base this argument on any empirical study in Finland, but on the empirical findings of Johannes Bergh and

[8] This does not include immigrants with Finnish citizenship, since they do not appear on the Electoral Register as immigrants but as Finnish nationals (Wilhelmsson 2015)
[9] This source is mainly from Statistics Finland (2017). Yle puts the figure at 57.5% overall, and 23.9% non-Finns.

Tor Björklund (2010) in Norway where it is discovered that immigrants who have lived long enough in Norway have higher feelings of affection for the country, which makes them participate more in the political process than those who just arrived. Centre for European Studies & Suomen Toivo (2012) however confirms this in Finland in their online survey of 238 immigrants in the 2008 municipal elections that those with longer residences participated more than those with a shorter one. Katsiaficas (2014) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2012) respectively argue that newly arrived immigrants tend to participate less than the early arrived because the former may not have known the host society's political/electoral systems well yet, including the political parties, candidates and the society in general, the knowledge of which is necessary for active political engagement formally and informally. Various international studies also show that electoral activity is lower at the beginning of immigration but rises over time as immigrants stay longer in their countries of residence (OECD 2012; de Rooij 2012). OECD (2012, 178) for example even notes that in countries such as Finland, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom, long-term residents have voting participation rates that are over 10% higher than short-term resident immigrant population, although when compared to the native population, the rate is still low (see also Centre for European Studies & Suomen Toivo 2012, Katsiaficas 2014, 5-7).

This finding raises some hope that longer residence and/or citizenship acquisition could increase/improve immigrant political integration. However, it also raises some questions about those immigrants who have had longer residences and/or acquired citizenship but do not participate as we would see among some African immigrants in chapter five.

Finnish political parties are also tagged as one of the significant barriers in immigrants' low participation by not mobilizing them enough (Srai 2012. See also Centre for European Studies & Suomen Toivo 2012). Srai further argues that in terms of memberships, some Finnish parties tend to look for immigrants who are culturally and historically close to native Finns, such as the Swedes, Estonians, and the Russians, for example. This makes it hard for non-European immigrants, especially non-whites (such as blacks) to be mobilized or recruited or given important/top party posts. Weide (2011) however claims that why political parties do not mobilize immigrants enough is possibly because of lack of funding from the government since the political integration of immigrants is not directly specified in the Finnish immigrant integration policy (L493/1999) as it is, for example, in the Danish one. Hence, she concludes that "there is little reason to believe that project funding would be readily available" from the government "for the political mobilization" of immigrants (pp. 6-8). However, Srai's (2012) argument about discrimination in the recruitment of immigrants might be the case, as for example, the Finns party – famous for its anti-immigrant position and ideologies as well as hateful rhetoric- became the biggest winner in 2012 municipal elections, whereas the immigrant-friendly parties such as the National Coalition (NCP) and the Social Democrats (SDP) became "the biggest losers", losing nearly one-third of their seats in municipal councils for recruiting

immigrants. An SDP official attributed their loss to the presence of immigrants in their electoral list, pointing out that "we had immigrants with us and many (Finnish) people don't accept that yet. A lot of (Finnish) voters complained to me that if they give their vote to me or (to) another Social Democrat, the vote also goes to immigrants" (Yle online English news, October 29, 2012), mainly because of the party-list proportional representation system of Finland in which seats are allocated to each party in proportion to the number of votes it receives. Although the Greens party –an immigrant-friendly party[10] – took over the mantra of the biggest winner[11] in the 2017 municipal elections (Statistics Finland 2017, Yle online English news 10 April 2017) but this has not yet translated to a drastic reduction in racism and discrimination against immigrants in the society, especially African immigrants. In fact, it has even increased (Vanttinen 2020) because support for the Finns party appears to be on the rise again among the public. It is argued that following the rise of nationalist–populist politics all over Europe, racist opinions have now found more room in public discussions in Finland (Saarinen & Jappinen 2014, 144).

Be that as it may, some researchers have also argued that many Finnish political parties do not yet see immigrant votes as significant in winning elections because of the relatively low immigrant population. This makes them show little interest in immigrant memberships and candidacies (Sagne et al. 2005). It is also probably why some of them do not even have any physical strategy, structure, or platform for recruiting or mobilizing immigrants. In many cases, what they have is their websites which are often in Finnish with a scanty English translation. This leaves many potentially interested immigrants - who do not understand Finnish - outside the party system as some rarely visit these websites due to the language barrier, and those who do, seldom find any tangible information about recruitment and membership in English, and/or even their policies. Many also lack political friends who could supply such information. Even most campaign fliers distributed by Finnish municipal electoral candidates are said to be in Finnish, which thereby obstruct their chances of communicating their campaign messages well to immigrants who do not yet understand Finnish/Swedish as we would see in the case of (some) African immigrants.

Overall, party membership in Finland among immigrants is generally low. A good illustration is seen in a survey on the four largest immigrant groups – namely, the Russians, the Estonians, the Somalis, and the Vietnamese – conducted by Statistics Finland (Wilhelmsson 2015). It was found that in nearly all of the 4 groups, party membership is very small, mainly owing to low mobilization by the parties. Some immigrant candidates of some parties including the Finns party in the 2012 municipal elections for example argue that

[10] It is reported in a nationwide poll that most supporters of the Greens see racism as a problem in Finland that needs to be tackled, while most supporters of the Finn's party do not see it so (Adam Oliver Smith, *Helsinki Times*, 2 July 2020). Apparently, they are comfortable with it.

[11] It may have been voted for also for some other reasons (e.g., support for human rights, clean environment & climate change, worker rights and welfare, vulnerable groups, etc.) than being migrant-friendly. Besides it has a strong immigrant support for being immigrant-friendly in its policies

their inclusion was just a mere window-dressing without any tangible support from the parties during election campaigns (cf. Yle online English news 2012, October 30). Although it has been reported that some political parties have gradually started showing interests in recruiting more immigrant members and nominating some as candidates (Wilhelmsson 2015; Yle online English news 2012, October 30; Wass et al. 2015; Weide & Saukkonen 2013), they are yet to sufficiently tap into their political or electoral potentials.

Moreover, lack of enough information about the municipal election from the municipal administration is also seen as militating against immigrant political participation in Finland. For instance, Researcher Merja Jutila Roon, of the Social Democratic think tank, the Kalevi Sorsa Foundation, finds among the immigrants she interviewed through the pollster TNS Gallup, that 39 percent did not vote because they were not aware of their right to vote (Yle online English news, 1 March 2017). This casts some doubts on whether all the eligible voters actually receive a letter about the election on their right to vote usually sent out by the municipal administration some months before the election as we would see in chapter three. However, at the time Roon conducted the research, official information about the municipal elections was mainly written in Finnish and Swedish languages. Given that some immigrants do not understand either of them, it makes sense that they would not participate. Hence, Roon argues that "It is useless to deliver information about the right to vote in languages that the recipient will not necessarily understand… Merely listing immigrant background candidates for the election is not an appropriate way to activate [immigrant] voters" (cf. Yle online English, I March 2017). Nevertheless, although information is now gradually being distributed in other languages including in English, Russian, Arabic, Somali, Chinese, etc, not much has yet changed in terms of immigrant political participation as we saw in the 2017 election statistics above.

Furthermore, lack of trust on certain candidates is also singled out as one of the factors behind low immigrant electoral participation (Tiilikainen & Ismail 2013). The candidates in question are those mostly seen as unlikely to deliver electoral promises made to immigrants during their campaigns if elected because they are seen as those with selfish/vested interests in their political goals (ibid). For example, in their study of the Somalis in Helsinki using qualitative research methods, particularly focus group interviews, Tiilikainen & Ismail (2013) found that many Somalis do not participate in the municipal elections as well as in Somali associations because 1) they do not trust most of the electoral candidates - both natives and *some* immigrants including some Somali candidates - who they believe are running for their selfish interests rather than for the interests of the Somalis. 2) that many Somalis do not also belong to Somali associations because they also believe that most of the associations were registered for selfish interests rather than for the interests of the Somalis. According to the authors, this has to do with their experiences of racial discriminations and harassments in the society, especially in employment, housing, and social platforms, which have caused some sense of fear, insecurity and isolation among them, and make them worry

not only about themselves, but also about their family members, and especially the future of their children in Finland (p.44).

However Pirkkalainen and Husu (2020) in their study of four young Muslim migrants (aged 19 - 27) in Finland using a life course approach, found that despite "the unjust treatment" and "discrimination" they face in the society as minorities and especially as Muslims, they are still able to politically integrate especially through the strong emotional capital they gained from childhood and which has helped them develop the 'political habitus' or a deep inner motivation for political activities.

Poor electoral results of immigrant candidates are also said to be another barrier to immigrant participation (Weide 2008). Weide (2008) has argued that many immigrants believe that their candidates were deliberately for reasons of being immigrants not voted for by the natives, and hence, have little or no chances of being successful. She illustrates this with the result of the 2004 municipal elections, where out of the 264 candidates that participated, only 13 immigrant candidates (or 0.66%) were elected. Besides, most of those elected are descendants of Finnish (return) migrants from Russia and Sweden. This implies that virtually all third-country national candidates failed (See also Srai 2012). In the 2008 municipal elections, their failure was even worse as only 0.3 percent was elected out of 1.5 percent that ran (Wilhelmsson 2015; the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities 2010). In the 2017 elections also, the situation did not improve. For example, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (2020) also reports that there were altogether 33,618 candidates in that election and those elected were 8,999 overall, out of which, only 66 are immigrants or those with a mother tongue other than Finnish, Swedish or Sámi. This expectedly affects immigrants' decision to vote and consequently their political representation. Caitlin Katsiaficas (2014) following Quintelier (2009, 919) argues that lack of descriptive political representation of immigrants or dearth of their strong political voice usually discourages them from taking further part in the electoral process. However, Sagne et al. (2005: 34) argue that even when immigrants get elected, they are still "subjected to invisibility in terms of decision-making" in their political positions. Saarinen & Jappinen (2014, 143) also argue along this line that when the actual political inclusion of migrants is considered, Finland is not a model country because immigrant representation and integration in decision-making are only a vision: the norms and policies seem to be formulated *for* them and not *with* them.

Srai (2012) also points out that the availability or access to better job opportunities is a motivating factor. This she found in her cross-country study of the Nordic states and argues that immigrants with access to better job opportunities tend to be more motivated (as a result) to be active in (formal) politics than those without. She particularly based this argument on a study of immigrants in Sweden (Bäck and Soininen 1998, SOU 1984) and concluded that it is not surprising that immigrants with no access to better job opportunities are in a marginalized position and hence show little interest in politics (Srai 2012, 52).

Place of residence is also said to be a factor in immigrant political participation. For example, in their online survey of immigrants earlier mentioned, the Centre for European Studies & Suomen Toivo (2012) found that immigrants who live in urban or metropolitan areas tend to turn out in numbers more than those living in rural areas or outside the cities. Specifically, they found that 66.67% of immigrant voters in 2008 municipal elections, for example, lived in the metropolitan areas compared to 33.33% that lived elsewhere (p.14). The reason for this was not stated, but it is probably connected with many political activities that usually go on in the urban/metropolitan areas more than in other areas. Among African immigrants however, as we shall see in chapter five, residing at the metropolitan area or not, has not significantly increased or decreased their participation in politics as such. Instead, their stages of integration appear to be more paramount.

Age is also considered as another factor in immigrant political participation. For instance, the Centre for European Studies & Suomen Toivo (2012) found in their survey that immigrants between the ages of 25 to 40 voted highest (54.67%) in the 2008 municipal elections, followed by those at the ages of 41 to 55 (21.33%), and those between the ages of 18 and 24 (i.e., the young) (19.11%). The least voters were said to be those at the ages of 56 to 64 (4.89%) (p. 9). This is however somewhat contrary to the findings of some international research which show that people increase their voting participation as they grow in age, the base or least voters being the young people (18 – 30), followed by those at 31 -55, and reaching its highest among those at the middle age (56 - 64), then declining as they reach 90 and above (cf. Braxton 2008; Sachs 2007; European Social Survey 2006; Hooghe and Stolle 2005; Ndukwe 2013). The stated reason is that people acquire more social resources such as the knowledge of politics, political parties, and candidates as they grow in age than when they are younger. Among African immigrants however, as we shall see in chapter five, the influence of age was almost insignificant as the influence of their stages of integration appeared more prominent.

Furthermore, some research has also claimed that the reasons why immigrants do not participate are because they are too young, poor, inexperienced, and even uneducated (Sagne et al. 2005). If we are to consider this claim, including even an earlier one about the low immigrant population in Finland – both claims made in 2005 - what about now that the population has increased, averaging about 6 percent of the population (Statistics Finland 2019), many of whom are now adults, well educated (some even in the Finnish higher institutions) with good Finnish language skills, knowledge of Finnish culture and society (see also Centre for European Studies & Suomen Toivo 2012), and relatively comfortable, yet the percentage of their political participation in the last election in 2017 was still 20. Thus, I contend that while some of the above-mentioned factors are true or maybe, some are mere speculations and stereotypes. This means that it may not have been the factors or some of them. Perhaps it has more to do with integration in the society since voting in elections has been said to be connected to integration in the society (Hellsten & Martikainen 2001;

Kariuki 2012; Researcher Roon in Yle online English news, 1 March 2017). Perhaps this has to do with society's attitude as my interviews with African immigrants show. The institutional channeling finds society's attitude towards immigrants as one of the most important factors that influence their political participation in many countries (cf. Ireland 1994, 2000; Martiniello 2005; Just and Anderson 2014).

This society attitude is virtually lacking in most of the existing Finnish research above, perhaps because many approached the issue from immigrant specific (/alleged) characteristics rather than the society opportunity structure perspective or for some other (unclear) reason. Some who followed the society opportunity approach did not mention it (e.g., Centre for European Studies & Suomen Toivo 2012). Some who mentioned did not discuss it (e.g., Srai 2012; Pirkkalainen and Husu 2020; Weide 2008; Sagne et al. 2005). Some who discussed did not do so in full (Tiilikainen and Ismail 2013). For instance, in her accusation of Finnish political parties for being racially biased in not recruiting immigrants who are not culturally and historically close to native Finns, or in the immigrant access to better job opportunities, Srai (2012) did not discuss the attitude. Also, Pirkkalainen and Husu (2020) in their study of four young Muslim migrants using a life course approach –closely related to the society structure approach – did not also discuss it. For example, what forms or in which platforms the discrimination and unjust treatment they talked about took place, and/or which nationalities were studied, are not explained. Only Tiilikainen and Ismail (2013) discussed the attitude in their study of the Somalis in Helsinki but not broadly enough. Although the study is the closest to my research, it also has some important limitations: 1) it was only limited to the Somalis in Helsinki, excluding the Somalis in the other cities where many also live. 2) It did not also include non-Somali African immigrant groups in Helsinki let alone in other cities. 3) It did not include other platforms for immigrant political engagement such as labor and student unions and non-African associations. 4) It uses focus group interviews as a method which implies that Somalis who are shy or afraid to speak in public would not be able to speak or express themselves well enough due to fear or shy of others. 5) It considered only the negative side and effects of the society attitude and mostly neglected the positive (just like other studies mentioned above).

My doctoral research seeks to fill these epistemological gaps by approaching the issue from the society opportunity (and barrier) structures or specifically the political opportunity (and barrier) structures perspective. The case study is Black African immigrants from different countries, in five different Finnish major cities such as Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Jyväskylä, and Tampere where many of them legally live, without however neglecting any relevant individual/immigrant factors African immigrants may have (such as natural interest or disinterest in politics, previous participation in politics or lack of it, laziness, lack of time, etc) that could also influence their political integration. The research method to be used is in-depth one-on-one interviews. The aim is to find out from a variety of responses, the factor(s) behind their political engagement and disengagement as the case may be, in the formal (such as municipal electoral

politics) and informal or civic[12] sectors (i.e., other forms/platforms for political engagement such as in unions and associations). This is especially important because research on immigrant political engagement in Finland has generally been on electoral politics especially municipal elections (Anttila 2016). Other forms of immigrant political engagement such as in unions and associations (e.g., their protests and internal elections) have been mostly neglected. This means that we have little or no knowledge of whether and/or to what extent immigrants engage in them. The study will also discuss not only the negative side and effects of the society attitude on (African) immigrants but also the positive side and effects. Hence, the study contributes meaningfully, through these, to the literature on immigrant political participation in Finland. Because no immigrant group in Finland has so far been comprehensively studied in the political sector, the study also comes as a pioneer in this regard.

Black African immigrants are chosen as case study in this study because their political integration has not yet been studied before in the Finnish context. Besides, they suffer greater discrimination than other immigrant groups in various facets of the society (cf. Vanttinen 2020, Ahmad 2019, Oliver Smith 2018,[13] Ndukwe 2015a) perhaps because they are the most *visibly different* immigrants in terms of color, with a growing population, standing at about 50,000 in 2018, (Statistics Finland 2018). The growing number makes them a potential political force in Finland especially at the municipal level in the foreseeable future. The municipal level is chosen because it is where many immigrants have full suffrage. In addition, municipalities are also the closest government administration to the residents and also shoulder significant responsibilities in their daily lives, which include but are not limited to schools (especially kindergarten to secondary), health and transport services broadly speaking.

Theoretically, the study is analyzed from the perspectives of the institutional channeling and the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) as well as also that of immigrant identity formation. The institutional channeling analyzes the influence of institutional structures or the political opportunity structures of the host society on immigrant opportunities (and barriers) to participate in the political process (Ireland 1994; Martiniello 2005). In particular, it permits the exploration of nearly all of the abovementioned structures including immigration laws and policies, political institutions and programs aimed at immigrants, and legislative documents supporting the inclusion of immigrants and their associations in the society (Ireland 1994; Saksela-Bergholm 2009). It was used by Saksela-Bergholm (2009) in her study of the political integrative aims of immigrant associations in the Helsinki metropolitan area by exploring their opportunities to participate and represent

[12] Some research prefers to use civic instead of informal to distinguish from the formal. This study uses both interchangeably.

[13]Oliver Smith reports in his article in the *Helsinki Times* titled "Africans in Finland Face highest amount of discrimination in EU", that "20 years after the adoption of EU laws forbidding discrimination, people of African descent [still] face widespread and entrenched prejudice and exclusion", and that Finland is the worst performer among all EU countries in this regard and in virtually all sectors of society (cf. *Helsinki Times* 28 November 2018).

the interests of their groups in local and national policymaking. It was also used by Ireland (1994) in exploring and discussing immigrant opportunities and barriers to participate in the political process of their host societies, especially in France and Switzerland. In this study, it will also be used to explore the opportunities and barriers available for African immigrants' political participation in Finland, especially at the local level. Special attention will be paid to the society's attitude since it is a very strategic concept in this study. And to analyze it very critically, the institutional channeling will be supported by the DMIS.

The DMIS is an intercultural theory that mainly analyzes people's, especially immigrants', societal experiences (and actions) in relation to the host society's attitudes and also vice versa. Its importance lies in its exploration of the forms of intercultural experiences that people, or specifically, immigrants for example face as a minority group in the majority society, which could make or mar their integration in that society. (Bennett 2004). It distinguishes between two stages of experience: the ethnocentric and ethnorelative. The ethnocentric is the stage where immigrants face several discriminations, while the ethnorelative is where such experience is less or non-existent. Ethnocentric is the intercultural stage where immigrants mainly experience hostility/acute racism from the host society which usually starts at the time of arrival and could be continuous, resulting in the lack of integration in the society, or what the institutional channeling refers to as less or no feeling of belonging and institutional completeness in the society, while ethnorelative is the less difficult intercultural stage where the experience of hostility/acute racism is low or non-existent, resulting in societal integration or what the institutional channeling refers to as great feeling of belonging and institutional completeness in the society. My interview data show that many African immigrants have ethnocentric or ethnorelative experiences– with those with the ethnocentric however higher in number than those with the ethnorelative - which respectively affect their socioeconomic and political integration in the Finnish society.

Shote (2011) has used this theory to study the socio-cultural experiences of some West African immigrants in relation to the Finnish society attitude towards them, using interviews. She discovered that the worse the attitude the less their integration in Finland. She also reports that some of them even concluded that the best thing to do is to leave Finland. In this study, the theory will also be used to explore in a similar manner. The main aim is to understand the reason behind the society's attitude and its effects such as why some respondents experience more or less positive attitudes than others.

Furthermore, different identities also result from their experiences and are hence further analyzed, in this study, from the perspective of Berry's (1990) acculturation model, particularly his theory of immigrant identity formation. According to this theory, immigrants acquire different identities in the host society according to their respective experiences in that society. These identities include separated, integrated, assimilated and marginalized identities, and indicate the extent of their alienation or inclusion (as the case may be) in the

society. Hence African immigrants with ethnocentric experiences tend to have separated or marginalized identities, while those with the ethnorelative tend to have integrated or assimilated ones. These have some influences on the way they view and relate with the society including in the political as we would see in chapter five.

All in all, the Finnish society institutional structures to be discussed in this study include the political system including the municipal act on immigrant political rights, immigrant integration laws including the anti-discrimination act, the labor market, and the society attitude. Others include the unions (such as labor and student), associations (African and non-African), and religious bodies. Studying these structures is necessary because as Martiniello (2005) rightly argues, whether immigrants would participate in the political process of the host society or not depends on the institutional structures existing in that society at any given time. Such structures could either be mobilizing structures/linking bodies (if positive), or demobilizing/de-linking bodies (if negative) between immigrants and the host society (see also Ireland 1994; Just and Anderson 2014, 2012).

In the next subchapter, we are going to clarify the key concepts of this study, namely, the society attitude, socioeconomic inclusion and political integration. Part of our discussions especially on the society attitude will heavily draw from my article (Ndukwe 2015a) which, as I noted above, is part of the results of my doctoral fieldwork.

1.1.2 Definition of key concepts

Essentially, society attitude is a central concept in this study, just as socioeconomic inclusion and political integration are. In "The Attitude of Society" by J. Cory (2001), society attitude is referred to as prevailing beliefs and practices in the society espoused and influenced by traditions, cultural orientation, historical background, and prevailing conditions that guide society's feeling, disposition, and action towards a person or group of persons especially outsiders to the society (see also Bennett 2004). For Bennett (2004) this can be positive (i.e., non-racist, welcoming, multicultural) or negative (racist, monocultural/conservative, hostile). The positive, he refers to as intercultural competence of the host society especially in its relations to outsiders, while the negative he refers to as intercultural intolerance in the same relations. This study adopts both the definition and description in relation to Finnish society's attitude towards African immigrants.

As I noted elsewhere (Ndukwe 2015a), in defining the positive or otherwise multiculturalism, Fred Dervin sees it as a bridge where different peoples and cultures meet on equal footing, tolerance, and mutual harmony. Also drawing from the European Commission (2003b), Meinhof and Triandafyllidou (2006), define it as a public acceptance of immigrants who "should be granted equal rights in all spheres of society without being expected to give up their diversity (such as language, culture, and social behavior)," although also usually with an expectation of obeying the rules and regulations of the host society. Hence Kevin

Bloor (2010) also writes that multiculturalism emphasizes government rules and policies that promote cultural diversity in such a way that it makes the society feel at ease with the rich tapestry of its diversified human life and the desire amongst all peoples in it to express their own cultural identity in a culturally suitable manner. In Finland, such rules include the Anti-discrimination act (2004) which states that everybody should be treated equally regardless of origin, ethnicity, color, gender, status, religion, culture, or age. In general, government laws and policies on multiculturalism (as we would see later in chapter three) are in tandem with the above definitions. And so, at least theoretically, they are favorable for immigrant integration in all aspects of life including the political.

On the other hand, the negative or mono-culturalism/conservatism [14] which is a socio-psychological, cultural, economic, and political attitude that seeks to promote, retain, and protect culturally homogenous ways of life of a society against outside intrusion or influence. According to McLean and McMillan (2009), conservatism is an outright opposition in reactionary form to an evolving multicultural model of society, that harks back and attempts to reconstruct styles of society that have been the tradition. In doing so, it subdues, discourages, and prevents a multicultural lifestyle, preferring rather what Cantle (2001, p. 18) calls a "dominant or monoculturalist view of" life in all its ramifications. In general, conservatism can be said to be much of a behavior or an attitude that serves as a constant force against the progress of a multicultural, multi-racial, and transnational society (Hailsham 1959).

In doing the above, conservatism aligns remotely with xenophobia which, according to the World Conference Against Racism, Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (2001) "describes attitudes, prejudices and behavior that reject, exclude and often vilify persons, based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or national identity." This exclusion or vilification often turns to outright racism which, as the article 1 of the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), argues, signifies "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life" of people in any country (For more on all of the above arguments, please see Ndukwe 2015a).

In this definition is embedded the individual/personal racism as well as the systemic (also known as institutional and structural) racism. According to Henry & Tator (2006, 329), personal/individual racism refers to an individual's racist assumptions, beliefs, or behaviors and is "a form of racial discrimination that stems from conscious and unconscious, personal prejudice" against others. On the other hand, systemic racism is a form of racism that is well embedded in the society as a normal practice which results in the exclusion of designated groups

[14] Not specifically referring to political conservatism although such conservatism is also part of it

(such as nonwhites in a white society for example) (cf. Toronto Mayor's Committee on Community and Race, 1993) and can manifest in either of two ways:

- **institutional racism:** racial discrimination that derives from individuals carrying out the dictates of others who are prejudiced or the orders of a prejudiced society.
- **structural racism:** inequalities rooted in the system-wide operation of a society that excludes substantial numbers of members of particular groups from significant participation in society institutions (Henry & Tator 2006, 352)

This study adopts these definitions of society attitude in relation to the Finnish society's attitude towards African immigrants. But a clarification, however, is to be made here between these seemingly three types of racism in the way they relate in this study or in the Finnish context in general. Institutional or structural racism (and xenophobia) are closely related and interwoven such that it is sometimes difficult to know which is which. For example, when a Finnish employer or group of employers have or share the same or similar view (sometimes without even knowing each other) that a group of immigrants (e.g. black Africans) are not to be employed especially in the white-collar jobs[15] because of their color and/or country of origin; or when a majority of natives feel it is quite ok to avoid close contacts with such immigrants in the social space; or even to stop allowing them into Finland as a recent nationwide survey discovered[16] (cf. Yle online English news, 10 March 2019). To the extent that this is a nationwide belief, it could be called structural or institutional racism even though it is a result of widespread acts of individual beliefs. This kind of belief, which often reflects in actions or practices that are sometimes learned from one another - e.g. from employer to employee, workmates to workmates, parents to kids, friends to friends, peers to peers, etc, - regardless of the Anti-Discrimination Act (2004) which forbids all kinds of racism/xenophobia and discriminations against anybody for any reason including reasons of color and country of origin, turns the integration concept on its head by leading to lack of integration of such immigrants, thereby putting the responsibility on the society. It also critiques the Finnish government's idea of immigrant integration as a (two-way) process of involving both the immigrant and the society in mutual interaction and progress in all aspects of societal life (cf. The Finnish Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers, 493/1999 amendments up to 324/2009 included; see also Ireland 1994, Ahokas 2010, International Organization for Migration 2019, Lillie and Ndomo 2021) but which the society, or specifically,

[15] It is comparatively easier for blacks to get employed in blue-collar jobs than in white-collar because many natives do not usually seek blue-collar jobs which have created vacancies for immigrants. This does not however mean that every black that applies for a blue-collar job gets it. It still depends on whether the recruiter is a non-racist or a racist.
[16] The survey indicated that Finns mostly prefer immigrants from other EU states, as well as from North America and Asia, but less so for immigrants from Africa and the Middle East.

some of its members, do not adhere to, or simply do not accept, through their actions/behaviors. This is clearer when we recall that there is currently no *written* official or state or policy racism in Finland whether it be institutional[17] or structural but rather repeated and continuous acts of individual racism/xenophobia that have become institutional and structural, and even acceptable to many natives in the society. It is this broad type of racism/xenophobia that many African immigrants experience more or less in the Finnish society especially in the socioeconomic arena, which has deprived or offered them socioeconomic inclusion and integration that consequently influence their political involvement.

Socioeconomic inclusion/integration

Alba & Nee (1997) define social inclusion or integration as the process in which immigrants are incorporated into the social structure of the host society. It is also a dynamic and structured process in which all members participate in dialogue to achieve and maintain peaceful social relations. Compared with other dimensions of integration, social integration focuses more on the degree to which immigrants adapt to local customs, social ties and relations, language and cultural skills, and daily practices (Vigdor 2008, Lillie and Ndomo 2021). It is usually measured through social network, language, and intermarriage (Vigdor 2008). But the most commonly used indicator is said to be social network, which refers to the connection that immigrants build with the natives. Some researchers use the total number of immigrants' friends as a measure, while others use the frequency of interaction with friends (ibid). Cornel Nesseler and his colleagues used access to social activities (e.g., being able to join a local sports team) as a measurement for social integration (Nesseler et al. 2019). Nonetheless, some studies differentiate local friends from immigrant friends noting that the former appears more important in integrating immigrants into the local society than the latter (ibid; Vigdor 2008; Alba & Nee 1997). This is especially relevant in the factors mentioned above as well as job acquisition. Jobs, especially those that match immigrants' academic qualifications or skills are said to determine to a large extent their economic integration. Together with the social integration, this is said to guarantee their *solid* integration in the society (Ibid. See also Lillie and Ndomo 2021, Vigdor 2008). This study adopts this definition in relation to African immigrants' socioeconomic inclusion and integration in the Finnish society.

Nonetheless, Lillie and Ndomo (2021) however argue that this also depends on certain additional variables. Drawing from the citizenship theory perspective, they note that

[17] Even the Finns party that is generally regarded as an anti-immigrant party does not use discrimination or racism in its manifesto in relation to immigrants but instead "defense of Finnish democracy". Hence it does not see itself as racist or anti-immigrant even though its actions or statements say otherwise (cf. for e.g., Zuzeeko 13 April 2012, Perussuomalaisten Nuorten English webpage, 2013, Yle online English news 18 November 2020, 8 September 2017, Ndukwe 2015a).

> Migrant integration or conversely exclusion should [also] be seen in the struggle to extend or restrict citizenship. Integration is often seen as occurring along a spectrum or timeline; migrants move along it as various milestones are achieved, becoming ever more integrated. As Ager and Strand show, formal citizenship in a host country is in many respects considered an endpoint or at least a milestone in migrant integration, as are developments such as acquisition of host country ties, language skills and cultural skills. Similarly, obtaining employment and secure economic status (which are not the same thing) are also considered indicators of migrant integration (Ager and Strang, 2008). However, this idea of citizenship moving along a line until the migrant has "paid their dues" and becomes a member of the society in good standing does not match the hierarchical and contingent structure of citizenship in practice. In practice, there are individuals whose wealth, ethnicity, skills, high-value passport [i.e., referring to nationality] and status allow them travel freely and enjoy extensive rights wherever they go; while others, by dint of their social class, low-value passport and ethnicity, are best tolerated, if not excluded, when they migrate. This exclusion can be permanent, and also indeed affect the second [and even the third and fourth or more] generation[s] of migrants (Kempton 2002). Thus, citizenship [in this sense] … is both a cause and a reflection of labor market segmentation and variegated integration (pp.135-6).

This argument shows that regardless of the acquisition of host country ties, language skills, and cultural skills, as well as obtaining employment, discrimination and racism play a substantial role in (certain) immigrants securing their (socio)economic status (Somers 2008) because those from wealthy countries and/or with certain ethnicity and skills are highly valued and hence preferred more than those from poor countries and/or with certain ethnicity, even with equal or better qualifications or skills. This we will see clearly in the experiences of many African immigrants in the Finnish society, with a few exceptions, in chapter four of this study. These experiences – a result of society attitude - thus play a great role in fostering or depriving them of the sense or feeling of *belonging* to Finland which consequently also affects their political participation as we would see in chapter five.

In "Making Sense of Belonging", Allen Maps (2009) describes belonging as a perception of quality, meaning, and satisfaction with social connections, particularly when it comes to relations between natives and foreigners because it is our sense of belonging and its importance to us as a species that shapes the way our relationships with others, which motivates our participation in the society processes: the better the relationship the better the participation. She further argues that social rejection, for example, is at odds with belonging because the social pain caused by the rejection creates a terrible response in one's neural processing not so different from that caused by severe physical pain (see also Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003). This makes one become passive or withdraw from an imminent or further activity. Thus, in this study, this could help us understand the psychological (and physical [18]) pain that African immigrants on the rejection side experience which tends to make them passive or withdraw from some societal participation particularly the political.

In summary, rejection or acceptance and the sense of belonging or lack of it that it fosters are the main factors that encourage or discourage African

[18] Physical is included because when somebody is not earning well, the person is not also eating well, and also not being able to do essential things he or she needs to do including going to the hospital when sick which could also be a result of not eating well.

immigrants' integration in Finland. Integration here means full participation in societal affairs which occurs when immigrants and natives accept one another and live harmoniously together without discrimination (Bennett 2004, Hämäläinen 2021, International Organization for Migration 2019). According to the Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment which oversees immigrant integration in Finland, a prerequisite for the successful integration of immigrants requires non-discrimination and commitment both on the society and immigrants because integration can only succeed if everybody is committed to non-discrimination, and immigrants are accepted as members of the society (Hämäläinen 2021. See also Bennett 2004).

Clarification on political integration

As earlier noted, political integration in this study broadly means political mobilization, participation, and representation, which Martiniello (2005) considers the three major aspects of immigrant political integration in any host society. He argues that political integration can happen in the formal (or conventional) and informal (or unconventional) political forms. By formal/conventional form, he means political integration through direct and institutionalized channels such as voting, party membership, being a candidate, and political campaign activities in general elections; while the informal/unconventional means political activities outside of this realm, including in protest politics (See also Ireland 1994; de Graauw 2013). He makes clears that

> Unlike a lot of political science research, political participation cannot be restricted to conventional forms, such as voting or running for election. It also covers other and less conventional types of political activities, such as protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, hunger strikes, boycotts, etc. Even though the usefulness of the distinction between conventional and less conventional forms of political participation is a matter of discussion between political scientists, we claim that it is useful because the two categories involve different patterns of [political] activities (Martiniello 2005, 3).

He also argues that the unconventional forms also include trade union politics and politics in pressure groups/movements and associations/organizations and argues that although some of these may not strictly be consciously political-oriented, they certainly do have political impacts. Just and Anderson (2012) confirm that earlier studies of political participation have mostly focused on the formal aspects of politics. But later, the scope of inquiry widened in the aftermath of the waves of popular unrest in the 1960s and 1970s when their political outcomes/significance brought about their recognition as part and parcel of political participation under the acronym: protest (or contentious) politics. Research shows that immigrants have been active in them even before their political rights were given, and when the rights were finally given, both forms complemented each other (ibid; Ireland 1994). Drawing from his study of immigrant politics in France and Switzerland, Ireland (1994, 256) further argues that "my findings indicate that immigrants were most potent when they employed both conventional and unconventional political tactics" in

their demands on the host society. Research also finds that both are influenced by cultural, social, economic, and political environments of the society (Huckfeldt 1986; Ireland 2000, 1994; Martiniello 2005, Just and Anderson 2012), which altogether form part and parcel of the society's political opportunity structures for immigrant political engagement. All of them could exist at the local, regional, and national levels (Martiniello 2005). However, our study is mainly concerned with the local level. It also adopts the two forms of political participation and hence will investigate the political situation of African immigrants from the two points of view.

To define the three major parts of political integration therefore, we start with political mobilization. No politics, whether electoral or protest, can be possible without some mobilization. Mobilization is therefore an important step towards people's political engagement (Martiniello 2005; Ireland 1994). By definition, *political mobilization* is understood as a process where people (e.g., immigrants) mobilize themselves or are mobilized by electoral candidates, political parties, churches/mosques, organizations, pressure groups, etc, in order to express their interests and demand of the political institutions of the society to respond to those demands. For this to be more effective, political institutions would need to make available relevant opportunity structures, such as giving of political rights, including rights of free association, and making/implementing of non-discrimination laws. When this is the case, the onus then falls on those who have been legally empowered and mobilized to translate rights into participation. In this study, political mobilization is exactly understood in this way and would be discussed accordingly.

When it comes to *political participation*, researchers see it as any action by individuals aimed at achieving collective/individual political objectives, including the election of government, decision-making or influencing of public policy in a given society (cf. Game 2001; Deth 2001; Katsiaficas 2014; Srai 2012; Norris 2002; Verba & Nie 1972). It also refers to any political action or inaction by an individual or group that intentionally or unintentionally supports or opposes certain societal decisions, actions or changes in a given society (Barnes 1979; see also Conge 1988, in Srai 2012, 34). A range of actions can be utilized to influence public policy such as campaigning, voting, demonstrating and rioting (Deth 1986). In this study, political participation is understood as any action by African immigrants aimed at achieving collective/individual political objectives as well as influencing public policy. These could be campaigning, voting, association/union memberships, and protests in various forms. Abstaining from politics, especially elections as a form of protest is also considered a form of politics (Martiniello 2005). So African immigrants who do not participate in electoral politics for example because of the discrimination they face in the society are also considered to be engaged in (protest) politics. Martiniello argues that sometimes when immigrants abstain from an election, it does not mean they are not interested in it, but it could be a way of expressing their anger against a society (or its agencies) they consider hostile due to discrimination.

The last but not the least, and equally important, is *political representation*. According to Childs and Lovenduski (2012), political representation refers to the action of speaking or acting on behalf of another or even the state of being so represented in a government or association/organization (see also Pitkin 1967). People are represented for various reasons either directly or by proxy. As Childs and Lovenduski (2012) further argue, we may not all be present in the parliament or municipal council or executive bodies (such as those of associations and unions), but we could elect or appoint someone to do so on our behalf. Hence Martiniello (2005, 3) argues that in political representation, power is exercised by a person or group of people legitimized by the citizens' mandate to govern or exercise power on their behalf. The whole process involves three dimensions: 1) the represented; 2); the representative and 3) the process of representation (Ankersmit 1997, 19). In other words, the represented (the voters) is made visible by the representative (the elected or appointed) through a process of representation (the council, association, union).

Nonetheless, research shows that the concept of political representation created two theoretical vantage points, namely: mimetic and aesthetic representations (Ankersmit 1997; Ruedin 2013). Mimetic representation holds that all political representation should be an "exact portrait, in miniature, of the people" being represented in such a way that the representative "should (always) think, feel, reason and act like them (i.e., the represented)" since "a representative is the legitimate one if he or she acts with the consent of those whom he or she represents" (Ruedin 2013, 12). Conversely, the aesthetic – particularly championed by Ankersmit[19] - holds that there should be "an unbridgeable aesthetic gap" between the represented and the representative because it is this gap that guarantees the discretion and freedom with which the representative should represent (Ankersmit 1997). Although these definitions have been contentious among scholars, with a lot of *pro et contra* arguments, Ruedin (2013, 18-19) argues, drawing from Esaiasson and Holmberg (1996) that many voters today would want their representatives to be mimetic, whereas many representatives would want to be aesthetic. This study adopts the definitions of political representation by Childs and Lovenduski (2012) and Martiniello (2005) above. It also recognizes the two theoretical vantage points as argued by Ankersmit (1997) and Ruedin (2013) and would investigate which of them is more appealing to African immigrants with ethnocentric and ethnorelative experiences and why. In any case, whether political representation follows the mimetic or the aesthetic path, the bottom line is that representatives should be held accountable for their representations. And if for any reason, a representation is not done well, the representative might face the risk of losing the next election,

[19] This Ankersmit's position originates from his admiration for arts and artistic impressions. He argues that just as an artwork is not expected to be identical to the landscape it is depicting in order to bring out its beauty, so also should it be in political representation. An artwork depicts in the sense of substitution, not imitation, he says, and concludes that the expected gap or difference coming between the landscape and its painting must not be seen as "a mistake or a shortcoming" but the aesthetics itself and so should it be in political representation (1997, p.45)

assuming he or she decides to run again. In short, Ruedin (2013) sees this implicit threat of losing an election as the most powerful incentive for many representatives to act in the interests of the represented in the course of their representation, regardless of which method of representation they follow.

Another type of representation that is essential to this study is the descriptive and substantive. Drawing from Pitkin (1967), Birch (2000), and Paxton et al. (2007), Ruedin (2013) argues that descriptive representation is concerned with the demographic characteristics of a population, such as racial, ethnic, gender, age, social status and class; whereas substantive representation is mainly concerned with issues, interests, views, and policy preferences (see also Mansbridge 1999; Powell 2004). The concept of descriptive is said to be rooted in the moral argument that every representation should mirror the population of its constituency in order that the constituents' interests and needs be properly represented (Ruedin 2013; Mansbridge 1999). It is also argued that the higher the number of descriptive representatives a group has, the higher their chances of being well represented. Failure to do so, the group in question could be considered underrepresented, and this is critical if it is seen that the underrepresented group is deliberately being silenced/suppressed as well as marginalized by the political institution and/or the larger society (cf. Wittman 1990; Fearon 1999, in Ruedin 2013).

In substantive representation -- also known as policy representation – it is about issues, interests, needs, and policy preferences to be represented regardless of who represents them. It is assumed that a descriptive representative is in a better position to do a proper substantive representation of his/her descriptive constituents well than a non-descriptive. For example, African immigrants at the ethnocentric stage have this belief, arguing that it is only an African/nonwhite immigrant representative that could pull them out of their woes due to shared discrimination experience (or the sympathy [20]), whereas Africans at the ethnorelative see it otherwise, arguing that the *quality* or *competence* of the representative is the most important regardless of his or her ethnicity or social status. In this regard, Mansbridge (1999) argues that having a descriptive representative is not a guarantee that descriptive interests could be served because some immigrant representatives for example could be representing other interests rather than those of his immigrant constituents. For example, she illustrates that having a woman representative does not necessarily mean representation of women's interests because such a representative might be representing a professional class interest (such as a lawyer union or medical group, etc) that are not directly related to women as the female folk. However, it is also argued that a descriptive representative elected solely to represent the substantive interests of his/her group is more likely to raise discussions about the group's problems and needs than would any other representative outside the group (cf. Mansbridge 1999; Bird et al. 2010; Ruedin 2013; Dancygier n.d). This study examines the political representation of African immigrants from all of the

[20] This is in the situation where the representative has no experience of discrimination.

above. It particularly seeks to find out the kind of representation they prefer and the kind they get, and how the representation is made.

Overview on the rest of the Chapters and their Contribution to the Study

Overall, this study is divided into three major parts which consist of four main chapters altogether some of which have sub-chapters. In particular, Part I consists of chapters one and two. Chapter one had begun with the introduction where the research problem and question, the aim of the study had been tabled, the previous research, and the approach have been discussed. The key concepts have also been clarified.

Then Chapter two (coming next) discusses the theoretical framework, as well as the data collection and method, and research ethics. The theoretical framework involves two main theories: the institutional channeling theory (Ireland 1994, Martiniello 2005) and the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett 2004) as well as an additional support theory of immigrant identity formation (Berry 1990, 1997) which helped analyze, in the most meaningful way, the opportunity structures in Finland especially the society attitude in relation to African immigrants' experiences in their socioeconomic and political inclusion and integration or lack of them. The research method and data collection particularly discussed the use of in-depth interviews, why it is preferred (over other methods), and how data collection was made. The description of data collection explains those interviewed, why they are interviewed, as well as the locations, period, and duration of the interviews. Age, length of stay (in Finland), education, and jobs of interviewees are also explained. In line with good research, the research ethics was also discussed and its rules on interviews and reporting also followed, which include (but are not limited) to informing interviews beforehand about the purpose of the interview, asking for their consent to participate, and ensuring of the confidentiality of information provided as well as their identities if they want it so.

Furthermore, Part II consists of chapter three and its subchapters which discuss the political opportunity structures that frame immigrant political participation at the local level in Finland. This starts with a brief overview of the Finnish political/electoral systems, the (current) number and the role of the municipalities in Finland, especially to the local residents. The political opportunity structures are then discussed which include but are not limited to the Local Government Act (2015) where immigrants' full political rights at the local level (including the right to belong to or form own associations) are specified, immigrant integration laws including the non-discrimination (2004) act, which guarantees their participation in all aspects of societal life without discrimination.

These are then linked to the socioeconomic and political situation of African immigrants in Part III. This Part – which is the final part - consists of the empirical chapters (four and five) as well as the conclusion (chapter six). Chapter four discusses the African migration to Finland, the concept of the African as the "only" immigrant in Finland, and their socioeconomic inclusion and exclusion in the

Finnish society. This subchapter showcases the positive and negative experiences they have in this socioeconomic arena, which inform the formulation of their sense of belonging or lack of it as well as the acquisition of varied identities that consequently influence their political mobilization, participation, and representation in chapter five. Then in chapter six comes the conclusion, where all arguments are summed up, and some solutions proffered to the problems found.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 An Outline of Theoretical Approaches

As already noted, this study applies the theoretical approaches of the institutional channeling and the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS). One thing about them is that although the institutional channeling is the more widely known in academic debates especially in analyzing immigrant political integration, the DMIS – a relatively unknown in political research – will especially be used to analyze the intercultural experiences of African immigrants in Finland in relation to society's attitudes which, as the interviews show, highly influence their socio-cultural/economic and political integration. To the extent of *applying* its intercultural (normative) concepts in this regard, is part of a contribution of this study to the literature on immigrant political participation in Finland. We shall however first discuss prior theoretical approaches to immigrant political involvement, especially in Europe before delving *proper* into the institutional channeling and the DMIS.

Social scientists focusing on immigrant political integration in host societies have mostly (and respectively) followed three theoretical approaches, namely: ethnicity/race, class, and more recently, institutional channeling. Many have emphasized "social class characteristics, ethnic and/or racial socialization process and institutional channeling" (Ireland 1994, 4). Ethnicity/race and class theories are said to be the oldest and the most "predominant in studies of immigrant political behavior" (p.8). Immigrant involvement in politics in Europe is said to have originated first from the immigrant decision to settle permanently, and second, from their unwillingness to no longer remain politically passive in their host societies (Ireland (1994, 27). Before then, immigrants were merely seen as guest workers and temporary residents who would one day return to their home countries (Ibid, p.2; See also Martiniello 2005; Castles, Booth and Wallace 1984). Hence, it was not considered necessary to give them any political rights. Martiniello (2005, 1) in fact explains that

> They [immigrants] were not supposed or expected to be politically active. As guests, they were even asked to observe a kind of *devoir de réserve* (i.e. duty not to interfere [in politics]). In other words, they were invited not to get too involved with their hosts' political and collective affairs. Migrants just had an economic role in the host society: to work and to produce [economic goods and nothing else] (See also Martiniello 1997; Sahlberg 2000, Gilmore 2004).

Marchetto (2014, 1)[21] affirmed that this is mostly because, for long in Europe (as elsewhere),

> … migration has been closely associated with labor migration, which is often temporary by nature. This type of migration includes seasonal and frontier workers but also highly skilled corporate staff. There are also cross-border commuters, "tourists" for labor purposes and petty traders. Then, there are forced migrants, including asylum seekers, refugees and those in need of temporary protection. There are also students and working holiday-makers. Still another group that belongs to the mobility continuum are *tourists* and business travelers who have the characteristics of temporary migrants and also facilitate migration since they sustain a global network of travel infrastructures.

To add to this is Western Europe's thirst for cheap labor for its industries. But while it recruits numerous workers, it failed to implement coherent, coordinated policies for coping with the social and political effects of such mass recruitment (Miller 1986, in Ireland 1994, 2-3). As a result, increased immigrant population made their unfulfilled potentials in politics more glaring (Nacarino et al. 2013) and exclusion from the political process prevented them from playing relevant political roles in the countries of settlement (Martiniello 2005; Ireland 1994). Hence, the 1981 Conference of European Ministers decided to take it up. The proponents argued that

> The migrant's integration [in Europe] – apart from [the] economic, social, and cultural aspects – [also] involves the question of political participation, since the migrant has a political dimension, as does any other human being. His status in the receiving [EU] country cannot [therefore] be divorced from this fundamental dimension (Soysal 1998).

They further argued that the more they participate in the democratic/political process of their host country, the more they get used to its democracy (Council of European Union's Press release on Common Basic Principles 2004; Ahokas 2010; Migrant Policy Group 2013; Togeby 1999). It was hoped that their participation in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures that affect them, especially at the local level, would support their societal integration (cf. Council of European Union's Press release on Common Basic Principles 2004, # 9; Katsiaficas 2014, 10). But the opponents argued in contra, insisting that migrants have only an economic role to play, after which they should return to their countries as giving them political rights will be meddling in the countries' governance affairs. After a lot of *pro et contra* arguments, the pro-group won, and each country is allowed to give the rights. Currently, about 17 EU member countries have granted political rights to

[21] Agostino Marchetto is a Catholic Archbishop and the Secretary to the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People as at the time of writing this work.

third-country immigrants (i.e., non-Europeans) at the local level. They include Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK (Groenendijk 2008; Bousetta 2005; Togeby 1999). However, Groenendijk (2008, 4) points out that while many of these countries allow immigrants to vote and stand as candidates at local elections, some five others only allow them to vote and not to stand as candidates. They include Belgium, Estonia, Hungary, Luxembourg, and Slovenia.

Nonetheless, Ireland (1994, 5) following Corderio and Dias (1985) and Piore (1979), argues that even prior to the granting of the political rights, the European public disenchantment on immigrants' decision to settle permanently had already grown, resulting in various discriminations – especially in the form of xenophobia and racism - against migrants particularly in the socioeconomic space. The granting of the political rights even made matters worse. Unfortunately, many host governments also failed to improve immigrants' socioeconomic situation and subsequent integration. This anomaly hence pushed many immigrants into a more precarious situation, and some who were prone to repeated racism and discrimination were forced to mobilize to salvage their situation. Ireland (1994) argues that this move partly became a prelude to the formation of the ethnic/race and class politics and theories that we are now about to discuss.

Social scientists (e.g., Foner 1979; Moore 1975; Miller 1981, 1982; and Touraine 1990) using ethnicity/race theory on immigrant political participation as a theoretical and methodological framework make an assumption that ethnic identity is of fundamental importance to immigrant political mobilization and participation, and hence that ethnic/racial politics would continue in the future, conditioned and determined by discriminatory situations in the host societies (Ireland 1994). Ethnicity/race theory for example predicts that immigrants of the same ethnicity or race will roughly adopt similar forms of political mobilization and articulate their political interests along ethnic or racial lines because of shared discrimination experiences and concerns they have (ibid, p.7). In line with this, the 'reactive ethnicity' perspective of Vermeersch (2011) holds that the rise of ethnic mobilization as a process is prompted by *unequal* division of resources in the society. Citing Hechter (1975) who first used this term, Vermeersch asserts that this implies that ethnoregional loyalties and conflicts within a state could be strengthened as a result of increasing levels of *inequalities* between the ethnic core (e.g., the natives) and the ethnic periphery (the immigrants). Even prior approaches to ethnic voting, for example, also say something about this when it suggests four channels through which ethnicity/race could motivate the selection of a co-ethnic/racial candidate during elections. They include (i) affective ties of (in-)group membership, (ii) fear or (iii) prejudice towards ethnic/racial outsiders, and (iv) expectations about the distribution of patronage and goods from politicians (Long 2008). This theoretical approach also holds that it is natural that immigrants should organize and articulate their political interests along ethnic/racial lines in a hostile host society. This would give some

sense of shared identity and in-belonging among them. It could also produce strong psychological feelings of affection towards in-group members which makes them trust each other more than others outside their group (ibid). All of these could be found among African immigrants in their political behavior in this study.

The lack of trust and the presence of prejudice towards outsiders could also be found which results in doubt as to whether these outsiders could politically represent them well or not if voted for (or appointed) or not, since they (the outsiders) are not part of their shared discrimination experiences. For example, judging from my interview data, there are reasons to believe that the in-group bonding of Black African immigrants is strong enough to influence who to vote for during municipal and union elections as well as which protests to join, because of the racism/xenophobia they face in everyday life in the Finnish society (see also Austin et al. 2012; Roger 2006; Greer 2013; and Carter 2019 for a similar group consciousness among black immigrants in American politics).

This engineers collective mobilization for an in-group candidate(s) during elections in order to safeguard their descriptive interests. Arguing on collective mobilization, Togeby (1999, 667) explains that

> Group-based or collective political mobilisation is [often] determined by interests. It is expressed through a high degree of group consciousness... Collective mobilisation depends on lively interaction among people with similar… interests and on stable and lasting patterns of interaction. Collective mobilisation explains why some groups, despite few individual resources, manage a high level of participation.

Ireland (1994, pp.7-8, 39) argues that such mobilization is possible in the light of bad socioeconomic conditions that virtually all foreign workers in Europe, especially non-Europeans, have borne the brunt of.

Besides, the issue of "homeland hangover" (ibid, p.8) – that is homeland characteristics - which is the persistence pattern of home origin elements that immigrants developed in their home countries or their renewed interest in the homeland politics might add to the ethnicity connection. Put differently, immigrants may direct their political activity solely towards their countries of origin because of the racism they face in the host society, and/or because of their patriotism or interest in their home countries as we would see in chapter five among some African immigrants. Homeland opposition as well as ruling parties and movements have also been known to have set up organizational presence in host countries to boost mobilization and participation of their natives in homeland elections and other political activities (p. 25).

Importantly, Ireland (1994) also writes that social scientists (e.g. Rex 1979, Castles and Kosack 1973, Miles 1982; Lawrence 1974; Castles, Booth and Wallace 1984) using class theory argue that immigrants' common working-class identity also determines the nature of their political participation in the host society, because the capitalist system's need for cheap labor – which as already noted has inspired much immigration in Europe and globally – has also culminated in the creation of ethnic/racial subproletariats, thereby creating a group of lower-class immigrants. Hence, immigrants of all nationalities have worked overwhelmingly

in unskilled, hazardous positions that the natives scorn, often regardless of their education levels or professional experiences at least initially (see also Schmitter Heisler 1983; Englund 2002). This increases the possibility of group-based (political) mobilization and participation among concerned immigrants to get out of the lower work or marginalized status. Although Saksela-Bergholm (2009) argues that it is logical for immigrants to establish networks and associations that are not based on class but ethnicity/race, the kind of work they do naturally groups them into a marginalized class and hence makes them form the same or similar network.

The neo-Marxist assumptions of the class theory make it clear that immigrant participation in the host society also reflects their class status (Ireland 1994, p.16). Specifically, in political participation, the socioeconomic status (SES) theory holds that the socioeconomic resources of individuals determine whether and to what extent they participate in the political process (Verba & Nie 1972). In a comparative study of seven countries, Verba and Nie (1972) found that the decreasing or increasing levels of socioeconomic resources often leads to decreases or increases in the political involvement of individuals and groups (See also Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995; Chernyuk 2013; Norris 2000; Verba, Kim and Nie 1978).

Be that as it may, although ethnicity/race and class theories have their strengths, they do not however fully explain the institutional structures of a society especially in relation to immigrants, and specifically on the reason(s) behind the high and low levels of socioeconomic status and political participation. Therefore, they are not enough to *fully* explain well such a situation in the case of African immigrants in the Finnish society. Previous research on immigrant political participation in Finland has not also been able to fully explain it since it mostly centered on immigrant characteristics – real or imagined – and less on the institutional structures whereas the ethnic and class experiences of African immigrants in this regard are mostly influenced by the institutional structures. In fact, existing research (in Finland) has laid more of the blames on immigrants for their lack of political participation than on the society and its structures. Incidentally, Martiniello (2005) has argued that whether immigrants participate politically or not, for the most part, depends on the institutional structures existent in the host society. Hence whether immigrants act ethnically, racially, or as working-class, in the formal and/or informal politics, is therefore often highly dependent on the institutional structure(s) of the host society as we would see in this study. Phinney et al. (2001, 506) even made it clearer that

> Immigrants' desire to become part of the larger society will be thwarted if they meet discrimination or rejection of their efforts towards inclusion [in that society]. Immigrants who are forced by circumstances to live in the isolated… are unlikely to be satisfied or productive members of the society. If, however, the host society is accepting of immigrants, newcomers will have the chance of being bicultural [i.e., combining their culture and that of the host society] … and … proceeding at their own pace in the process of adaptation to the new country.

Just and Anderson (2012, 6) also argue that,

> …. countries that provide opportunities for immigrants to express their grievances and contribute to collective policy decision-making are likely to have more politically

> involved foreign-born residents. In contrast, states that are hostile or closed to immigrant political input are more likely to produce apathetic and alienated migrant communities, whose grievances might occasionally manifest themselves through violence or crime among poor immigrants, and the return home or further migration to another location among highly skilled foreigners.

In summary, it is these institutional structures that the institutional channeling scholars study. The essence of starting with these structures has been importantly argued by Adamson (2007). Drawing from Penninx (1998), he emphasizes that,

> … the institutional framework of the society can be taken as a starting point in asking the question such as how far the institutional framework is open for participation by immigrants and ethnic minorities. In this approach the terms of inclusion/exclusion and so-called 'opportunity structure' are key-concepts pertaining to openness of the existing system (Adamson 2007, 42).

Therefore, as previously noted, I would in this study deviate from the previous studies' mainly immigrant centered approach to the institutional structure approach. This is to interpret well the societal sense of Black African immigrants' political integration in Finland. When such approach is applied to a study of this kind, the teleological aspect of what is being analyzed is gradually uncovered. The theories would also help us map out probable roads to the future for African immigrant political integration in Finland, because, as Korhonen (1992) argues, theories are instruments for constructing reality and mapping out probable roads to the future. I shall now turn to the institutional channeling theory proper.

2.1.1 Institutional Channeling Theory

In his seminal work, *The Policy Challenge of Ethnic Diversity: Immigrant Politics in France and Switzerland* (1994), Patrick Ireland, defines institutional channeling as a political opportunity structure theory that attempts to analyze the influence of the host society's institutional structures on immigrants' opportunities (and barriers) to participate in the political process. He concentrates on the institutional structures rather than on the ethnic/racial and class characteristics of immigrants, arguing that "It is important to challenge the prima facie assumptions that immigrant organizing must take along either purely ethnic and purely class lines" because ethnic/racial based "participation, after all, seems to be more an effect than a cause" from the host society's structures. He also makes clear that "immigrants need not organize politically along ethnic lines", but when they do so, it is mostly because the host-society institutions have nurtured ethnicity in them through their discriminatory policies and practices (p. 10). Following Mauco (1932, 269) and Schor (1985a, 222), he further notes in this regard that

> Public opinion and policymakers alike [have in fact] tended to construct a veritable hierarchy of foreign groups, ranking them through discriminatory practices and attitudes according to nationality and perceived cultural proximity…. Such layering [has

> consequently] fostered an ethnic based identity that was often lacking among arriving immigrants… (Ireland 1994, 33)

For example, nonwhite immigrants especially blacks are often ranked lower (for strange reasons most of which empty stereotypes) than whites. Meanwhile, the structures to which he was referring to above could be national or local institutional frameworks and include government policies, immigration laws, citizenship, immigrant integration laws, attitudes of the native society, anti-discrimination laws, political/electoral systems, administrative practices, and political party systems (Ireland 1994; Martiniello 2005; See also Togeby 1999) which influence directly or indirectly the form of immigrant political involvement, formally or informally. Besides, he also made mention of indigenous trade unions, immigrant residence status, attitude of the native society, labour market conditions of immigrants, human rights organizations, and other relevant institutions that could in one or the other influence immigrants' political engagement.

Following a similar ideology, Martiniello in his "Political Participation, Mobilisation and Representation of Immigrants and their Offspring in Europe" (2005), writes that any form of immigrant political participation will first and foremost "depend on the structure of political opportunities existing in the host society at any given time" supplied by the state and society because

> by granting or denying voting rights to foreigners, facilitating or impeding access to citizenship and nationality, granting or constraining freedom of association, ensuring or blocking the representation of migrants' interests, states open or close avenues of political participation for migrants and either provide them with more or fewer opportunities to participate in the management of collective affairs (p.6).

In addition, he also singled out the non-political structures (such as the attitude of the native society, the labour market condition of immigrants, human rights organizations (e.g. anti-racism orgs), trade unions, religious bodies, multicultural and immigrant' associations) as important as the political rights because they are usually the "linking bodies" and "mobilizing structures" or what Ireland calls "political midwives" between immigrants and the state/society that facilitate (or stall) immigrants' active political involvement thereof (Ireland 2000, 236-7; Martiniello 2005; see also Koopmans & Statham 2000).

Already, before Ireland and Martiniello, a group of scholars on immigrant political participation had suggested that society institutional structures play a decisive role in the nature and level of immigrant political integration (Castles 1992; Brubaker 1992, 1989; Soysal 1994; Thompson 1983; Cohen 1982; Lowi 1964). Among others, they had emphasized "the *indigenous population's attitudes* towards ethnic minorities" as of very crucial importance (Ireland 1994). Ireland's and Martiniello's approach is therefore built on this body of research. So, we could ask, for example, with Togeby (1999, 667): "how open is the receiving country's institutions and behavior (comprehensively speaking) in including ethnic minorities in the political process?" (See also Just and Anderson 2012; Eisinger 1973; Kitschelt 1986; Esman 1985; Cordeiro 1985b; Katznelson 1973). A

general explanatory model for the African immigrant political integration in Finland can be broadly derived from this.

Following the neo-institutionalist perspective (e.g., March & Olsen 1989; Hall & Taylor 1996), Ireland's and Martiniello's non-political structures, therefore, transcends purely political institutional arrangements and extends to the realm of social, ethnic, economic, cultural, religious, and even humanitarian sectors. This is somewhat not exactly the same with the views of some scholars on political opportunity structure, such as Sidney Tarrow, whose *Power in Movement* (1998) is one of the most famous works in the POS discourse. Tarrow has argued that "by political opportunity structure, I mean consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure" (p. 85). By 'incentives' he possibly means immigration and residence laws, naturalization policies/procedures, and political rights (see also Koopmans & Statham 2000); by 'structure' he refers to formal political institutions and actors whose actions and reactions affect immigrant political participation; and by 'collective action' he means group-based actions such as immigrant mobilization for political action. In all of these, Tarrow failed to mention non-political structures such as the attitude of the indigenous society, labor market, labor unions, immigrant associations, religious bodies, multicultural organizations, and consultative bodies, as part of the POS. As a result, he was criticized for "paying less attention to the social structure, to non-political activity, and to the collective-action dilemmas of formal associations" (Bengtsson 2010, 245). This criticism implies that POS should not only be seen from a purely political perspective, but also from a non-political. This is particularly sensible as my interview data show. In other words, there is a *strong link* between the attitude of the indigenous society, the labor market situation of African immigrants, and their political integration, and this could be seen in their interview narratives in chapter five.

Perhaps in consideration of all of these, Martiniello (2005, 2) argues that the study of immigrant political integration should involve four key dimensions: 1) The (political and associational) rights granted to immigrants by the host society. 2) The identification of immigrants with the host society. 3) The adoption of democratic norms and values by immigrants; and 4) Political participation, mobilization, and representation. These four dimensions summarize the institutional channeling theory as a whole.

One is impressed that Martiniello first considered "the identification of immigrants with the host society" before the actual "political participation, mobilization and representation", because, without this identification, there will be no adoption of democratic norms/values in the first place, let alone political participation, mobilization, and representation. In this scenario, any political rights granted to them might not be utilized or not well utilized. This is the plight of many African immigrants in Finland. In other words, while those who identify with the society often actively/regularly participate in formal politics such as elections, those who do not identify, are often passive, absent, or anything in-

between in the same (formal) politics. The implication is that immigrants' recognition in non-political space often determines their participation in the political space. In concrete terms, if immigrants do not have access to gainful employment and/or are not accepted in social relationships by the native population, especially for reasons of their color and/or country/continent of origin, asking them to participate or to participate fully in the electoral political process might be difficult unless they have a natural interest in politics or have a trusted candidate to support, and/or for some other strong reasons! Hence it is argued that if migrant experiences in the host society are negative, chances are that their political integration would be low, but if positive, chances are that it would be high (Just and Anderson 2014, 2012).

Martiniello's (2005) informal form of political participation (e.g. protests, demonstrations, hunger strikes, sit-ins, boycotts, and other political activities organized by unions, pressure groups and associations) will especially appeal to those immigrants 1) who do not feel accepted in the host society, 2) who, even though feel accepted, are not yet legally eligible to participate in the conventional political process, or however those, 3) who for some other reasons, do not want to participate in the conventional form even though, admittedly, they are legally eligible to participate in it. This could be seen in the life of some African immigrants in our study. Katrina Morgan sees this kind of participation as a critical part of democracy because, according to her, such dissenting acts are "a critical element of democracy", and their effectiveness and the ease at which they emerge can illuminate and explain the broader definition of democracy (2006, 4-5).

Nonetheless, Bengtsson (2010, 247) argues that whether immigrant political participation follows through formal or informal means, the most important thing is that it is mobilized through ethnic/immigrant associations as well as non-ethnic associations[22] because, for him, they are 'the best roads to political integration' since they serve as arenas where immigrants feel at home and are better informed or mobilized for political action. Besides, they also help immigrants reach out to society institutions relevant to their needs, more so, because, immigrant associations have dual functions in the host society: 1) as 'bonding social capital' that bind immigrants together within the association, and 2) as 'bridging capital" between immigrants and the rest of the society, both of which are very essential for immigrants' societal integration in general, and the political integration, in particular (ibid). However, in the case of African immigrants, the bonding is more noticeable than the bridging. This could lead to identity politics, which according to Kranendonk et al. (2015), drawing from Lee (2008), assumes that individuals who share a label – whether it be ethnicity, nationality, race, and/or religion – often have common interests and collectively pursue them (See also Simon & Klandermans 2001). Among African immigrants especially those at the ethnocentric stage, this is the case particularly in their fight against racism and discrimination.

[22] Such as multicultural associations, labor and trade unions, and left-wing political parties which also aid their integration.

In any case, whether immigrants choose the immigrant or non-immigrant associations, ethnic or non-ethnic, the formal or informal (political) means, still depends on the institutional structures – the friendlier, the better, and vice versa. For example, in his study of five European states – notably, France, The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland - Ireland (2000) discovers that countries with immigrant-friendly multicultural laws, integration policies, and administrative practices tend to witness a higher rate of immigrant integration than those with unfriendly or conservative ones. Countries like France [23], Netherlands and Belgium with multicultural and liberal models of citizenship and integration policies and practices, he says, have a higher level of immigrant political integration than Germany and Switzerland [24] with conservative, monocultural, and assimilationist models, or what Thurer (1990) calls "destruction of immigrants' former cultural identity" model. [25] We do not however know if this claim exists in all member states, with liberal multicultural integration policies such as Finland or not. Nevertheless, Ireland concludes that the "differences (in the integration approach of EU countries) made for widening differences" in all other institutional structures that determine immigrant political integration in them (Ireland 2000, 271).

Probably owing to these 'widening differences' and the discrepancies that result therefrom in immigrant integration policies, the EU Commission decided to pursue a common approach in its Common Agenda for the Integration of Third-country Nationals and Common Basic Principles. For instance, in its Press Release (2004) in this regard, it states that "it is vital for Member States to maintain and further develop societies in which newcomers *feel welcome*, and which are defined by a spirit of mutual *understanding* and *accommodation*', because 'a critical aspect of managing migration is the *successful integration* of legally residing immigrants and their descendants' (p.15, #2). Further in its 2011 Directive, it also reminds member states that in order to fully recognize the potential of migration for building a competitive and sustainable economy, the 'effective integration of legal migrants, underpinned by the respect and promotion of (their) human rights must be observed and maintained by member states' since it is this that can lead to 'stronger economies, greater social cohesion, an increased feeling of security, and cultural diversity" (EU Commission 2011, 455 final #1). This implies that favorable immigration and integration policies can contribute tangibly to the success of immigrant integration, which in turn could lead to what Bengtsson calls a *politically integrated society* where "all its members, including immigrants, have their proper share of the political rights and

[23]The civic-assimilationist conception of citizenship in France gives migrants greater legitimacy to intervene in the national public space, and the inclusive definition of membership in the national community also favors claims pertaining to minority integration politics (Giugni & Passy 2002).

[24] The ethnic-assimilationist view in Switzerland leads migrants to stress homeland-related claims (Giugni & Passy 2002)

[25]This could probably explain why it could be possibly easier for an African immigrant to politically integrate in The Netherlands, France, and Belgium, than in Germany and Switzerland (See Giugni & Passy 2002 for a more comparative view on France and Switzerland).

resources that are seen as appropriate for full members of the political community." And in this way, a *politically integrated individual* is born, characterized "as having the rights and resources to take part in the political community on equal terms with other citizens" (Bengtsson 2010, 246).

That said! The issue with some EU Directives, such as on immigrant integration, is that member states are free to interpret it according to their local situations although the implementation is binding nevertheless.[26] For example, the Commission makes it clear that 'the development and implementation of integration policy is … the primary responsibility of individual Member States rather than of the Union as a whole' (ibid, #3). This implies that member states could plan, structure, and implement their own policies and practices according to the way they want in regards to their situations.[27] This approach thus gave room to the emergence of different kinds of immigration and integration policies, models, and procedures among them, resulting therefore in the aforesaid differences and discrepancies, which to some extent seem contradictory to the core notion of EU integration and common bloc.

In any case, the following institutional or opportunity structures in Finland would be discussed in this study, namely: the Finnish law on immigrant political and associational rights (otherwise known as the local government, or municipal, act), the political/electoral system at the municipal level, immigrant integration acts, anti-discrimination law, the attitude of the native society towards immigrants, including that of employers in the labor market, and the political parties. In addition, the roles of the labor and student unions, religious bodies (such as the church and mosque), African immigrant associations, multicultural organizations, in directly or indirectly influencing African immigrant political involvement in the formal and/or informal sense, would also be discussed.

2.1.2 The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

I now turn to the DMIS to examine the attitude of the native society towards immigrants especially but also vice versa. It is good to point out that the DMIS embeds assumptions about the way integration of people especially immigrants/foreigners, or attitudes towards them, or how the general socio-cultural processes usually work, in a host society. There is a degree of normativity to it. To clarify its scientific merit, it would be used to measure/analyze the attitudes of the host society towards immigrants and vice versa since both are parts of the same socio-cultural processes. In particular, its two stages – the ethnocentric and ethnorelative – that would be discussed in detail below- will be used later in chapter four especially (but also in chapter five) to analyze the attitudes of the Finnish society towards Black African immigrants and also vice

[26] As with all (EU) laws, the phrasing of specific clauses affects the amount of discretion actors have in deciding on how to interpret a law, but directives must be implemented in national law, and if this does not happen, the directive text itself becomes national law (Prof. Nathan Lillie in informal communication, 7 January 2021).
[27] This according to Prof. Lillie is only as it relates to third-country nationals and not to EU citizens (ibid)

versa, especially at the socioeconomic spaces to find out if the integration of African immigrants in Finland has been a two-way process involving them and the society as the Finnish law stipulates (cf. Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration 1386/2010, as well as Act on the integration of immigrants and reception of asylum seekers 493/1999 amendments up to 324/2009 included. See also Hämäläinen 2021; Ahokas 2010) or a one-way process involving only their efforts while the society or its majority merely looks on.

We shall now discuss the DMIS. To do this better, we shall first briefly discuss culture, leveraging on sociological and anthropological perspectives, since the DMIS is mostly embedded in the social culture of man. This approach will then lead us to a more in-depth discussion.

The role of culture in societal integration has been studied in academic research for decades (Bennett 1986, 1993, 2004; Griswold 1994; Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman 2003; Castells 2004; Räsänen 2005; Kriesberg 2003; Triandafyllidou, Modood & Naser 2011; Zapata-Barrero & Gropas 2013). Unfortunately, the role of culture in immigrant political integration has barely been studied or received adequate attention, especially in political science. Thus, while the role of culture in intercultural relations (e.g., the DMIS) is receiving a growing interest in sociology and anthropology – the two sister disciplines of political science – it has been very slow in political science. Rarely have existing academic works on immigrant political participation discussed intercultural sensitivities as of decisive importance to immigrant political integration. My bringing this to my research through the adoption of DMIS theory in analyzing the political integration of African immigrants is part of a key contribution of this study to the academic debate on immigrant political integration in Finland.

Sociologists have defined culture as a key to understanding a people's behavior, attitudes, practices, outlook, lifestyle, interactions, and relationships (Griswold 1994; Walker 2001). In general, sociologists see culture as an embodiment of four things, namely: norms, values, beliefs, and expressive symbols. Norms refer to the guidelines to people's behavior; values point to what they cherish; beliefs refer to their perceptions; and expressive symbols refer to their representations of what they believe and cherish (Walker 2001; Rummens 2004c). However, analysts caution that culture must never be seen in the abstract but as a practice: that is to say, in people's behaviors, particularly in their actions and reactions in a variety of ways towards others (Shote 2011).

For anthropologists, culture can be basically understood as a complex phenomenon that consists not just beliefs and practices, but also knowledge, arts, morals, law, ethos, habits, customs, and traditions including all the entire aspects of the life of man that are observable in daily life (Taylor 1958; Connolly 1995). For Parekh (2006), culture is also a system of meanings and practices, and the understanding it seeks and the way it organizes human life is not at all *ad hoc* but grounded in a particular manner of observing, conceptualizing, and understanding a people's behaviors both within and outside their cultural setting.

Bennett's introduction to the DMIS confirms this concept of observing and conceptualizing in order to understand a people's behavior:

> After years of observing all kinds of people dealing… with cross-cultural situations, I decided to try to make sense of what was happening to them…. The result of this work was the *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* (DMIS) (Bennett 2004, 1).

He argues that people usually face new challenges when they arrive in a new country, facing new environment, and explains that the whole concept of DMIS is that experience is constructed with the assumption that people can be sensitive to cultural differences as well as the supposition that change in one's worldview is usually generated by contact with people from a different culture (ibid, p.9). Specifically, he argues that people can be more or less "sensitive" when engaging in interactions with others from a different culture or environment (p.10). In this regard, he distinguishes between two different stages that emanate from this encounter, usually from the part of the host society, but could also be from the part of the newcomers, namely: *ethnocentricism* and *ethnorelativism*. By ethnocentrism, he refers "to the experience of (seeing) one's own culture as central to (all) reality" in comparison to others'; in other words, "that the beliefs and behaviors that people receive in their primary socialization are (considered) unquestioned" and perceived as 'just the way things are'", and from the platform on which to relate to and judge others (ibid, p.1). In addition, it only allows for observations within the familiar categories of "race" and "ethnicity" and other associated constructs of deserved or undeserved inequities (p.2). Here, three "distinct kinds of experience" exist, namely: *denial* - *defense* - and *minimization* (of cultural differences), which would be discussed in depth later. On the other hand, by ethnorelativism, he means "the opposite of ethnocentrism" and the stage where one's own beliefs and behaviors are seen "as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities" or one culture among many other cultures when relating with others (ibid). Thus, the stage of ethnorelativism is the accommodating stage, or what Pedersen (2008) describes as the stage that helps us "turn cross-cultural experiences into intercultural learning". 1). Here also, three "distinct kinds of experience" exist, namely, *acceptance* – *adaptation* - (and finally) *integration* – which is progress on the ethnocentric experiences. These two broad stages and their distinct experiences can be succinctly represented in the table below:

Development of Intercultural Sensitivity
Experience of Difference

Denial → defense → minimization → Acceptance → adaptation → integration

ETHNOCENTRICISM	ETHNORELATIVISM

Source: Bennett (2004)

The Ethnocentric Stage:

At the ethnocentric stage, Bennett (2004) argues that people tend to interpret events and behaviors solely from their own cultural perspective, and the most ethnocentric of this is *Denial* which is seen as a default condition of a typical, monocultural primary socialization. In other words, it is the state in which one's own culture – e.g. beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes – is conceived or perceived as the only real and unquestionably true one among other cultures, while these other cultures are either not noticed at all, or are perceived in rather vague ways; for example, a native seeing a 'foreigner' or 'immigrant' as a kind of differentiated *other* that can only be taught, exploited or even sometimes eliminated (ibid, p.2). In some cases, a dominant-culture group (i.e. the host/native society) could perceive themselves as better "humans" than immigrants, especially immigrants that are 'visibly different.' This could particularly happen in a residential neighborhood where there are more natives. In such places, there have been cases where some have influenced the evicting of immigrants from their midst. In some cases, some might choose to relocate to another neighborhood owing to the presence of immigrants. For example, such happened to an African immigrant couple in Helsinki where, upon their moving to a native neighborhood, some natives suddenly started packing out, questioning what these blacks are doing in their neighborhood. A few months later, one of them came back to mobilize for votes for his municipal electoral ambition and asked them to vote for him. They accepted but did not vote eventually because of his initial hostility towards them (Interview: 10 July 2013). Such attitude of the native, Bennett would argue, bespeaks of some people's unwillingness to tolerate the presence and/or cultural differences of others not related to them, especially because of the benign stereotyping of those others that is often out of ignorance, naïve observations, or outright racism, including also even the tendency to dehumanize or make mockery of outsiders (Bennett 1993). Such discriminatory attitude creates the conditions of intercultural isolation that protects the xenophobes' or racists' worldviews from change (ibid) as well as political apathy on the part of their victims as we saw in the case of the African couple.

The experience of *Denial*, however, is not only restricted to dominant-culture folks alone, as Bennett argues, it could also happen among people of non-dominant culture such as immigrants, especially when they remain unable to recognize the cultural dimension of interaction in their host society, and interpret it solely from their own cultural point of view. This can be seen in the tendency to use familiar but often simplistic or fallacious categories of race or ethnicity. One thing people at this level have in common (whether natives or immigrants) is their general *disinterest* in observing and respecting cultural differences 'even when it is brought to their attention' (loc.cit). And if the disinterest continues, they could remain in a closed worldview with discriminatory attitudes towards others.

Furthermore, when people scale through the *Denial* stage successfully, they could enter the *Defense* stage, which is the stage where 'one's own culture is

experienced as the most "evolved" form of civilization, or the only good way to live' (ibid, p.3). People at this ethnocentric stage recognize and acknowledge cultural differences but tend to defend their cultures as superior to others' (loc.cit; See also Hammer and Bennett 1998). In this regard, they could claim to 'helping' others "succeed by bringing them into the assumedly superior dominant culture of theirs" (loc.cit.) Bennett argues that people of dominant cultures are more likely to do this than those in less-dominant cultures because the former could easily discriminate against the latter whose presence and cultures they feel threatened to, perceiving them as an attack on their own cultural values. In terms of economy, they could sometimes "complain that immigrants are 'taking our jobs'" (Bennett 2004, 3) or exploiting our social welfare system.[28] Thus, people of dominant cultures tend to have negative stereotypes of immigrants, "including a full stock of jokes" emphasizing their assumed failings' in their society (loc.cit.) On the other hand, people of non-dominant cultures sometimes could also experience *Defense* as "a negative stereotyping of other cultures" and positive stereotyping of their own culture (loc.cit.) Somewhat, this ironically could help them *discover* and/or *solidify* their separate cultural identity in the midst of the dominant culture (loc.cit; See also Banks 1988; Parham 1989). This solidifying, it is argued, is very necessary in order "to counteract the efforts of the dominant group to impose their culture" on them (Cross 1995, as cited by Bennett 2004).

Also, Bennett points out that *Defense* can also be evident in the complaints about unfamiliar foods and their 'awful' smells, including also the failure of the other to make them look or smell like ours (ibid, p.4; See Bennett & Castiglioni 2004). This has also constituted a great intercultural upheaval between migrants and natives, especially those living in co-housing arrangements as we would see in chapter four. Be that as it may, Bennett tells us that there is also a subtle variation of Defense called *Reversal* where an adopted culture is experienced as superior to the culture of one's native or primary socialization. Here, a polarized, "us and them" worldview also exists, but unlike in mainstream Defense, it does not see the other culture as a threat, since the other has already been assimilated into it even if to the disadvantage of own culture. This can, for example, be seen in a situation where some migrants have been assimilated into Finnish culture and see it as better than theirs. In this regard, Bennett points out that *Reversal* provides a positive experience of a different culture from which analytical criticisms of one's own culture is made. But he, however, argues that such a positive experience often "is at an unsophisticated stereotypical level", and that the criticism that one levels against one's own culture "is usually an internalization of others' negative stereotypes" about that culture (Bennett 2004, 4).

A successful passing of this Defense stage lands one (e.g., the immigrant) onto the final stage in (society) ethnocentrism, which is the Minimization stage. Here, the cultural differences experienced at the *Defense* are minimized by reducing the 'you vs. us' mindset and replacing it with the common humanity of all peoples, or the *physical universalism* in the common biological nature of

[28] This has been a common and growing accusation against foreigners in Finland.

humans such as thinking, learning, speaking, eating, sleeping, associating, culture, creativity, etc. There is also a *transcendent universalism* where similarities in religious, social, economic, political, and/or philosophical concepts and practices across cultures are recognized and well appreciated. However, Bennett notes that the danger at this stage is the constant expectation of similarities with other people, which when not found, could lead to the temptation of correcting others' behaviors to match our own expectations in order for us to appreciate, accommodate and tolerate them. He illustrates this with the common assumption today among western democracies that all peoples would like to (or even must) live in a democracy in order to develop properly, whether economically, politically, socially, legally, culturally, and even intellectually. Bennett asserts that "particularly for people of dominant cultures, Minimization tends to mask recognition of their own culture and the institutional privilege it affords its members" over others (p.5; See also Hammer and Bennett 1998; Bennett 1986). The key problem here is that because people at this stage no longer experience others in a highly polarized way (as for e.g., those in *Defense* or *Denial* stages), they tend to overestimate their appreciation of others even to the extent of not seeing their communication style as a cultural pattern. And if, for instance, others don't use the same or similar communication style, they could be judged as ingrates, or people unwilling to integrate into their society (Bennett 2004). The experience of Minimization, therefore, takes one's own cultural patterns as central to an assumed universal reality – and that is to say that all people are essentially similar in ways that are unfortunately only explainable by one's own cultural beliefs (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman 2003).

Thus, for the ethnocentric stage to be resolved, people need to recognize that one's own culture (such as beliefs, behaviors, and practices) is just one among many other cultures in the world. This could be done through intercultural exposures especially away from one's own country, or through adverts (or drama series) on national TVs, radio, and newspapers. This could help introduce one into the basic culture-general frameworks for adequate intercultural communication with others (Bennett 2004). When this is done, it then leads to the ethnorelative stage, where a more benign form of intercultural relations exists. But it is not a must that one must go through the ethnocentric stage before landing at the ethnorelative. Instead, if one is lucky, it is possible to land straightway at the ethnorelative stage, without necessarily going through the ethnocentric.

The Ethnorelative Stage:

The ethnorelative stage of experience starts with *Acceptance*. According to Bennett, *acceptance* is the state in which one's own culture is recognized as one of a number of equally complex cultures in the world (Bennett 2004, 6). Here, cross-cultural differences are seen as an inevitable part of human existence, not as a defect of any culture or people. Bennett further explains that people at this stage are good at identifying these differences through 'constructing a kind of self-reflexive perspective that helps them experience others as different from

themselves, but equally human' (loc.cit.) But this does not mean that they are necessarily experts in one or more cultures (although this might be possible on a case-by-case basis) but simply because they are able to acquire positive culture categories such as knowledge, attitude, and/or skills that help them appreciate rather than discriminate against others and their cultures. However, Bennett warns that the possession of these categories must be in-depth especially in terms of real cultural experience with relevant feelings and worldviews of the other as well as the ability or willingness to use them in real life situation, or at least to put them into consideration while relating with the other, otherwise it might not lead to a proper appreciation and acceptance of the other.

Thus, people may have some linguistic or behavioral skills of another culture without in reality having any feeling about them or how to use them in a culturally appropriate way (Bennett 1997). In other words, real cultural experience and skills as well as the ability to use them appropriately is the key to acceptance. This is important both for people of dominant cultures and those of non-dominant. We must note however that

> Acceptance does not [often] mean agreement. It is naïve to think that intercultural sensitivity and competence is always associated with liking other cultures or agreeing with their values or ways of life. In fact, the uncritical agreement with other cultures is more characteristic of the ethnocentric condition of Reversal, particularly if it is accompanied by a critical view of your own culture. Some cultural differences may be judged negatively – but the judgment is not ethnocentric unless it is associated with simplification, or withholding equal humanity (ibid, pp.6-7).

What this implies is that we might not always agree with certain ways of life of a people, for example, their mode of dressing, food smell, or ways of greeting, but we should try to recognize and accept that such could possibly be part of their cultural lifestyle and therefore part of their identity. When one is able to do this, one gradually moves to the stage of *Adaptation*. And according to Bennett, *Adaptation* 'is the state in which the experience of another culture yields perception and behavior appropriate to that culture' even when the person involved is not in full agreement with the lifestyles in the culture (Bennett 2004, 7). This could, for example, happen in a situation where an African immigrant in Finland tries to adapt to the Finnish way of life, including practicing the lifestyles, even though s/he may not be in total agreement with them. The concept of adaptation, therefore, is the extension of one's repertoire of beliefs and behavior to one's host culture in such a way that "you don't need to lose your primary cultural identity to operate effectively in a different cultural context" (ibid, p.8). One thing central to adaptation is this expansion of one's cultural worldview to include relevant constructs of other's cultural worldviews in such a way that one can engage in empathy which is not just cognitive but also a change in the organization of lived experience. And if this process of empathy 'is deepened and habitualized, it becomes the basis of bi-culturality (i.e., in relation to two cultures) or multiculturality (relating to many cultures)' (loc.cit.) Therefore, whether in bi-cultural or multicultural society, people of dominant and non-dominant groups can be expected to adjust and adapt to each other's culture.

Nonetheless, Bennett warns that there is sometimes the tendency of the dominant-culture group to demand that only the non-dominant group adjust and adapt since they are in the minority (for e.g., as it is currently the case in Finland where many natives demand that immigrants assimilate into the society. This is despite the government's multiculturalist approach to immigrant integration. However, Bennett argues that some dominant-culture people who are ethnorelative are less likely to make this demand. Rather, they would attempt to learn some ways that would reflect a bi- or multi-cultural fairness and understanding of the foreign other. Notwithstanding, the major issue to be resolved in *adaptation*, Bennett notes, is that of "authenticity" – i.e., being honest in one's cross-cultural interactions in order to adapt well. He points out that a key question can be asked in this regard: is it possible to behave in culturally different ways (from one's own culture) and still be oneself? To what extent can one do this and still retain one's cultural originality? The answer lies in 'defining oneself' more cross-culturally in such a way that one might, for example, be German critical, Japanese indirect, Finnish silent, and African tolerant, and at the same time retain one's cultural authenticity. This implies that "insofar as each of these behaviors emerged from (honest) feeling for various cultures, they would all be authentically" correct (Loc.cit.; Bennett & Castiglioni, 2004)

When one passes the *adaptation* stage, the next stage is *Integration*, which is the last and best in intercultural sensitivity experience. According to Bennett, integration is that stage in which one's own cultural experience is expanded to include an easy, selfless and considerate movement within the cultural setting of the other. This basically sees the other's cultural identity as part of a global culture. Kriesberg (2003) argues that (cultural) identity is very essential to the development of a sense of self in an individual in a multicultural environment. Social identity theory also emphasizes that individual behavior reflects individuals' cultural background which makes them think, feel, and act the way they do even within larger societal units (Tajfel & Turner 1986).

Bennett (1993) further notes that sometimes multiple identities are also developed within larger societal units, as well as at cultural margins, influenced by everyday experiences or factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and color, and which sometimes lead to a crisis of identity (see also Shote 2011). Furthermore, Bennett asserts that "cultural marginality may (also) have two forms such as an *encapsulated* one, where the separation from one's own culture is experienced as alienation; and a *constructive* one, in which movements in and out of one's adopted alien cultures are a necessary and positive part of one's identity" (Bennett 2004, 8-9). Of these two, integration occurs in the constructive form. Here, people are able to experience themselves as multicultural beings who are constantly dynamic and choosing the most appropriate cultural behavior within each cultural context (ibid, p.9) unlike in the encapsulated form where this is not possible as the experience is alienating on one side and incorporating on the other. This might accompany the experience of some non-dominant group members who might find themselves "caught" up between their minority ethnic group and the majority group that (for some reasons) may perceive them as "selling out"

their authentic self to please the dominant group (loc. cit). This kind of perception, Bennett argues, might lead to a debilitating self-criticism on the part of those accused in such a way that it could send their integration attempt crashing. An African man in Tampere, for example, tells of how he was continuously criticized by his African/immigrant friends (with ethnocentric experiences) for "trying to behave more Finnish than Finns because I was trying to adapt to the Finnish lifestyle" (Interview: 15 August 2013). It depends however on what kind of lifestyle he was trying to adapt to and how he is going about it! However, this kind of criticism has the potential to strain relations between co-ethnics and friends. Nonetheless, Bennett asserts that such strain may or may not affect the adaptation or integration process of the individual, depending on whether s/he sees him/herself as a multicultural or mono-cultural being. In the case of the African above, he forged ahead with his adaptation process unperturbed, even to the extent of convincing some of his friends to ignore any racism and discrimination they may have had and join. Bennett affirms that constructive marginals are likely to take the role of cultural bridge-builders in intercultural situations without "losing themselves" because of their self-reflexivity that defines their intercultural identities (loc. cit). Ethnorelative people are therefore better at respecting cultural differences than are ethnocentric, and thus are also better at adapting to cross-cultural situations. At the same time, 'it might (also) be better if we kept our primary cultural identities' while adapting and integrating to other cultures in order to avoid a crisis (or even sometimes loss) of our identity (ibid).

2.1.3 The theory of immigrant identity formation

The DMIS is also theoretically related to Berry's (1990) acculturation model, particularly his theory of immigrant identity formation, which also presents a useful model in this study in understanding the African immigrant (political) behavior. Berry had theorized that immigrant identity in the host society could be *integrated*, *separated*, *assimilated*, or *marginalized* following societal experiences, or immigrant's deliberate decision regardless of experiences (see also Phinney et al. 2001). These identities emerged from his questions: Is it considered valuable for an immigrant to maintain own cultural heritage while in the host society? Is it also considered valuable to develop relationship with the society (alongside)? Answers to these indicate the identities. For example, positive answers to both questions result in integration while negatives result in marginalization. A positive answer to the first and a negative to the second result in separation and vice versa is assimilation. Integration means that the immigrant retains a strong ethnic identity while identifying with the society. Assimilation means that the immigrant gives up his/her ethnic identity while identifying with the society. Separation means the immigrant retains a strong ethnic identity but does not identify with the society; and marginalization means the immigrant neither identifies with the ethnic group nor with the host society. All these are determined by their respective experiences in the society, or in some cases,

immigrant's deliberate decision regardless of experiences (Berry 1990; Phinney et al. 2001).

This offers a useful insight in understanding the African immigrant experiences in Finland. The latter part - i.e., immigrant's deliberate decision (not to integrate) regardless of experiences - does not apply to African immigrants, especially those interviewed, as we would see in this study. Their identities mainly emanate from their societal experiences which, in the words of Phinney and his colleagues (2001), either generate some "sense of belonging" and "positive feelings" (if positive) or deprive these of them (if negative) especially through "prejudice and discrimination", which could also be ameliorated by "the coping strategies employed by the acculturating individuals" (see also Berry 1997).

In summary, African immigrants with positive (or ethnorelative) experiences and feelings (who are in the minority), usually have integrated and assimilated identities respectively. The integrated identify with the society and their ethnic group. This motivates their participation in the politics (electoral and protest) of both groups (although comparatively less in protest) as well as also in membership of native/multicultural and ethnic associations. The assimilated on the other hand only identify with the society and not with their ethnic group. This informs their participation only in societal politics (electoral and protest but also less in protest) as well as in native (i.e., Finnish), and in a few cases, multicultural association memberships only. Hence, they are not members of African associations even though they have some individual Africans as friends, usually those with assimilated or integrated identities.

On the other hand, African immigrants with negative (or ethnocentric) experiences (who are in the majority) and are unable to cope or ignore/bear them often have separated or marginalized identities and do not identify with the society. Hence, they do not usually participate in society politics especially electoral. Some, especially among the separated, nevertheless participate (this also includes in protests) mainly to solve their disadvantaged situation politically. According to them this is *not identification* with the society however, but *engagement* with them through 1) voting descriptive candidates such as African/nonwhite immigrants during elections in all segments - municipal, union and associations, 2) protesting against their racial marginalization. They also identify with their ethnic group and its politics and are hence generally members of African associations. Conversely, those with marginalized identities do not identify with both the society and their ethnic groups, and so, are not involved in any societal or African immigrant associations or politics. This means that like the assimilated, they are not also members of African associations. However, they have a few African friends (just like the assimilated), usually those with marginalized or separated identities.

DMIS stages/Identity	Election turnout	Protest turnout
Ethnorelative stage	***Municipal/Union/non -African associations'***	***Protests against racism & poor work conditions***
The integrated	10	7
The assimilated	10	2
Ethnocentric stage		
The separated	5	10
The marginalized	0	10
Ethnorelative stage	***African association Elections***	***Protests about issues in home country***
The integrated	10	10
The assimilated	0	0
Ethnocentric stage		
The separated	10	10
The marginalized	0	0

Figure 1. African immigrants' participation at varied political forums in accordance with their DMIS stages and identities on a scale of 0 – 10 (0 is lowest, 10 is highest)

Their political representations also follow a similar trend, with representatives with positive experiences (or those with integrated and assimilated identities) more likely to raise and/tackle issues of society interests mostly, with some exceptions (mainly many with integrated identity), than those with negative (specifically those with separated identity) who tend to raise and/tackle issues of immigrant interests only especially issues of racism and discrimination.

Table 2. Political Representations Among political representatives

DMIS stages & identities	Society issues	Immigrant issues
Ethnorelative experience:		
The integrated	Yes	Yes
The assimilated	Yes	No
Ethnocentric experience:		
The separated	No	Yes
The marginalized	Absent	Absent

Table 3. African immigrants and their DMIS stages/experiences and identities

DMIS stage/experience	Identity	Number[29]
Ethnorelative	The integrated	16
	The assimilated	6
Ethnocentric	The separated	27
	The marginalized	31
Overall Total		80

All in all, we could see that the different attitudes are engineered and fostered by the society attitude. The identities they received either from their ethnocentric or ethnorelative experiences indicate the kind of *impact* the experiences have on them. These identities are primarily known through their identifications with the society and/or their ethnic group or otherwise as discussed above following their experiences. Movement from the ethnocentric to the ethnorelative stage is usually difficult. It is not determined by years of residence, education, age, knowledge and practice of local customs, language, culture, or social etiquette as we would see in the empirical chapters, but mainly by the *nature* of their experiences as well as the ability of the individual to cope/endure/ignore racism and discrimination and move ahead, which many of them have not achieved yet. Also, levels of ethnocentric or ethnorelative experiences, although distinguished by literature, are not easily distinguishable by many, especially those at the ethnocentric because according to them, the experiences all look similar even in different settings. Nevertheless, they all know whether they are integrated or not. Therefore, to make discussions and analysis easier, they are all grouped and discussed under ethnocentric and ethnorelative stages/experiences as well as the identities respectively, going by their narratives, and then analyzed with the help of the levels and other sources in the light of the institutional channeling theory.

Concluding discussion:

In the foregoing theoretical discussion, we could see that the DMIS and the institutional channeling theories as well as that on immigrant identity formation are somewhat *interwoven* in explaining the (African) immigrant integration in general, and political integration in particular. That is to say, while the institutional channeling analyzes mostly the political aspects of the POS, the DMIS analyzes mainly the native society's behaviors/attitudes towards immigrants as well as immigrants' responses. The identity formation model then showcases the respective immigrant identities that result therefrom, which all influence their (political) integration.

For instance, when immigrants face racial and/or xenophobic discrimination in daily life - due to intercultural intolerance of (some) natives, this affects their identification with the host society, resulting in the lack of

[29] This is restricted to only those interviewed

adoption/acquisition of its (i.e., the society's) democratic values/norms which Martiniello (2005) considers 'the most necessary condition' for political integration. Martiniello's emphasis on the adoption of democratic norms and values might even be guilty of Bennett's ethnocentric stage of *Defense* that sees one's own (political) culture as superior and the only viable one and the most evolved form of civilization, which others must copy in order to be fully integrated in the society (Bennett 2004, 3). Such ideology may also be gleaned from the common argument by many western democracies that democracy is the most necessary condition for socioeconomic and political development. However, if we agree to this argument, how is it then that *communist* China has been able to develop without a democratic system? However, this is not to say that the adoption of democratic values and norms by immigrants in democratic societies is not important, but that this cannot be seen as 'the most necessary condition' for their political integration because there is a better and nobler necessary condition than that, and that is 'the identification of immigrants with the host society', which can only exist if immigrants are accepted by the society (not just by the government). Without this acceptance, the other dimensions of political integration enumerated by Martiniello, would not likely occur or be effective. Therefore, although the EU Commission (19 Nov. 2004) emphasizes that immigrant "integration policies also require the will and commitment of migrants to be part of the society that receives them" because "integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by migrants and by the societies that receive them", this still largely depends on whether or not immigrants feel welcomed by the host society through its attitudes. As Ahokas (2010, 9) argues, immigrant

> integration should not be narrowly understood as something concerning only the arriving immigrants, but also the host society and its ability to reciprocally adapt to intercultural encounters. This conception of integration directs attention towards the *attitudes* of the recipient societies, their citizens, structures and organizations.

To the extent that immigrants adapt and integrate or will do so, strongly depends on this self-evident fact. Martiniello (2005) is then right to argue that whether immigrants and their offspring will seize the government institutional opportunities available for their political integration largely depends on the *attitude of the indigenous population* towards them, which could generate the high or low feeling of belonging among them. The DMIS has also highlighted this 'feeling of belonging' as 'intercultural acceptance', arguing that without it, immigrant integration could be difficult to realize. This is especially critical in a society like Finland where racism/xenophobia is a growing problem. Therefore, more emphasis will be laid in this study on the Finnish society attitudes than on immigrants' as my interview data (and several research reports) also testify.

What all of these concretely tell us is that it is not just *formal* societal structures/factors (such as government policies, programs, and institutions) that determine immigrant integration, but also the informal such as the attitudes of the natives. The EU Commission is therefore right to advise member states to commit to developing *favourable attitudinal* conditions for migrants' economic,

social, cultural, and political participation (COM, 2011, 3) in order to ensure a feeling of belonging and institutional completeness among them, and hence increased social cohesion and harmony between them and the host society. This is because without this feeling of belonging and institutional completeness, no social cohesion and harmony would exist. Consequently, migrants' contribution to the economic growth and the cultural richness of the host society will be severely affected (Council of the European Union 4 May 2010). Ireland's (1994) cross-country comparative study shows that in countries where *favorable* conditions exist for immigrant integration, their resourcefulness and productivity are higher and more sustainable than in countries where the contrary is the case (See also Ireland 2000 and Bauböck 2003b).

2.2 Research Method and Data

This dissertation is an empirical study based on a topical reality in Finnish society – the political integration of immigrants. It is empirical in the classical philosophical sense of the word, i.e., referring to the *experiences* of African immigrants. Its epistemological basis is first based on my personal observations and informal discussions with them, as well as the Finnish media reports and previous research on immigrant political participation in Finland/world, on which I have added some systematic information gathering through in-depth interviews with them and some Finnish officials. Some other sources include various Finnish legal documents such as the Finnish Local Government Act, Immigrant Integration Act, Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration, the Non-discrimination Act, the Electoral Act, the Aliens Act, Universities Act, and some EU immigrant integration policies, Directives and Statements.

From my initial observations, informal discussions, and readings of previous literature, I was able to fashion out the research questions and the aims and objectives of this study. From these, it became clear that *qualitative in-depth interview method* rather than quantitative or survey, would be the best method to do this research because as research has found, interviews offer great insights on people's political behavior (Tansey 2007) because it seeks to find out *what*, *where*, *when*, *why* and *how* of human behaviors (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, Tansey 2007, Woods 1999, Becker & Lißmann 1973). Kvale & Brinkmann (2009, xvii) argue that "If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk with them?" (See also Rubin and Rubin 1995). Woods (1999) and Becker & Lißmann (1973) respectively confirm that qualitative interviewing is mainly concerned about life as it is lived, situations as they are constructed, and things as they happen. Hence, Theodoros Fouskas (2014) argues that in-depth interviews offer more data than perhaps any other method in social science research (see also Patterson & Monroe 1998). Czarniawska (2004) sees it "as a narrative production site" where the narrator is given the freedom or wide latitude to narrate his/her stories without restriction. This is especially important in studying the socioeconomic and political life of a people. Social scientists also

have argued that in-depth interviews give room for respondents to link their socioeconomic, cultural, and political experiences in their responses (Langellier 1999; Riessman 1993; Robinson 1981). Interviews therefore offer a valuable source of information because a vivid citation from an interview data can enliven a research work and summarize a good argument (Bleich and Pekkanen 2013).

Essentially, Riessman (1993) argues that interviews may be oral or written, short or long, elicited or naturally occurring, and maybe told as a way of sharing one's life stories (see also Labov and Waletzy's 1997). In the process, participants tend to assign varied interpretations and meanings to their experiences, making the interview rich (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, Kvale 1996) especially because for each interview that is conducted, more knowledge is gotten on the phenomenon being studied (Folkestad 2008, 4). All my interviews are oral except one, and how and where they are conducted (including all the respondents involved) is discussed further below.

Nonetheless, in-depth interviews have their own limitations too. First is the possibility of bias and lies by some respondents (Boyce and Neal 2006). I try to limit this by asking probing questions, and sometimes also verifying responses through another source(s). Second, some in-depth interviews are also time-intensive. I try to limit this by going straight to the point. Third, finding people to interview is sometimes difficult. I relied on snowballing method whereby some African immigrants helped introduce me to more people. Meanwhile, my being an African studying Africans posed as an advantage in terms of the relaxation of my African respondents during the interviews and unreservedly sharing their experiences. However, it also created a problem for me during analysis, in the sense that I found it a bit difficult to detach myself emotionally from their narratives. It was after strong and wise criticisms from my peers and supervisors, that I was able to develop a detached and critical balance between this emotion and academic objectivity.

2.2.1 Description of data

Black African immigrants in this study refer to those from the South of the Sahara (so-called Sub-Saharan Africa). The reason for choosing them is to know how they fare in the political sector, especially in the face of their socioeconomic experiences in Finnish society. Interviews were conducted during 2013 to 2016 comprising of 80 African immigrants and 15 Finnish public officials whose work or office is related to immigrant civic integration. All are legally residing (with residence permits and citizenships respectively) in the municipalities of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere, and Jyväskylä, where the majority of African immigrants live. As at the time of the interview, many have lived in these municipalities for about 5 to 30 years, and hence are quite eligible for political participation at the municipal level as stipulated by the Finnish Local Government Act (2015). Although there are also other Finnish cities included such as Lieksa and Mikkeli, the central focus is on the above five municipalities. The aim is to increase diversity of lived experiences, responses, and perspectives, and not to compare between municipalities/cities.

African immigrants interviewed are within the age bracket of 20 - 60 (at the time of the interview), and comprising of 60 males and 20 females[30]. Many were selected from the pool of my social and academic networks in the aforesaid municipalities based on their age and length of stay in Finland. Some are also contacted through the Snowball sampling method. This is a method where research participants contact or recommend others (e.g., their friends, co-ethnics/nationals, etc) to participate in the interview. So, in this study, some African interviewees contacted some of their African friends, co-nationals/co-ethnics, workmates, and schoolmates to join the interview as well. Most Africans interviewed (about 8 out of 10 on a scale of 10) speak the Finnish (and in some cases also Swedish) language fluently. They also know the local culture, have some form of social ties with some natives and practice the socio-cultural etiquette well. In terms of education, in numerical strength, about 10 already have doctorate degrees, 35, master's degrees, 20, bachelor's, 10, vocational degrees, and 5, secondary school certificates. Some of these academic feats are achieved in Finland, often in addition to the one already achieved in the home country. In terms of work, with the exception of a few who are mostly working in their fields (such as nurses, some technicians, and PhD researchers), most others are working in areas other than their academic fields, often in jobs much lower than their qualifications. For example, 1 in 5 doctoral degree holders are taxi drivers, 4 in 5 master's are either taxi drivers and/or delivery agents with Posti (i.e. post office), Wolt, Foodora[31] and/or some other delivery companies as well as cleaning companies. 4 in 5 bachelor's degree holders are either delivery agents (in any of the above companies) or are workers in the cleaning sector and other menial jobs, or in some cases, all of the above. Then, 5 in 5 registered and practical nurses, and 4 in 5 technicians are working in their areas of expertise.

15 Finnish public officials (instead of the initially scheduled 20[32]) are interviewed and they include officials of the municipal integration offices, political parties, Moniheli (esp. its iCount political project), ETNO, labor/student unions, and religious institutions (such as the church and mosque). The aim of including the officials in interviews is to get information on some institutional structures, specifically as it concerns their organization's or agency's work as it relates to immigrant inclusion and/or participation therein.

Some of the interviews especially with African immigrants were carried out face-to-face at homes, restaurants, inside trains and busses, along the streets, parks, workplaces, and school premises while some were held through social media, particularly Facebook, Whatsapp, Skype, phone calls, and emails. Those with public officials were held on phone or face-to-face, and in some cases, inquiries were made by emails. The language of the interviews was English as all the respondents understand and speak English fluently. Each interview lasted

[30] This is mainly because there are more African men than women in Finland due to the fact that men as breadwinners or potential ones, travel more than women.
[31] Wolt and Foodora are food delivery companies. Wolt also engages in grocery delivery. All of which many African immigrants work in.
[32] Two excused themselves under different reasons, and three did not respond to interview requests.

between 40 minutes and 1 hour. The questions that guided the interviews especially with African immigrants are: what motivates or de-motivates their political mobilization, participation, as well as their choice of representatives in all the sectors mentioned, and whether they feel politically integrated or not. Those that guided interviews with Finnish officials are mainly about their organization's or agency's work as related to immigrant inclusion and/or participation therein as already mentioned.

In any case, thematic guidelines for the questions were prepared beforehand in order to guide the focus of the interviews and to prevent respondents from digressing to unnecessary issues. They also help the researcher reformulate his questions when necessary. Toivanen (2014, 45) argues that a thematic guideline "provides space for reformulation of questions in the course of the interview, an opportunity for the researcher to verify his or her understanding of what was said, and a chance for the interviewee to offer (more) insights and even challenge dominant discourses". Drawing from Alvesson (2002), she further argues that in the process, the interviewer may encourage the interviewee to approach the topic from different angles for more depth and clarity, thereby deconstructing any stereotypical conventions. This is exactly the case with my African and Finnish respondents. They were not just free to explain themselves but also through my probing questions expatiated their responses. This is especially in the link between their socioeconomic and political integration experiences. However, while I asked guiding or probing questions to ascertain or clarify grey areas, the respondent retains the discretion in deciding on what to include and how to relate this to his/her story (see also Toivanen 2014). Overall, all interviews are therefore treated as a common text corpus, and a mass of texts that are analyzed regardless of the municipalities the interviewees come from.

Therefore, while interpreting the data, I had this in mind. Sometimes, I had to do follow-up interviews in order to grasp more of the perspectives of some respondents. In interpreting the narratives, I paid closer attention to personal situations and *interpretations* of respondents themselves – often easily seen in their narratives, linking it to the general situation of blacks in Finland. These situations include but are not limited to the type of job and income and intercultural encounters they have or have had, and how these affect their involvement in the formal and informal political sectors. Patterson and Monroe (1998, 316) argue that "how the speaker organizes events to give meaning to them is what becomes important, for it is the process of organization that reveals much about the speaker's mind". Quoting Scott (1991, 779), they further argue that "experience is at once always already an interpretation and something that [also sometimes] needs to be interpreted. Scott (1991, 797) himself was clear when he argues that there are two levels of interpretation involved in making sense of experience: one is an explanation of what makes that experience possible; the other is the very act of experiencing itself. He criticizes the attempt to make experience visible *without* analyzing *the conditions* producing it (ibid). This is why

the condition(s) producing the African immigrant experience has been laid bare and would be discussed in more detail later.

Notes were taken throughout the interviews/interpretations with the consent of the respondents except a few respondents who allowed theirs to be recorded on a device. The recorded responses were thereafter transcribed, and along with others, manually coded and divided into passages related to the research questions, and finally categorized thematically for analysis. However, not all responses were analyzed because some respondents repeat what others had said, and so, it was not necessary to analyze all of them one by one. Nonetheless, all the responses analyzed are substantial enough to answer the research question. I assure that they are quite representative of the populations studied.

2.3 Research Ethics

By definition, research ethics is conceptualized as a set of rules that define what one should or should not do in research. This includes in reporting and analyzing results. Research ethics is therefore about what is right or wrong to do in research. The most significant of the rules is being *honest, transparent*, and *objective* in the whole process, especially reporting. In Europe, this is the same. For example, according to the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA 2017) as well as the Finnish Guidelines on Responsible Conduct of Research from the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK) (2019), the following ethical rules should guide interviews: 1) notifying respondents beforehand about the interview as well as seeking their informed consent and keeping their identity confidential if they want it so. 2) Being honest, transparent, and objective with the research method as well as in reporting and analyzing the results. This would make research trustworthy and acceptable to people, especially the research community and policymakers.

In this work, all the above rules are strictly followed. For instance, all my respondents were duly informed beforehand at initial contact about the purpose of the interview, their consent to participate, and the confidentiality of their identities unless they want it made public. They were also told of their freedom to stop their participation in the interview at any stage. All these are also in line with ethical principles of research in the humanities and social and behavioral sciences of the University of Jyväskylä as well as those of the Finnish National Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK) (2019). In my interviews, only two people allowed their real names to be published. All others did not allow. Hence their real names were substituted with pseudonyms. Also, none of the respondents pulled out of the interview eventually.

Overall, research ethics guided my entire research, including in reporting and analyzing results objectively. Some sensitive information provided by African respondents advertently or inadvertently was either reported with their permission and utmost care or was simply kept confidential where they refused

it reported. Besides, being an African immigrant myself, researching on fellow African immigrants created a good socio-cultural background for me especially in the sense that we share the same racism/xenophobia experience in Finland. But at the same time, it also created a problem for me during analysis, in the sense that I found it initially difficult to detach myself from this experience and analyze objectively. It was after wise criticisms from peer reviews and my supervisors, that I was able to develop a detached and critical balance between this proximity and academic objectivity. In summary, I reported and analyzed all the findings well in the strong academic sense.

PART II

CHAPTER 3: POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES IN FINLAND

In this part II, I will first give a brief overview of the Finnish political system and then discuss the political opportunity structures in Finland available for immigrant political participation especially at the local level[33] in the light of the institutional channeling theory.

3.1 A brief overview of the Finnish political system

The Finnish political system is a multiparty (representative) democracy where the political parties compete with each other during elections for votes and where the citizens have the political rights to vote and to get elected, as well as enjoy the freedom of speech and association. The Finnish electoral system has three general elections, namely: the presidential, the parliamentary (including that of the EU), and the municipal, although its structure of governance is mainly at two key levels comprising of, 1) the national level (comprising of the presidency and the parliament), and 2) the local level (comprising of the municipalities). No elected regional government yet exists, but its introduction into the political system has been discussed following ongoing debates and reforms about it in Finnish politics. Political representatives at the local and national levels are chosen in these elections and the government (at all levels) relies on them for key political decisions. Drawing from the Finnish Election Act, Jääskeläinen (2010, 9-10) argues that all the elections are embedded in six key principles, namely: 1) Direct, which means that voters vote directly for the person they want to elect. 2) Proportional (PR system), which implies that each party or other group gains seats in relation to the votes cast for it compared with the votes cast for other groups. For example, if a party gets 20 percent of the votes, it should also get 20

[33] The political opportunity structures at this level are also the same for the natives except that in the case of immigrants, a minimum of 2 years residency requirement is needed for them to be considered eligible.

percent of the seats. While this applies to the parliamentary and municipal elections, it does not apply to the presidential in which votes are only cast for a candidate, not for a party. 3) Secret, which means that neither the election authorities nor anyone else gets to know who the voters cast their vote for, or whether they returned an empty ballot. 4) Equal franchise, which implies that voters must have equal voting rights in that election. They are also entitled to one vote each in each election. 5). Personal, which means that the voter can only vote personally, and not use the services of an agent. And finally, 6), Voting takes place in front of election authorities. This is not to unravel the secrecy of voting as the election staff does not look at the voter's choice of candidate, but to guarantee that everything is done in the right manner and with free will (see also Dag Anckar et al. 2014). Our study is however mainly concerned with elections and political participations at the local/municipal level where many immigrants have gained political rights as we would see later.

Currently, there are about 310 municipalities in Finland including the province of Åland (Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities 2020). They are said to be responsible for a variety of services at the local level for residents - both natives and immigrants alike. From 2019, following the SOTE reform, the newly established 21 regional authorities and the city of Helsinki, have become responsible for the arrangement of health and social services, rescue services, environmental healthcare, regional development duties, and tasks related to economic development, while the general municipal authority oversees education and cultural services, land use and building guidance and technical services within its area, and for the optional functions such as energy supply (Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities 2017, Yle online English news 13 October 2020). Integral to the tasks of local authorities also are the promotion of resident well-being and health and the strengthening of local democracy and vitality (cf. Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities 2017), and the municipalities under our study - namely, Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere, and Jyväskylä - are part and parcel of this authority. In summary, residents (both immigrants and natives alike) have a lot to benefit at the municipal level in their daily lives. It is at this level that we concentrate in examining the political opportunity structures available for immigrant political integration, more so because the government encourages immigrants (as it encourages the natives also) to be part of the political decision-making. Nonetheless, although this study is not a comparative one between immigrants and natives, we will find that most opportunity structures at the local level available to immigrants are also available to the natives, and so, discussing those of the natives separately will not be necessary.

3.2 Political opportunity structures in Finland for immigrant political participation in the light of the institutional channeling theory.

Opportunity structure is a theoretical concept developed by Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd B. Ohlin (1960), inspired by and built on Robert Merton's theory of anomie[34] (1938), which refers to the fact that the opportunities available to people in any given society or institution are shaped by the social organization and structure of that entity (Ashley Crossman 2017, Marta Latorre-Catalán 2017). Typically, within a society, there are certain opportunity structures that are considered basic and necessary for certain aims such as socioeconomic and/or political successes/integrations to be achieved, and if such are lacking, things are not likely to go to the way expected. From the last decades of the twentieth century, the concept was further developed in the analysis of collective action under the name of political opportunity structure by authors such as Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow, and Doug McAdam (Latorre-Catalán 2017), as well as Patrick Ireland and Marco Martiniello under the institutional channeling theory, which this study is using as a key theoretical framework.

The institutional channeling theory has emphasized that any form of immigrant political participation would first and foremost depend on the structure of political opportunities existent in the host society at any given time (Martiniello 2005. See also Ireland 1994). It singles out certain opportunity structures which have already been mentioned and would be discussed below. They include immigrant political rights and their knowledge about them, political parties, associations, religious institutions, labor, and student unions. Others include immigrant integration laws, the attitude of the indigenous population, the labor market, the anti-discrimination act, immigrant and multicultural associations, and consultative body. It sees these structures as very important in influencing immigrant political participation. Discussions here will map out the setting to discuss the experiences of African immigrants in the empirical chapters (part III) where their socioeconomic and political integration at the local level is well discussed in relation to the structures.

3.2.1 Institutional setting framing immigrant political participation in Finland at the local level

3.2.1.1 The role of the government

The institutional channeling theory considers the government as the first institutional structure for the political participation of immigrants in many countries (Ireland 1994, Martiniello 2005, Vráblíková 2011). As Martiniello (2005)

[34]Merton's anomie theory states that most people strive to achieve (socio)culturally recognized goals. A state of anomie develops when access to these goals is blocked to entire groups of people or individuals. The result is a deviant behaviour characterized by rebellion, retreat, ritualism, innovation, and/or conformity.

argues, the state has a significant role to play in this regard. In particular, he argues that by granting or denying voting rights to foreigners, facilitating or impeding their access to citizenship and nationality, granting or constraining freedom of association, ensuring or blocking the representation of their interests, states open or close avenues of political participation for them and provide them with more or fewer opportunities to participate in the management of collective affairs. Vráblíková (2011, 6) drawing from Tilly (1995), Meyer (2004), Kriesi (2004), also argues that "the institutional design of the state is definitely the most important political opportunity structure affecting the political activism and mobilizing strategies of political actors" in all democratic countries (see also Ireland 1994). Such mobilization begins with the giving of political and associational rights among others.

In Finland, as earlier noted, the state has given immigrants who are not yet Finnish citizens the political and associational rights to participate in the political process especially at the local level. This is contained in Chap. 5, 20.1§ of the Local Government (or Municipal) Act (410/2015), which states that immigrants can vote and/or stand as candidates in local/municipal elections as long as they have reached the age of 18 no later than on the day of the election, and their municipality of residence as defined by law (i.e. the Act on Domicile) is the municipality in question on the 51st day before Election Day (for EU citizens), and (for third-country nationals) who at that time have had a municipality of residence in Finland for an uninterrupted period of two years".

Before then, this was not the case because the laws governing immigrants' rights to participate in municipal elections were restricted to those who already have Finnish citizenship (cf. Salo 2013; Centre for European Studies & Suomen Toivo 2012, 4). But this gradually began to change in 1976 when the right to vote in local elections was first granted to citizens of other Scandinavian countries (such as Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark) provided they had been resident in Finland for two years preceding the election. Then, in 1991, this right was extended to other foreign residents (but not to stand as candidates), provided that they had been resident in Finland for four years also before the elections. And finally, in 1995, full rights were given and years of residence reduced to two (by the previous Local Government Act (1995) which was later succeeded by the current Local Government Act 410/2015 while retaining the rights). Giving immigrants full political rights especially at the local level, Katsiaficas (2014) argues, is a good starting point in ensuring their full political participation at that level. This is particularly essential in Finland since municipalities administer most of the welfare policies, housing, education and healthcare, integration programs, basic education, etc, that affect immigrants' daily lives at the local level (Wilhelmsson 2015, 182). Therefore, empowering immigrants politically at this level would ensure they have a say in the political decision-making that affects them. All African immigrants in this study have been resident in Finland for more than two years and therefore have been politically empowered to have a say. In other words, they have the political right to vote and/or stand as candidates in municipal elections.

The Local Government Act (410/2015) also gave immigrants the right to belong to various associations and unions including religious organizations and/or to establish their own if necessary (see also the Finnish Association Act 1989). The associations could also include associations with political goals such as political parties or constituency associations (see also Centre for European Studies & Suomen Toivo 2012, 4). Many African immigrants in this study also have joined or established various associations such as African associations, religious associations/organizations, Finnish/multicultural associations, and political parties. Some have also joined constituency associations. A constituency association is an association empowered to play a role, similar to those of political parties in candidate nominations, during general elections from among their members who might be interested in running for election. In the case of municipal elections, it is stipulated

A constituency association for the nomination of one candidate may be established by at least ten people who are entitled to vote in the municipality. In some small municipalities determined by the Ministry of Justice, a constituency association may, however, be established by at least three persons entitled to vote. Constituency associations may [also] form joint lists with a maximum number of candidates equaling the number of councilors to be elected… multiplied by one and a half (Jääskeläinen 2010, 19)

In this role, constituency associations can also be described as electoral associations (ibid). According to Yle online English report, there are more than 70 constituency associations presently, and they come in all shapes and sizes. The list also includes lobbyists, dissident ex-party members, interest and protest groups, and established movements with broad agendas reminiscent of political parties. What seems to unite them all is an emphasis on thinking outside of party boxes and concrete local change (cf. Yle online English news, 3 March 2017). In summary, a constituency association represents voters who do not associate with any political party. Their candidates, or so-called independents, usually believe that political parties keep the whole process tied up in bureaucracy (ibid). However, they (the constituency associations) must be duly registered in the local register in order to be considered legitimate and eligible to nominate a candidate for election. They should also follow due internal democracy during the nomination process (ibid).

The voting period for municipal elections is usually two-phased and is contained in the letter posted to eligible voters. The phases are: 1) advance voting, and 2) Election Day voting. Advance voting usually begins on Wednesday, eleven days before Election Day, and ends abroad on Saturday eight days, and in Finland on Tuesday five days, before Election Day. A person entitled to vote may vote on either of the days. There are also four different venues for this type of voting:

1. Post offices as well as municipal offices. There are however more venues on certain conditions (see numbers 2–4 below), and abroad, they include Finnish embassies prescribed in a Government decree. There is at least one such

polling station in every municipality, unless otherwise prescribed. Eligible voters may do so either in Finland or abroad.

2. Hospitals, prisons and some other institutions where only the people who receive treatment or are incarcerated there may vote there.
3. People whose ability to move or function is so restricted that they are unable to come to an advance polling station or a polling station on election day may vote in advance at home. This means that an election official goes to their homes to receive their vote. The family carer of a person entitled to vote at home, living in the same household, has also the right to vote at home.
4. The crew of a Finnish ship abroad may vote in advance onboard the ship. The advance voting in ships can begin already 18 days before the Election Day (Jääskeläinen 2010, 13)

On the Election Day, voting starts at 9 a.m. and ends at 8 p.m. Voters cast their votes at the polling station stated on the card sent to them before the elections. There is at least one polling station in the designated places in every municipality, the total of which nationwide is approximately 2200 (ibid).

Each municipal council comprises of councilors and deputy councilors. The number of councilors to be elected in each municipality depends shall be an odd number based on the population of registered residents (natives and immigrants alike) in that municipality. Below is an example:

Population in municipality	**No. of councilors to be elected**
Up to 5000	13
5001 - 20 000	27
20 001 - 50 000	43
50 001 - 100 000	51
100 001 - 250 000	59
250 001 - 500 000	67
Over 500 000	79

Source: Chap. 4, 16.1§ of the Local Government Act (410/2015)

At the end of any municipal election, unsuccessful electoral candidates who suspect foul play as a result of their failure at the polls could appeal to a regional administrative court within 14 days of the publication of the election results. This does not however include candidates in the presidential election as this election cannot be appealed. For other elections, an appeal may be submitted on two multifaceted grounds:

1) that a decision is illegal by
2) - a person whose interests or rights are violated by the decision;
3) - the candidates;
4) - the parties or joint lists which have taken part in the elections.

5) that the elections have not been held in proper order by
6) - everyone entitled to vote and
7) - a municipality member in municipal elections (Ministry of Justice, March 7, 2014)

The Ministry of Justice (that oversees all elections) also instructs that "If a decision or measure of an election authority has been illegal and this clearly may have influenced the election results, the results shall be amended or, if that is not possible, new elections shall be ordered to be held in the electoral district (if in parliamentary elections), municipality (if in municipal elections), and in the entire country (if European parliamentary elections). Appeals against the decision of the regional administrative court may be lodged with the Supreme Administrative Court" for further hearing and consideration (ibid). Despite this opportunity, no unsuccessful African immigrant candidate(s) at the municipal elections or other elections has approached the court to appeal against his/her failure because even if they suspect that the (negative) native society attitude was the cause of their failure (for example in terms of not voting for them due to discrimination or that native election umpires rigging them out as some African voters actually think and as we would see in chapter five), lack of some tangible evidence could stall the process in court.

Furthermore, the Local Government Act (410/2015, 22§) mandates municipal authorities to carry residents along on the workings of the municipality so as to ensure that residents and service users in its domain have the opportunities to participate in the municipal affairs and also are able to influence municipal operations. It also stipulates that the authorities could do this through the following ways:

1) By electing representatives of service users to municipal organs.
2) By setting up administrations for component areas of a local authority.
3) By providing information about local affairs and holding hearings.
4) By finding out residents' opinions before taking decisions.
5) By providing for cooperation in managing the local authority's functions.
6) By helping residents to manage, prepare and plan matters on their own initiative.
7) By arranging municipal referenda.

This is an encouraging opportunity structure for residents (especially immigrants) to feel belonged to the municipality since it will ensure that they develop and/or sustain their interest in municipal affairs as long as they are being carried along. While many African immigrants with ethnorelative experience acknowledge they have been contacted (usually through letter or pasted notices in their residential buildings) about their opinions on some issues or informed about decisions made, many with the ethnocentric argue that they have never been contacted or informed about anything. Some of them however do not yet understand the local languages (Finnish & Swedish) which is often the language of communication that those at the ethnorelative understand. This

could invariably explain their claim. However, even if they understand any of the languages (as some do), being at the ethnocentric could mean they might not be disposed to respond to any information.

In any case, much of the above legislations concern formal political participation in the municipal process. There is however some room for informal political participation such as submitting an initiative or a complaint to the local authorities. For example, section 23 of the Local Government Act (410/2015), gives the *right of initiative* to residents through which they could submit initiatives or complaints to the local authority in matters related to their lives or the council, and which is within the council's jurisdiction and sphere of operations. However, a certain number of people would need to be met before a submission is made. In this regard, if those submitting an initiative on a matter represent at least two percent of the local residents, the matter shall be considered not later than six months after the matter is instituted (ibid). Also, "persons submitting initiatives shall be informed of action taken as a result of an initiative. At least once a year, the council shall be informed of all initiatives submitted in matters within its purview and of action taken as a result" (ibid). As we shall see in chapter five, some African immigrant associations, including religious bodies, do submit an initiative or a complaint to any relevant agencies within the municipality whenever necessary especially on issues relevant to them. They acknowledge that such isses also are usually given adequate attention.

The Act also recommends referendum proposals from residents when necessary. In particular, section 25 holds that residents constituting at least four percent of those persons resident in the municipality who are at least 15 years old may submit a referendum initiative. The municipal councils shall decide without delay whether to hold the referendum or not. Section 134 also gives the right of seeking redress or petition writing if dissatisfied with the decision of a local executive, local authority committee or standing committee or of their sub-committees, or of a public authority subordinate. Such a demand should also be dealt with immediately by the council or the relevant organ. If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision made, this could be referred to the municipal board for consideration. In the case that there is still dissatisfaction, a claim for a revised decision must be submitted within 14 days, and an appeal against the decision of a municipal authority within 30 days, of being informed of the decision (138§). However, this must be on the following ground:

1) The decision was not taken in the proper order.
2) The authority taking the decision exceeded its authority, or
3) The decision is otherwise illegal (135§)

If the complainant is still not satisfied with the ruling of the administrative court, s/he could appeal to the Supreme Administrative Court as stipulated by section 142 of the Act. Notices of the Supreme court decisions would be immediately placed in a public information network unless the provisions on secrecy require otherwise (142.1§). Being that Supreme Court decisions are not

usually challenged, the matter stops there. Incidentally, no African immigrant person, group(s), or association(s) (including religious bodies) has initiated any referendum or petition against any council decision or any of its members.

Although there is no specific mention of 'protest' by the Act, petition-writing and approaching the court are also regarded as a form of politics (Martiniello 2005). Besides, Finland's freedom of speech or "the right to hold opinions" [35] is also a freedom of expression. This means that residents could engage in any protests on any issue considered legitimate. This freedom of speech is also in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which Finland is a signatory to (Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2018). Article 19 of the UDHR states that "everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference" and this includes the freedom to seek, impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing, or in print, in a demonstration, in the form of art, or through any other media form one deems fit. [36] In line with this, African immigrants have engaged in various protests either alongside Finnish associations and unions (especially in matters concerning Finland) or on their own as associations/groups (in matters concerning their home countries) as we would also see later in chapter five.

Besides, to make immigrants more settled in the society, the Finnish government has also enacted immigrant integration policies and acts that are geared towards promoting immigrant cultural and socioeconomic integration in Finland. Such policies include measures such as Finnish language training, basic/further education, job acquisition, housing, freedom to practice their own culture and language (cf. chapter 1, §1 of the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers, 493/1999, amendments up to 324/2009 included. See also chapter 1, section 1 of the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration 1386/2010). As we would see in chapter four, some African immigrants have benefitted from these measures and are already integrated in the society. The issue of integration is seen by the Act as the full participation of immigrants in all aspects of societal life. It also sees integration as an interactive development involving immigrants and society (i.e., a two-way process), while immigrants could also preserve and practice their own language and culture (cf. The Finnish Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers, 493/1999 amendments up to 324/2009; see also Sagne et al. 2005, 17; Kymlicka 1995, 2012; Dancygier and Laitin 2014, Lillie & Ndomo 2021). This is strengthened by the Non-discrimination Act (or the Equality Act) which sees equality, non-discrimination, prevention of racism, and the promotion of positive attitudes towards immigrants as the hallmark of a multicultural Finland (cf. Non-discrimination Act 21/2004 as amended 84/2009, 6§). In other words, the Act prohibits any discrimination against anybody based on race, ethnic/national origin, language, religion, age, belief, opinion, health, disability, or sexual

[35] Freedom of expression is recognized as a human right under article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and recognized in international human rights law in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
[36] According to George Orwell in *Animal Farm* (1945), "If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear".

orientation in any façade including but not limited to employment, education, housing, social and the political. It is hoped that this will encourage a harmonious multicultural environment for "different population groups" as well as "good ethnic relations"[37] (cf. The Finnish Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers, 493/1999 amendments up to 324/2009). This is related to Bennett's (2004) definition of integration as the stage in which one's own cultural experience is expanded to include an easy and considerate movement within the cultural setting of the other, such that 'it might be better if we kept our primary cultural identities' while adapting and integrating to other cultures in order to avoid a crisis (or even sometimes loss) of our identity. Although many African immigrants practice their own language and culture, many have not yet integrated into the society due to racism and/or the non-observance of the anti-discrimination law by many natives especially in the socioeconomic sector and which has negatively affected both their socioeconomic and political integration as we would see in chapters four and five respectively.

3.2.1.2 Informing/reminding residents of their right to participate in municipal elections

Informing residents (i.e., immigrants and natives alike) of their rights to participate in the political process (such as municipal elections) has also been considered as an important part of the political opportunity structure for immigrant political participation by the institutional channeling (cf. Ireland 1994, Martiniello 2005) because if rights are given but are not communicated, the recipients might not be aware of them and therefore might not participate. Hence, whenever such rights are given, the government usually informs the recipients/residents about them through various communication methods such as posted letters or electronic media (especially radio and TV). In Finland, this is the case. Such information is usually disseminated through posted letters some few weeks before the municipal Election Day[38] by the municipal administration. This election usually comes once every four years[39]. The letter usually contains a polling card, name of the voter, personal number, electoral district, municipality of residence, time of voting, and the polling station. The voting register is then left open to public inspection in case any voter has claims of error or correction, which can be submitted to the City Administrative Court. This procedure is the same for all voters, regardless of nationality (Salo 2013, 5).

In addition, the government through the YLE (its media agency) also sometimes organizes debates for electoral candidates on TV and/or radio, in order for them to air and defend their electoral manifestoes and what their parties

[37] In the UK, for example, this is also closely related as it sees integration as "not a flattening process of uniformity but cultural diversity, coupled with equal opportunity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance" (Rex and Tomlinson 1979).
[38] It is also done the same way during other general elections such as parliamentary and presidential, including EU parliamentary, elections.
[39] Municipal elections take place on every third Sunday of April. If the third Sunday is Easter Sunday, the Election Day is the Sunday preceding the (Easter) Sunday. Previously, municipal elections were held on every fourth Sunday in October. But this changed in 2017.

stand for to voters (See for e.g., Yle online English news 29 March 2017a). This was particularly done in the 2012 and 2017 municipal elections respectively. The Yle also provided on its online English platform the links to the recently translated English websites of some major political parties (Yle online English news 10 March 2017), as well as information on immigrants' eligibility to vote and to stand as candidates (Yle online English news 29 March 2017b) in such parties. However, as valuable as this information is to immigrants (especially Africans), they are only available to those who read Yle online English news or who watch its TV or listen to its radio.

Furthermore, the municipal administration sometimes also organizes information sessions for immigrants at designated places in order to educate them further on the municipal elections and why they should participate. Some African immigrants have benefitted from them. The sessions are usually embellished with light refreshments to make immigrants relax while lectures go on. This is for example similar to what happens elsewhere in Europe. For example, in France, Ireland (1994, 107) argues that some French municipalities used the method to woo immigrants to their political fold. In the La Courneuve municipality in particular, the municipal officials usually "took pride in their ability to use popular mobilization" sessions with refreshments to bring immigrants and their associations into the municipal policy fold. Another dimension of this wooing is the education of, or advice to, native citizens to keep an open arm to immigrants in order to make them feel at home and participate in the municipal political/electoral process. For instance, Ireland (1994) asserts that in the municipality of Roubaix, the diversity of the governing local coalition famously advised the natives to keep a general openness and acceptance towards immigrants of all political divide and ideological persuasions. This was heeded, and which subsequently encouraged many immigrants to actively participate in the municipal political life (pp. 126, 145). This underscores the importance of openness/acceptance towards immigrants of all shades rather than hostility/rejection as has been the case with Finland as my interview data show. Bennett (2004) argues that immigrants at the ethnorelative stage – who feel accepted by the host society – tend to be more integrated than those at the ethnocentric who do not feel accepted. Such acceptance or openness also encourages immigrants to make certain complaints and claims related to their needs to the authorities (Just and Anderson 2012).

In this regard, some Finnish municipal officials argue during interview that it is not very necessary to ask the natives to open up to immigrants (like the French do) since they already know that discrimination of any kind against anybody is against the law (i.e., the anti-discrimination law) and so should be avoided (Interviews: 20 – 22 May, 26 June 2015).

In the next subchapter, we discuss access to the labor market also as an important opportunity structure to immigrant political engagement.

3.2.1.3 Access to the labor market

The institutional channeling and other research have argued that the labor market is one of the important opportunity structures that motivate or de-motivate immigrant political engagement in many countries (Ireland 1994, 2000; Martiniello 2005, Just and Anderson 2014; Bäck and Soininen 1998; SOU 1984; Verba & Nie 1972; Srai 2012; EU Commission 2004). In other words, the availability/access or unavailability/inability to access better or worse job opportunities is a motivating or de-motivating factor to immigrant political engagement. That is to say, immigrants with access to better available job opportunities tend to be more motivated (as a result) to participate more in (formal) politics than those without. Srai for example found this in her cross-country study of the Nordic states especially on a study of immigrants in Sweden (e.g. Bäck and Soininen 1998, SOU 1984) and argued that it is not surprising that immigrants with no access to better job opportunities are in a marginalized position and hence show little interest in politics (Srai 2012, 52). This access is also linked to integration in the society as good job opportunities more often than not lead to sound integration in the society including in the political sphere just as lack of it leads to lack of integration including also in the political as research has found (Ireland 1994, Martiniello 2005, Bäck and Soininen 1998, SOU 1984, Shingles 1981, Verba & Nie 1972, to mention a few).

In Finland, it is also argued that voting in elections is connected to integration (Hellsten and Martikainen 2001) just as lack of voting is also connected to lack of integration (Salo 2013). Usually, for the most part, integration is often acquired or denied in the labor market as research has found (Forsander 2008, Tiilikainen & Ismail 2013, Ndukwe 2015a, 2017). For instance, Forsander (2008, 81) argues that "the labor market defines the terms of inclusion" in the society because it "grants people their standard of living, social status, and promises of full-fledged citizenship," and if this is lacking, people often feel excluded. Lauri Ihalainen (a former Finnish labor minister) also argued that, "for immigrants, work is one of the keys to sound integration. If the doors to working life do not open, integration often halts half-way…." (cf. Finnish Ministry of Employment and Economy, 2012, June 7). But it is not however just any work, but often an educated/professional one especially for educated immigrants as we would see in the case of many African immigrants in chapter four! A major factor in having or being denied access to these jobs or even being unemployed is attributed to the native society attitude or influence, as it determines who gets a job, what kind of job or who does not (Bertrand & Mullainathan 2004, Tiilikainen & Ismail 2013, Ndukwe 2015a).

In the next subchapter, we will discuss this society attitude in detail also as part of the political opportunity structures available to immigrant political participation in Finland.

3.2.1.4 The (native) society attitude

The institutional channeling has also singled out "the attitude of the indigenous population" towards immigrants as a very essential part of the opportunity

structures for immigrant participation in the host society's political process (cf. Ireland 1994; Martiniello 2005. See also Just and Anderson 2014; Phinney at al. 2001; Cho, Gimpel, and Wu 2006; Miller, Gurin and Malanchuk 1981; Péchu 1999; Piore 1979; Shingles 1981). These studies indicate that the positive or negative attitude of the host society makes or mar immigrants' political integration. For instance, Just and Anderson (2014) in their study of immigrant political participation in 25 European countries have argued that countries with favorable opinion climate on immigrants often have more immigrants participating in the political process than those with unfavorable opinion climate. However, some research argues that this is not the case in all countries because, in some countries, unfavorable opinion climate has actually turned out more positive than negative in immigrant political/electoral engagement. In other words, rather than being a drawback, it has become a springboard for many immigrants to engage in formal politics in order to fight their discrimination politically (cf. Cho, Gimpel and Wu 2006; Austin et al. 2012; Miller, Gurin and Malanchuk 1981; Péchu 1999; Ireland 1994; Piore 1979; Shingles 1981; Just and Anderson 2012; Fanning and Boyle 2009). For instance, in France and Switzerland, Ireland (1994, 5), drawing from Corderio & Dias (1985) and Piore (1979), argues the key factor that engineered strong immigrant involvement in the host country politics is "the intensification of discrimination and racism/xenophobia (against them), and governments' failure to improve immigrants' socioeconomic situation and advance their sociopolitical integration." Also, Péchu (1999) argues that the political mobilization and participation of African immigrants in France, for example, is attributed primarily to the discrimination they faced daily. In the Republic of Ireland also, Fanning and Boyle (2009) discover that racism against immigrants especially Africans tremendously increased their participation in the formal political process as a way to fight it. (See also Galandini 2013 for a similar case in black political participation in the UK; and Austin et al. 2012; Rogers 2006; Carter 2019; and Watts-Smith 2014, for a similar case in black political participation in the US). As earlier pointed out, Austin had noted that Blacks and (some) other immigrants are still rejected, discriminated against, and feel that they don't belong in America, but are yet overcoming these barriers by gaining citizenship, voting, joining organizations, and participating in politics (Informal communication: 20 October 2021).

In Finland however, the case is the opposite as my interviews with African immigrants show. In other words, as earlier noted, those who experience discriminatory attitudes from some natives especially in the socioeconomic arena, tend to participate less actively or regularly in the formal politics especially elections because they tend to have low spirits due to their low socioeconomic status. Richard Shingles (1981,76) argues that low-income groups are generally politically inactive because they often lack the great motivation to participate in formal politics especially elections. Hence, they participate more actively in protest politics especially protests against racism and poor labour conditions as a way of expressing their anger against the society. Maxwell (2010) argues that minorities who do not feel accepted by the mainstream society usually avoid

active involvement in formal politics and at the same time have a high tendency to engage in protests and rioting as a way of venting their anger and frustration on the society.

On the other hand, African immigrants who experience mostly friendly or positive attitudes from some natives also especially in the same socioeconomic space, tend to participate regularly or actively especially in the electoral process but comparatively less in protest politics. The reason for all of these is basically because of the low or high sense of belonging that generates from their experiences, and which invariably has also grouped them into two distinct groups as earlier noted. In other words, those who experience mostly negative attitudes usually have a low feeling of belonging and institutional completeness and hence belong to the ethnocentric, while those with mostly positive experiences usually have a high feeling of belonging and institutional completeness and hence belong to the ethnorelative. Among the two groups, however, the ethnocentric is in the majority.

The reason behind the society's attitudes may be found in the historical background of the Finnish society as well as in the negative Finnish media news about immigrants. The Finnish society has been argued to be historically white, culturally homogenous and conservative and for long has been a closed society (Koskinen 2010, Valtonen 1997). This makes its relations with immigrants especially non-whites, fragile and sometimes tense. As I argued in the Introduction, [40], when immigrants, especially nonwhites, migrate to such a country, there is usually the tendency of fear from the natives about the "cultural disruption" and ways of life such immigrants could bring to their society. There is also the fear of pressure on the economy especially that their arrival might lower the competitiveness of the natives in the job market, which could trigger prejudice (see also Ervasti 2004), xenophobia and/or racism. The natives whose actions/reactions are mostly severe could be called right-wingers or conservatives, while those whose actions/reactions are less severe could be called liberals or multiculturalists (see also ibid). Also, government's actions or reactions in this situation, whether in terms of policy or law change towards immigration[41], could be grouped into the above two categories.

In Finland, multiculturalists exist and have indeed helped immigrants integrate in the society. These are the kind of natives that African immigrants with good experiences luckily encounter and who have helped them settle through good jobs and/or meaningful social relations. Some may have visited, or have even lived, in Black Africa and/or have had meaningful relations with blacks, whereas some may not have but are nevertheless nice people. In some cases, some of the above are classmates, co-members of multicultural associations, workmates of Africans, and/or just acquaintances. What they all have in

[40] Most of my arguments in the several pages below will draw heavily from this article of mine.

[41] For example, the government tightened immigration requirements for family reunification of non-EU immigrants whose resident spouses are not yet citizens. This might not be called racism but it is, however, a conservative and systematic move to prevent the influx of non-EU migrants.

common is a positive thinking about people of other cultures and the willingness to see them as human beings worth associating with and respecting regardless of how they look or where they come from.

On the other hand, conservatives[42] or the 'monoculturalists', also exist, and they seem to be in the majority as my interview data show. Many of them possibly may not have been to Black Africa or have not had any meaningful contacts or relations with blacks. Some could be classmates, workmates, co-members of Finnish unions, or even association with blacks, yet without any meaningful relations. What they all seem to have in common, as insights from my interview data indicate, is disdain for certain people of other cultures, particularly black Africans, and a stereotyped negative mindset and false assumptions about them. Some of these natives are in the Finnish media which helps in spreading these through the media. For example, Ervasti (2004) argues that true or false examples of social security and other benefits available to immigrants and asylum seekers are often found in the media and newspapers and which generate anger and negative sentiments among the native population. Kilpi (2008) argues that such media reports have had an adverse effect on the attitudes of Finns towards immigrants. Raittila (2002) argues that Finnish relationships with immigrants and ethnic minorities have been mostly through the media as only a small number of Finns is in reality in daily contact with immigrants and minorities.

These days, the internet, especially the social media, has also become a breeding ground for hatred, racism, threats, and hate speech against immigrants (Tessieri 2011**)**. This is prominent in blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and other online social media websites. There are even some social-media lynch mob leaders that masquerade as defenders of Finnish values, sounding hostile battle charges against immigrants and minorities (ibid). Incidentally, this racial battle has also been extended to Finnish researchers on racism and multiculturalism, so much so that some of their "meetings discussing racism, multiculturalism and Islam have been disrupted" by this mob. "As a result, some researchers are now reluctant to appear in public," prompting the researchers' union – the Negotiation Organization for Public Sector Professionals (JUKO) - to issue a statement, affirming that "Our researchers into racism and multiculturalism have been subjected to threats" of various kinds, including anonymous threatening letters sent to their homes (Yle online English news 13 February 2013).

In summary, the racists or xenophobes do not see immigrants especially African immigrants as human beings worthy of respect, and would hence block rather than help them secure good jobs or meaningful social relations. Moreover, they also tend to regard such immigrants as those who have come to disrupt the socio-cultural homogeneity of Finland as well as its economic progress since they (the immigrants) are (allegedly) takers from, rather than givers to, the Finnish economy and society (Perussuomalaisten Nuorten 2013). Hence, the practice of

[42] Here, conservatives should not be understood in terms of political leaning, but in the broader definition of the concept that is made earlier, of which, of course, politics is part of.

xenophobia and racism appears high among the natives with this kind of mindset, from the socioeconomic space (esp. the labor market) to the political arena.

For instance, in her study of immigrant unemployment in Finland, Kathleen Valtonen (2001) finds that "immigrant jobseekers [especially nonwhites] consistently encounter blockage at the outer periphery of the labor market" because "immigrant unemployment in Finland is simply an outcome of 'monopoly'-like mechanisms of exclusion in the Finnish society" by conservative native employers. Helsingin Sanomat also echoes a similar finding, pointing out that many Finnish enterprises are deliberately reluctant in recruiting (mostly non-white) immigrants in professional positions[43] as a way of excluding them from the mainstream economy (Helsingin Sanomat, 2010, September 23) and leaving them at the periphery of the economy, i.e., with menial jobs regardless of their educational qualifications. In the same year, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy expressed with sadness that "the ability to recognise and make good use of the professional skills of immigrants is currently only passable at best" (Markkanen 2010). Meri-Sisko Eskola, an adviser at the Ministry of the Interior's Migration Department, calls this "an awful waste" of human capital to Finland (Helsingin Sanomat, 2010, September 23). Interestingly, in 2011, the EU Agenda on Immigrant Integration warned EU member states (of which Finland is one) in this regard, arguing that unemployed migrants or immigrants employed in positions for which they are overqualified are an underutilised resource and a waste of human capital, and that such a practice is also very degrading to immigrants involved (European Commission 2011, 5) (For more on most of the above arguments, please see Ndukwe 2015a).

From my interviews and observations and research, Africans are the most hit among all immigrants in this regard because some (if not many) natives have a poor concept about blacks and Africa. Hence most African immigrants are relegated to menial/poor jobs regardless of their usually high qualifications. Specifically, many are in the cleaning services, paper delivery, food delivery, dishwashing, posti work, or construction and restaurant work, while some are outrightly unemployed. Some Finnish conservatives, researchers, and policymakers wrongly attribute this to lack of enough Finnish language skills. But they forget that those who blame towering underemployment and unemployment of immigrants on language seem to be unaware that Finnish language proficiency does not guarantee foreigners employment, especially non-Europeans (Zuzeeko 2012, November 29). This is a basic fact! Georg Henrik Wrede, the director, Youth Division of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Helsinki, rightly notes in this regard that

> If you don't want to hire someone [i.e., an immigrant], you would say they do not know the language, you don't say they have the wrong colour [because] you understand that you cannot say this…. You would say he did not speak or she did not speak

[43] Exceptions to this are those who are internationally known to be experts in a specific field such as Indians in IT or the Chinese in business especially because of the economic rise of China. The Chinese usually are not regarded as white even though they are fairer than the Indians, and they do not also regard themselves so but yellow (My finding during my 5-year residence in China, 2003 - 2008).

> fluently enough. So ... I do not think it is the language, I do [rather] think the language is a politically correct answer to those who interview you. It is not the right reason (Tiilikainen and Ismail 2013:72-3)

For example, nearly four in every five Somali immigrants with Finnish degrees as well as those who do not have a degree, understand, speak and write Finnish fluently, yet they have one of the highest underemployment and unemployment rates in Finland. And among the general immigrant population itself, a growing number has also learned Finnish, yet their underemployment and unemployment rate continue to rise. Researcher Tuula Joronen of the Information Centre of the City of Helsinki, using the Somalis in Finland as an example, argues that they experience the most difficulties in the job market, even though many have Finnish education in the sectors with labor shortages and also speak the Finnish language fluently. She hence concludes that it is actually "hard to find any other explanation for this phenomenon [other] than negative attitudes and impressions" of (some) native population towards them (cf. Helsingin Sanomat, 2005, March 14).

Essentially, Jaakkola (2005) argues that as far as finding (and sustaining) a job in Finland is concerned, immigrants' appearance and/or nationality play a big role. In other words, immigrants who are white and/or are culturally close to Finns have more chances of succeeding than those who are not. Cecilia Englund (2002, 32-33) calls this, "cultural proximity" to the employer, and argues that "it seems easier for employers to hire someone who has a background that is perceived as close to the employer's own background than the opposite" and that "some researchers believe that this factor is the main obstacle for not employing a migrant" (see also Ervasti 2004, 36). She further argues that in Sweden, for example, among all migrants, discrimination is especially intense against immigrants from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, irrespective of their educational backgrounds. Being that Africans look the most different from other immigrants, they are often at the worst receiving end. Therefore, the whole discrimination boils down to lack of cultural and physical (in terms of color) proximity. Rastas (2002) argues that in a country as culturally (and physically) homogenous as Finland, a significant modality of experiencing hostility is the way the native population looks at foreigners, especially those who look remarkably different.

This is also observable in the sociopolitical space, where the conservatives are more openly vocal in their anti-immigrant ideology and rhetoric. This is especially championed by the members of the Finns Party (also known as *Perussuomalaiset puolue* in Finnish) which is a relatively new but fast-growing right-wing political party that has sailed on anti-immigrant rhetoric to become the third-largest party in Finland from 2012 as well as the biggest opposition in the parliament since its formation in 1995 until 2017 when it slightly lost it to the Greens party (see Yle online English news, 9 April 2017). It tends to mobilize its native supporters through such nationalistic, conservative, and populist rhetoric as "Finland is for Finnish people" (Zuzeeko, April 13, 2012); and stereotyped ones such as (African) immigrants are mostly "social shoppers" who came to Finland

to exploit the Finnish welfare system (meanwhile they are not bothered about the taxes and other levies immigrants pay); every immigrant must be well investigated because "Finland is not the Red Cross" or an economic dreamland where outsiders come to pursue their economic dreams; multiculturalism is a threat to the Finnish national/cultural identity and also "a big expense" on the Finnish society; immigrants must behave like Finns because "when in Rome, do as the Romans do;" and the "solutions to the structural problems of the third world can't be fixed with development aid by the (Finnish) government." Therefore, all Finnish "government-led development aid should be stopped" (cf. Perussuomalaisten Nuorten English webpage, 2013)

With this anti-immigrant rhetoric, which seems to resonate with many among the native population, the party rose from political oblivion to having 443 councilors in the 2008 municipal elections, tripling it to 1195 in the 2012 municipal elections (Perussuomalaiset English webpage, 2013), thereby becoming the biggest winner of the 2012 municipal elections as noted, whereas immigrant-friendly parties such as the National Coalition (NCP) and the Social Democrats (SDP) became the biggest losers in the same election (Yle online English news, October 29, 2012), losing nearly one-third of their seats in municipal councils. An SDP official attributed their loss to the presence of immigrants in their electoral list, pointing out that "we had immigrants with us and many [Finnish] people don't accept that yet. A lot of [Finnish] voters complained to me that if they give their vote to me or [to] another Social Democrat, the vote also goes to immigrants[44]" (Yle online English news, October 29, 2012), mainly because of the party-list proportional representation system of Finland in which seats are allocated to each party in proportion to the number of votes it receives. Hence, Sami Borg, a political analyst at the University of Tampere, argues that the election results show that "the [Finnish] voters and candidates are conservative. They are nationalistic rather than international, and conservative rather than liberal" (Yle online English news, October 24, 2012)

During the same period, some of the conservative voters and supporters actively engaged in the vandalization of immigrant candidates' posters, particularly in the big cities. In some cases, the pictures of the candidates were totally ripped off and the boards thrown down in blatant acts of xenophobia and racism. Pekka Sippo, the Chairman of the Mikkeli Christian Democrats party, explains that this was not the first time it was happening. "We encountered the same kind of vandalism also in the last election [in 2008] except [that] no such stickers were used then. This kind of racism must be eradicated" (Yle online English news, 2012, October 15). Ironically, the Finns Party also fielded immigrant candidates (27 nationwide) in the same election to showcase that it is not really anti-immigrant. However, some of the candidates argued that they were merely used as "window dressing" for the party without any tangible

[44] Immigrants being referred to here are of course mostly non-whites. Even some white immigrants are viewed suspiciously especially the Russians for historical reasons, and also the Arabs whose names single them out. However, in comparison to blacks, they are better viewed and preferred, from the socioeconomic space to the political arena.

support from it (For more on most of the above arguments, please see Ndukwe 2015a).

In any case, the connection between the rapid political rise of the Finns Party and the society attitude is that the rise would not have been possible without the strong support of the native mainstream supporters and voters. It shows that the majority of them agree with its conservative and anti-immigrant ideologies and rhetoric. For example, in the summer of 2012 (during the build-up to that municipal election), a Finnish lady suddenly exclaimed at the Helsinki Central Railway Station: "Everywhere I go, I see immigrants, everywhere I look, I see immigrants, it seems I will vote the Perussuomalaiset in this coming election." Her friend, who was sitting by her side quickly agreed, "Yes, I see them too: black, yellow, brown, and some funny colors. It's time to kick them out. Finland belongs to Finns" (My observation, Ndukwe 2015a). This kind of anticipated support reached 17.2 percent by September 2012 (just a month to the election) among the mainstream population which "if translated into votes (as it later did) … would bring a wave of new Finns party faces into municipal decision-making" (Yle online English news, 21 September 2012). Although the Finns party lost its majority in the council in the 2017 elections[45], its popular support is still on the rise as is shown in a recent Taloustutkimus interview poll involving 2,221 people from 2 December 2020 to 5 January 2021 (Aleksi Teivainen, *Helsinki Times*, 13 January 2021). The implication is that xenophobia and racism are also on the rise, from the socioeconomic spaces to political arena, as we would see in the experiences of (some) African immigrants in the empirical chapters.

3.2.1.5 Political parties

The institutional channeling has also tagged political parties as another important opportunity structure for immigrant political participation because they are not only recruiters of candidates during general elections but also mobilizers of voters (Ireland 1994, Martiniello 2005. See also Karp 2012). This is usually done through political rallies as well as the use of print, electronic and social media. Huckfeldt and Sprague (1992) hence call them agents of political/electoral mobilization. In other words, in their role as political educators, political parties make effort to "inform voters of issues about which they may be concerned about" and how to solve them in order to get out the vote. It is also said that their political mobilizing actions and inactions can positively or negatively (as the case may be) influence voter participation. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) hence argue that the rise and decline in voter turnout depend largely on the kind of mobilizations political parties put forward on the electorate and how satisfied voters are in that regard (see also Cameron 1974). Although their mobilization effort is largely partisan and hence selfish, in a free market electoral competition, it, however, provides voters with the necessary political information aimed at convincing them to dance towards a particular political party's ideology and promises (Wong 2006) that should also reflect solutions to

[45] This might be for a reason other than immigrant issues.

local problems. Huckfeldt and Sprague however note that the success of this mainly depends on the political party's "heavy dose of social influence" in the society. Therefore in "Toward a Theory of Political Mobilization", David R. Cameron (1974, 140) argues that to the extent to which political mobilization involves the political induction of people, is only possible with the existence and strength of an institution such as a political party which through its recruitment process, promotional drives, and ability to create a favorable image of itself, to espouse in its rhetoric, the solutions for current political exigencies and to adapt its institution, policies that could address existing local discontents, may either succeed or fail in attracting new members to its fold.

In Finland, such can be said of political parties in their drive for votes during elections, although sometimes especially in municipal elections it is the candidates that campaign using party platforms or flags and not always the parties actually doing it. However, both are interlinked since candidates' political ideologies also reflect party ideologies. In other words, the candidates do not campaign on what the parties do not believe in. At the same time, they do not explain all relevant party policies, especially in detail, perhaps leaving them out for relevant party officials whose role it is to do that.

There are 8 *major* political parties[46] in Finland that constantly feature in the state electoral processes (whether municipal, parliamentary or presidential) and are therefore more known to voters than others. They are the ones we are going to concentrate on in this study. They include the National Coalition Party (NCP or *Kansallinen Kokomuus* in Finnish), the Social Democratic Party (SDP, or *Suomen Sosialidemokraatinen Puolue*), the Centre Party (CP, or *Suomen Keskusta*), the Christian Democratic Party (KD or *Suomen Kristillisdemokraatit*), the Left Alliance (*Vasemmistoliitto*), the Green Party (*Vihreä liitto*), the Swedish People's Party (SPP, or *Suomen ruotsalainen kansanpuolue*) and the Finn's Party (FP or *Perussuomalaiset*). During elections, they and/or their candidates mostly campaign among the natives in the manner described above. But some of them also profess interests in immigrant issues. Some have *tangible* information in English language about immigrant issues on their websites. They include the NCP, the SDP, the Greens, and to some extent, the Left Alliance. For instance, the NCP dedicated a webpage called *Kamut*, which literally means *friends* to immigrant issues, but which is officially also referred to as "National Coalition of Immigrants". On this website, NCP writes that "At Kamut we want a society that values tolerance, freedom, social responsibility, and democracy, as well as provides everyone with equal opportunities and adequate education". Also, the SDP, The Greens, the Center Party, and the Left Alliance respectively have such information about "a fair society" and "a world with justice, equality and sustainability" for all. The Greens – which Yle report shows offers the highest support for immigration and immigrants' wellbeing (Yle online English news, 10 March 2019) - specifically

[46] There are of course other minor parties that unfortunately do not usually feature in the electoral process due to few members and supporters, more so because, the Act on Political Parties stipulates that any party that fails to win a seat for two consecutive times in the parliament will be deleted from the party register. So apparently many of these small parties may have been deleted for not winning a seat for years

points out that "We want to build a [Finnish] society in which everyone can participate regardless of their degree of mobility, skin color, age, or where they live" (The Green party website 2014). These signify openness to immigrants and their integration in the Finnish society.

However, what is lacking is concrete information on how to mobilize or recruit them as party members. Virtually none of the parties has any of such information. My interviews with some party officials also confirm this. Only a few use their youth political wing to recruit especially in school political fairs. But even here, they have been accused by some African immigrant students of being discriminatory for not trying to recruit black students as we would see in chapter five. In any case, it is not clear why many political parties do not have physical platforms for recruitment. Some officials claim during interview that having such platforms have not yet crossed their mind and that they would possibly think about them later.

For many political parties, therefore, their recruitment is only through their website where interested applicants could go and fill in the application form and/or ask relevant questions through the phone number or email provided. If possible, one could also go to their local branch and apply because one usually becomes a member through the local branch (cf. Finnish Act on Political Parties 1969 as amended in 1992). However, an ignorant interested person (such as an African immigrant) needs a guide to do this. Since some of the websites do not have substantial English (or other foreign) language version, interested immigrants (e.g., some African immigrants) who do not yet understand Finnish or have Finnish friends or Finnish-speaking immigrant friends to translate for them or lead them to local party branches, are excluded.

There is also the possibility that some political parties or their high-ranking officials might not yet be disposed to mobilize or recruit immigrants such as African immigrants due to the prevailing society's attitude towards them. In other words, the reason could range from prejudice to outright racism or xenophobia. Research shows that such happens in some EU countries where discrimination has prevented immigrant recruitment and membership. The situation in Sweden is worth noting here. Rodrigo Blomqvist in her 2005 doctoral dissertation on Swedish municipal elections, argues that because of prejudices among local Swedish party officials against certain category of immigrants, notably Africans and Asians, it became hard for them (the officials) to recruit and/or nominate these immigrants as party electoral candidates in municipal elections (Rodrigo Blomqvist 2005), in spite of the plea by some Swedish media that immigrants should be representatives of their fellow immigrants, especially for reasons of effective governance and political diversity in Sweden (Anttila 2016). This kind of discrimination entails near-total exclusion of immigrant participation in politics and governance as the absence of immigrant candidates could (and does) discourage (some) immigrant voters from voting as we would see in the case of (some) African immigrants in chapter five. Kristjan Kaldur et al. (2014, 2) quoting EUMARGINS Policy Brief numbers 1-4, argue that social exclusion or marginalization of immigrants is not only witnessed in the public

discourses, in the labor market, or in the school system, but it is also visible in major spheres of political life. They affirm that the inclusion of immigrants in the political processes is not only important for the health of the host country's political system in general, but also for the growth of the political parties as well as immigrant political integration in the society.

In Finland, although some research recently shows that some political parties have started showing some interests in immigrant recruitment and nominations during elections (cf. Wilhelmsson 2015. Yle online English news 2012, October 30; Wass et al. 2015; Weide & Saukkonen 2013), they are yet to tap into their political potentials because the number of immigrant members/candidates in their membership lists is still low (Wilhelmsson 2015, 2).

3.2.1.6 Immigrant and Finnish/multicultural associations

Associations that immigrants belong to –whether they are solely immigrant associations or native/multicultural associations – have been regarded by the institutional channeling as also a good political opportunity structure for immigrant political engagement because such associations are generally useful for immigrants' political involvement in many host countries (cf. Ireland 1994 & Martiniello 2005. See also Galadini 2013; Wong 2006; Bengtsson 2010; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). However, some research believes that associations that solely belong to immigrants are the best road to immigrant political integration since they do ensure both in-group bonding (among members as co-nationals and/or co-ethnics) and out-group bonding (with the local society) (Bengtsson 2010). For example, in the US, various immigrant groups are said to mobilize their members towards political participation. Some even help register and educate them during general elections (cf. Wong 2006; Jamal 2005). In Britain and Ireland respectively, the mobilization of Black and Asian immigrants by their associations and groups has helped increase their representations at the local councils (Galadini 2013; Fanning and O'Boyle 2009). In some cases, such a move is part of the reasons why such associations are formed in the first place. For instance, in France, Ireland (1994, 255) argues that when the Mitterrand-Mauroy government extended greater political rights to noncitizens to form their own associations without severe restrictions, almost immediately, associations grouping immigrants of one or more nationalities flourished and began to compete with each other and their French allies in mobilizing immigrants, reaching out to them in workplaces, meeting venues, residential houses, and by personal contacts, to convince them to align with them in the electoral process for adequate representation. Nonetheless, these associations can be quite helpful in immigrant political participation. Although they sometimes may not be able to ensure in-group bonding among all its members, they are likely to ensure bridging with the society, at least socio-politically.

In Finland, many immigrant associations abound according to various nationalities with varied aims prominent of which is providing access to integration into the society, particularly in the labor market and the educational system as well as strengthening the ethnic identity of their members through

organizing ethnocultural activities (Sanna-Bergholm 2009). African immigrant associations are significantly among those with these aims. But whether they are the best road to immigrant political integration of their members or not is another matter especially in the sense of ensuring out-group bonding with the society. In other words, as we would see in chapter five, while they ensure the in-group bonding of members, it has not been quite so in the out-group bridging with the native society (or efforts in this regard such as cultural displays or some individual efforts to connect with society have not been quite effective) mainly because of racism from many members of the society.

Nonetheless, the associations still get along in the political mobilization project, especially through their partnership with Moniheli NGO alongside other immigrant associations - altogether from 17 countries.[47] Founded in 2010 and headquartered in Helsinki but with presence in 16 Finnish cities,[48] Moniheli is a network of multicultural associations and a platform for political mobilization drive - through its iCount and SOLID projects - which is mainly funded by the European Integration Fund. This project organizes workshops, lectures, and other programs on political mobilization and voting in municipal elections as well as about municipal decision-making and how immigrants could approach authorities on issues necessary to them. The main aim is to educate and mobilize mostly immigrant associations to mobilize members to participate in the municipal elections where the majority of immigrants have political rights. The goal is not only to make immigrants vote but also to let them know about the municipal decision-making processes and how to dialogue with the municipal authorities on their needs. The municipal authorities are particularly invited during sessions for this, particularly to explain their work and the municipal decision-making processes. Officials of the political parties are also sometimes invited in a similar manner to explain their manifesto and negotiate electoral support from the associations.[49] This is mainly because Moniheli's website lacks specific details about parties and their policies and the differences between them. Julia Breton one of its staff argues that it's not quite enough just to inform people about their right to vote: they would also want to know about the policies that parties are running on" (cf. Yle online English news 28 March 2019). Breton also informs that Moniheli also organizes debates between local candidates with a thematic focus on issues related to the increasing diversity of the Finnish society. In 2017 municipal elections, for example, about 21 of such debates were organized under the theme "Our Election" (*Kaikkien Vaalit* in Finnish). Among the key goals is to increase the interest and participation in elections among

[47] The 17 countries are Tanzania, China, Cameroon, Nigeria, Brazil, Kenya, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia, the Philippines, Liberia, Armenia, Iran, India, Colombia, Peru, and Mexico (Moniheli iCount project, 2012).
[48] The cities are Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Pietarsaari, Kuopio, Tampere, Jyväskylä, Kajaani, Rovaniemi, Porvoo, Loviisa, Pori, Lappeenranta, Kirkkonummi, Kouvola, and Lohja (ibid).
[49] In France, for example, Martiniello (2005) argues that a similar multicultural association known as France Plus also does a similar job by encouraging immigrants to be part of political participation and negotiating their electoral support for political parties on the basis of the advantages promised by each party to them (see also Ireland 1994).

immigrant-background residents in municipal elections (Breton 2017) where many have political rights.

During all of these proceedings, immigrant representatives or volunteers ask relevant questions that concern their civic integration and political participation in Finland, especially at the local level. Afterwards, they go to their various associations during general meetings when all or most members would be present and pass the knowledge (cf. interview with Melis Arı Gürhanlı, the iCount project coordinator: 14 November 2014). To this extent, immigrant associations not only serve as a basis for political mobilization but also as conduits for disseminating such knowledge among immigrants. Moreover, the volunteers also sometimes organize outreach programs to reach out to more people, mostly immigrants (ibid).

So, to a good extent, Moniheli could be called an essential opportunity structure through which immigrant associations especially African associations mobilize themselves during the municipal electoral process. Unfortunately, the efforts have not been successful to the political participation of many African immigrants who are at the ethnocentric stage because of their sad situation in the Finnish society.

On the other hand, and on a general note, Denise Wall criticizes that "in spite of the positive signals … the work of organizations like Moniheli is restricted to main population centres, which means that many immigrants (in the countryside) will continue to be excluded from the electoral process" (Yle online English news, October 24, 2012). This is clearer when I recall that some African immigrants who live outside the capital region argue they have never heard about Moniheli. But it is gradually expanding its presence across the country and now operates in 16 cities,

Some other associations that (African) immigrants belong to and through which they also engage in political participation projects including protests are the Finnish anti-racist network (such as Rasmus, Rasters, Free Movement Network, Human Rights League, and Right to Live), and the environmental associations (e.g., the Greenpeace). Others include the Multicultural Women's association (Monika), the Society for the Study of Ethnic Relations and International Migration (ETMU), the Finnish Sports Federation (Fimu ry), and the Transcultural Artists in Finland (Catalysti). These associations, when necessary, organize protests (usually peaceful) for one cause or the other relating to their work (e.g., the anti-racist network usually organize against racism, and the Greenpeace organize against harm to the environment) and immigrant association members including African immigrants usually join in these protests.

For example, the Finnish anti-racist network –which many (African[50]) immigrants belong to - sometimes mobilizes protests against racism. One of the biggest of such mobilizations is the "The Peli poikki or Stop this [Racism] Game" which was carried out in major Finnish cities, including Helsinki, Tampere, Kuopio, and Jyväskylä in the autumn of 2016 in response to the death of Joonas Karttunen, an anti-racist young man, killed by Jesse Torniainen, a staunch racist

[50] There are more individual African members than associations in this network.

and a member of an extreme right-wing group called Nazi Finnish Resistance Movement (Aljazeera online English news 2016, September 24; Yle online English news 2016, September 24; Haavisto 2019) in a blatant act of hatred for Joonas' alignment with anti-racism movement. As a result, many residents (immigrants and natives alike) participated in the protests. One of the Finnish organizers particularly affirms that "We (the anti-racists) have kept quiet about the increasing racism and right-wing extremism in our society for so long, and it looks like we have been silenced. No, we have not been silenced! This is the time to show that we are still alive and strong, and will continue to be strong against racism" (Informal communication, Helsinki, 25 September 2016)

Interestingly, the (then) Finnish Prime Minister, Juha Sipilä, was also in attendance in the southeastern city of Kuopio where he condemned the attack and promised changes in legislation as part of the government's crackdown on extremist groups in Finland (cf. Yle online English news 2016, September 24; see also Aljazeera online English news, 2016, September 24). Sidney Tarrow (1998) argues that contentious politics occurs when ordinary people, sometimes in league with more influential citizens, join forces to fight an anomaly in the society. And often, as the institutional channeling shows, such actions set in motion some important political and/or socio-cultural changes in the society. Hence, protest politics can create more awareness as well as produce quicker and more outstanding responses from authorities than do electoral politics (Ireland 1994).

Figure 2. Demonstrators (comprising of natives and immigrants) against racism at the Helsinki Senate Square, Finland (cf. Yle online English news, 24 October 2016).

A similar protest movement was carried out also in December 2016 to April 2017 in the Helsinki city center, and could perhaps be termed the longest-running protest in Helsinki in recent time. The protest which was against Finland's policy of forcefully returning rejected asylum seekers home followed the Finnish immigration authorities ruling in May 2016 that countries such as Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan, are now safe and their refugees should therefore return home forthwith. The protests/demonstrations which were organized and coordinated by the Oikeus elää (or A Right to Live) and the Raster network (which collected several online signatures in this regard) gathered hundreds of asylum seekers and their supporters to protest against this policy, which they see as very unjust! The protesters (made up of immigrants and natives alike) lit candles at the Helsinki central railway station in remembrance of civilians killed around the globe in conflicts and read aloud the negative asylum decisions made by the Finnish Immigration Service (Yle online English news 2016, December 3).

In a similar vein, the Greenpeace also does organize its own protests. One of the prominent of these is its protest against Fortum – a prominent Finnish energy company - which occurred intermittently between 2003 and 2012 against the company. Fortum was building a nuclear reactor in the Finnish Olkiluoto and destroying the environment in the course of work as the Greenpeace argued. It was asked to stop work by the Greenpeace and change to renewable energy instead. It remained adamant apparently because it has the government's backing which has even given the permission for the project that consists of two power plants to go ahead (Greenpeace Finland 2013). Work hence went ahead and unfortunately resulted in 1000 reported breaches of safety standards including highly toxic waste polluting rivers and lakes (Staff Writers, Agence France-Presse 2007, Nuclear-heritage webpage 2012). As the result, the Greenpeace mobilized its members (natives and immigrants alike) for the long-haul protests against the company. Many of its members participated in them including African immigrants as we would see in chapter five.

Furthermore, some immigrant associations, including African associations, also organize protests on different issues. But in most cases these issues are mainly about their home countries and rarely about Finland or the Finnish society. Sometimes, this occurs when a prominent political figure (such as the president, prime minister, foreign minister, etc) is visiting Finland. For example, in 2009, a prominent Turkish politician visited the University of Jyväskylä, and the Turkish nationals in Finland organized a fairly large protest against him, carrying placards and chanting some songs beside the university main building (My personal observation 2009). Sometimes, this kind of protest occurs when there is something politically or socioeconomically bad or awkward going on in the home country. We would see this in the African immigrant case in the empirical chapters.

Nevertheless, these associations including African immigrants' also periodically hold internal elections to change government and governance. Interested members vie for positions using various communication methods as

we would see in the empirical chapters in the African immigrant case. Besides, the associations also periodically serve as mobilization platforms for external electoral candidates (including Finns) during general elections, especially the municipal elections. These candidates and/or their campaigners visit the meeting rendezvous and campaign for votes. Therefore, all of these present these associations as good political opportunity structures for immigrant political involvement both in the formal and informal political (or civic) sectors.

3.2.1.7 Student and labor unions

Student and labor unions present another important political opportunity structure for (African) immigrant political engagement in Finland. In short, generally speaking, union politics has been said to be where immigrants started their political participation journey in the first place. As Martinielo (2005) argues,

> Immigrant presence in unions is an older and better-known phenomenon [than in the political parties]. One could [in fact] say that union politics is the cradle of immigrant political participation (p.12).

Although what Martiniello is obviously referring to here is the labor/trade unions, it is also true of student unions, since across the world, student unions have become a good platform for immigrant political engagement in various forms including even in state elections (Abdelrahman 2015; Ireland 1994; Leighley and Nagler 2003). For instance, in Egypt, Maha Abdelrahman (2015) argues that university student unions have a long history of strong political mobilizations both for politicians and governments. This made different Egyptian politicians/candidates, especially those who are unable to strongly compete in the formal political space, always reach out to them to assist in their electoral campaigning, including on campus. Abdelrahman further discloses that almost all past and present political regimes in Egypt have directly or indirectly done this, and have upon winning, brought the universities under their direct control in order to have the student bodies under their control in order to advance their political agendas, and "prevent any incipient political activity" against them from rivals.

In Finland, student unions –where all students including immigrants (of which African students are among) are members by law except doctoral students who may be members if they wish (Universities Act 558/2009) - are not used in this (latter) way by politicians. Nevertheless, they are engaged in political mobilization in general elections, not as a union body though, but as a certain group (e.g., party political youth organizations [51]) and/or individual campaigners to reach out to other student voters for the candidates/parties. Being members of the union is already a form of politics as Martiniello (2005) argues. So, African members of the union (just as in other associations) are already involved in politics through membership. Also trying to reach out to

[51] Political youth organizations belong to political parties and often have an organized presence in higher institutions. So, during elections, they tend to mobilize fellow students for their parties/candidates.

them (as to other eligible voters) by the different groups/individuals including some African campaigners to be involved in its elections is in itself a *realpolitik*.

Means of reaching out to voters by these groups for example include the social media, emails, text-messages, phone calls, and/or physical personal contacts. In short, it is usually done in the *Students for Barack Obama* (SFBO) style. SFBO is an acronym for a coalition of US university students who campaigned for Barack Obama during his re-election in 2012. They mobilized students on campus – natives and immigrants alike using the above methods. The executives of the SFBO emphasized that this was because they want to increase "the turnout of student and young voters" since "we believe that students need a voice in political decision both at the local and the national levels. We…[therefore] work to organize and mobilize our fellow student voters at the grassroots level through a variety of activities, including voter registration, door knocking, phone banking, student issue forums, campaign strategy meetings, and planning sessions, and special larger events to engage a wider segment of the student body" for the election (SFBO 2012). Moreover, "in organizing the student body around issues of electoral politics, our group will benefit the University by increasing levels of political engagement and activism among students, by fostering a deeper sense of community among members, and by partnering with other student organizations into [a] strong collective that will advocate on behalf of students at the University and in all levels of government" (ibid).

In Finland, as noted, the case is a little bit different because student unions do not mobilize for any party or candidate in national elections (such as the municipal) since members belong to, or are supporters of, different parties and candidates. But the issue of partnering with other student organizations into a strong collective union that advocates on behalf of students for their collective needs is also done. For example, one of such collective unions is the national coalition of student unions known as the National Union of University Students in Finland (SYL). This body has for example successfully negotiated students' meal support into legislation which now provides all higher education student meals at a basic fee of €2.60 for all students (regardless of nationality) except doctoral candidates who are mostly regarded as researchers. In addition, the coalition also negotiated up to 50% discount for students in public transportation (cf. Universities Act 558/2009). In fact, the coalition is now strong enough that it now participates in the national law-making process in topics related to the universities, students' welfare, and education.

In protest politics, student unions also mobilize their members (both natives and immigrants alike) and have in the past mobilized several demonstrations on matters bordering on local and national issues. One of the biggest of such mobilizations is the one against the government's decision to introduce school fees for international students in Finnish higher institutions. During the protests/demonstrations which recorded a large nationwide turnout of students (foreign and native, including African immigrant students), lasted periodically for five years (2010 to 2015). The mobilizing methods were both traditional and digital as usual. And so many student unions in several universities and other higher

institutions were involved. They carried placards and chanted protest songs around the cities. In Helsinki, for example, students protested in front of the Parliament building during one of the parliamentary sessions to express their displeasure on the policy. They argue that free education should continue to be promoted because it is a good thing and an excellent humanitarian gesture. The natives particularly emphasize that it is also the main reason why many foreign students come to Finland because the harsh winter and difficult Finnish language are enough to scare people away. Besides, some also believe that once the fees are introduced, it could gradually come to them as it happened in the UK where British students were eventually asked to pay school fees a few years after foreign students were required to do so. Although the bill for the introduction of the fees was eventually passed, the impact of the demonstrations - including also some background lobbying of some politicians - was strong as it delayed the passage of the bill for years. Martiniello (2005) has emphasized that protests/demonstrations, as well as lobbying, are all forms of politics.

Again, another of student union's politics is their internal elections that hold periodically to fill up elective posts that are vacant in order to enhance what Jonker-Hoffrén (2012) calls internal governance and representations in unionism. These are also open to immigrants including African immigrant members, and news of the elections is usually widely circulated beforehand especially on the union's websites as well as on the school notice boards. Sometimes, this is also done by email. All interested candidates – natives and immigrants alike who pay their annual union dues - are expected to notify the executive body in charge of elections on which post they are interested in and would want to run. After all the initial protocols including verification and registration, selected candidates start campaigning among students often in the SFBO campaign-style described above. In chapter five, we would see whether and how African immigrants have been part of this.

Furthermore, in Finnish labor unions also, similar political activities exist. That is to say, labor unions also engage in electoral and protest politics among members (and sometimes including non-members in the case of protests). Here, membership is open to immigrants but not mandatory as it is in the student union. In other words, immigrant workers are free to join or not to join. But generally, in order to protect their jobs, work rights and conditions as well as relevant work benefits including but not limited to regular payment of salary and prevention of unnecessary layoffs or layoffs without adequate compensation, many immigrants including Africans are members. In fact, it is mainly to achieve these aims that unions are even mostly founded and it is also in the course of achieving them that they organize demonstrations and strikes especially when talks with employers and/or sometimes government, fail.

For example, in the summer/autumn of 2008, for example, PAU – the biggest union for Posti workers - organized a massive protest and strike against the Posti employer for its drastic cut of workers' salaries as well as preparation for massive layoffs under the so-called global economic recession. The protest was well announced and mobilized through traditional (e.g., physical contacts,

notice boards, posted letters, etc) and digital/social media (emails, text-messages, Facebook, WhatsApp, etc) – and therefore drew a large number of workers including immigrant members across the country, lasted for several days, causing big disruptions in mail delivery, and eventually forcing Posti Oy to the negotiating table. Also, in June and August 2014 respectively, Posti drivers and terminal workers mobilized for days of strike and walkout over another proposed pay cuts of their salaries by as much as 500€ as well as possible redundancies also. More than 300 union members, including immigrants, took part in the exercise, resulting in another delay in the passage of mail cargos across the country, and forcing Posti Logistics' chief shop steward, Risto Lintula, to state that a resolution to the dispute was quickly being sought (Yle online English news 26 June 2014) to end the strike.

Then, in the autumn of 2015, a confederation of Finnish labor unions organized a massive protest/demonstration against the government's announced changes to workers' benefits, including forced restrictions to annual holiday entitlement, unpaid sick leave waiting day(s), turning weekday holidays into days without pay and cuts to overtime and Sunday work compensation (Tony Öhberg 2015). The protest, which crippled public transport, shut down schools, and canceled flights was also well announced and mobilized through traditional and digital/social media, was well attended by many workers, including immigrants alike. Even the police force joined under the umbrella of the members of the Federation of Salaried Employees. The chairmen of the coalition of the labor union argued that employees cannot accept the government's *coercive* measures because the government is not respecting employees' and employers' right to determine labour costs and other terms of employment. Such a position, he said, is also threatening to breach the internationally recognized principle that the law primarily protects the weaker party (ibid).

Furthermore, labor unions also hold internal elections periodically to change government and mode of governance. These elections are open to fee-paying immigrant members including African immigrants. Usually, the news about the elections is widely circulated especially through work notice boards, emails, and the social media. This notification is not only about the date and place of voting, but also about the electoral posts to be competed for. All interested candidates – natives and immigrants alike who pay their annual union dues - notify the executive body in charge of elections about their intention and of which post they are interested in. Then they are registered and selected (if they pay their dues regularly), after which, the selected candidates start campaigning among members usually in the SFBO campaign styles mentioned above. In chapter five, we would know whether and how African immigrants have been part of this.

In Finnish general elections (e.g., the municipal), the issue is different. That is to say, as in the student union, labor unions also usually do not mobilize for any party or candidate as a body for reasons also of different party memberships/leanings. In fact, although the Social Democratic Party (SDP) of

Finland is the "closest party to the labor unions" in Finland (Encyclopedia of the Nations, n.d) no labor union mobilizes its members for it. However, in some special elections such as the European parliamentary elections, labor unions do mobilize members (natives and immigrants alike including African immigrants) for a political party and/or candidate that are specifically sympathetic to the union's cause. Such a party or candidate is usually called the "union's candidate". In this case, the issue is about getting favorable EU labor laws that could bear on Finland as an EU member for workers. For example, in 2014 EU Parliamentary elections, the union's confederated body made up of Akava, SAK and STTK launched a joint mobilization drive on its members to vote in this regard. As Hanna Kuntsi, the director of union campaign, argues, members are going into this election because "We want work, income and stability from the EU. Our demands to the EU Commission include a strategy for occupational health, support for those facing redundancies, a better working time directive and the right of unions to take class action suits" against employers who meddle with workers' well-being (Jokinen 2014). Another of the demand is "more uniform corporate tax" across the EU (ibid). Although the 8 major parties competed in the election, NCP eventually came first followed by others including the SDP!

In any case, as already noted, membership of these unions is highly regarded as a good indicator of political participation as Martiniello (2005) has argued. So being members of these unions respectively has been helpful to African immigrants in getting involved in (union) politics especially in their participation in unions' protests as well as in their internal elections as we would see in chapter five. Such involvement has therefore presented a good opportunity structure for them to express themselves politically.

3.2.1.8 Religious institutions (such as the church and mosque)[52]

Religious institutions such as the church and mosque have been also seen as another important opportunity structure in the political engagement of immigrants by the institutional channeling since they have generally played active roles in being a mobilizing link to immigrant's political engagement in many countries (Ireland 1994; Martiniello 2005; Galandini 2013; Brown 2011; Boubekeur 2007; Wong 2006; Chhibber & Sekhon 2014; Siddiqui n.d; Calhoun-Brown 1996; Gerstle 2001; Harris 1994; Tate 1993; Jamal 1995; Verba et al. 1995, 1993; Wilcox and Gomez 1990). Drawing from Verba et al. (1995), Khuram Siddiqui (n.d) for example argues that the mechanisms put forth for the stimulation of political interest occur within religious institutions, such as the church (and mosque), by the exposure of members to religious sermons, and meetings, in which general political topics, or specific political issues, are discussed. In this way, the church provides a forum for political socialization where potential civic skills, political efficacy, and political knowledge are learned, as well as political preferences made, regardless of members' level of education

[52] Discussions here will heavily draw from my article on this issue (Ndukwe 2015b) which I wrote also during my doctoral fieldwork.

and socioeconomic status (Verba et al. 1995, Wong 2006). Wong (2006) for example finds that some Chinese immigrants in the US who are members of a church acknowledged the church has been instrumental to their getting into politics, knowing about it, and learning the political skills for mobilization and participation. Tate (1993, 96) as cited by Galandini (2013) also argues that in the US for instance, black churches provide a good political setting for Blacks to gain important political information and hone their political skills for political representation and leadership through church and community services as well as campaigning for member candidates (see also Harris 1994 and Verba et al. 1993). Further, drawing from Wilcox and Gomez (1990), Galandini (2013) points out that Black-led churches in Britain, also tend to have a dual function: one is being vital domains for black Brits or black people in Britain to acquire political knowledge and engagement. Two is that it (also) serves as a place where members find refuge from societal discrimination and deprivation, and where a strong sense of group belonging, and identity, is reinforced.

In Finland, this is true also of Black immigrants, especially Africans, as research has found (Haapajärvi 2012; Dutton 2009; Ndukwe 2015b). In other words, churches (and mosques) are used for the dissemination of information not only about religion and social behavior but also about politics. In this regard, it also provides a good political setting for members including immigrants to gain some political knowledge and preparedness for elections. For example, as I found in my previous research (Ndukwe 2015b), priests/pastors (and imams) have been known to sometimes preach about political issues during sermons as well as urge members to always be part of the political process so that they could influence decisions made on their behalf. From my interview data, some African immigrants have adhered to this as we would see in chapter five. Moreover, my research also shows political encouragements from lay leaders in the church and mosque, as well as also from among congregants themselves, especially through their own initiated political discussions, usually after church services or meetings. The lay leaders, for example, are usually leaders of intra-church or intra-mosque associations such as various men/women/youth organizations and pious societies/prayer groups. The political encouragements they usually give are said to be of two types, namely: the ones made during association meetings and the ones made after, especially while leaving the church premises. In the first, it is usually more general, non-personal, non-partisan, and therefore cannot be termed a campaign for any candidate or party, but a general advice to church or mosque members to vote during election time because "it is your civic duty". In the second, it is usually partisan, personal, and selfish, because it is aimed at supporting a particular candidate or party. Usually, it takes a form of a dialogue between the leader and the listener/member.

One in four African interviewees for example attests to having been approached by a church or mosque lay leader in this manner. Some respondents also affirm that this has sometimes made them doubtful of their own candidates, to the extent of their dumping these candidates for the leader's candidate(s). Such dialogue also happens even among the congregants themselves with similar

results. Sometimes, it takes the form of a group discussion after church services or mosque prayers with attendant *pro et contra* argumentations, usually on which candidate/party to vote for, and why. This sometimes heats up to the extent that consensus is usually impossible. For instance, a Nigerian man in Helsinki who goes to Redeemed Christian Church of God, argues that "Yes, it is usually difficult to agree on a particular party or candidate or both, because everybody often has their own candidate or party. This might lead to a quarrel when someone tries to lord their arguments over others in the bid to persuade them to vote for their candidate or party. That is why at the end of it all, nobody convinces anybody" (Interview: 8 January 2015)

Critically, some respondents argue that political encouragements are sometimes discarded even when religious influences (such as respected church leaders or fellow congregants) advise on the contrary. A factor that plays a decisive role in this is their poor socioeconomic status owing to racism as we have seen.

Furthermore, although many Finnish churches, for example, do not officially mobilize in general elections, they however informally serve as *campaign platforms* or grounds for some electoral candidates also who come to campaign for votes in an informal manner. That is to say, the candidates do *not officially* hold campaign rallies in the church premises and neither do they make campaign speeches inside the church, except perhaps in *certain* elections of some churches such as the Finnish Lutheran Church which allows campaigning inside the church and within church circles only during its church elections (cf. Juhani Niinisto*, Finland Times* 2014, November 5).

However, among some Finnish Protestant churches, the church is officially used for mobilization during general elections such as the municipal by some political parties. Olli Sulopuisto, a Finnish journalist, for example, argues that "Many Finnish people were quite certain that some parts of *Perussuomalaiset* (i.e., the Finns Party), mainly the *Helluntailaiset* (the Pentecostals) and the Christian Democrat party, do use (their) congregations for political mobilization" during municipal elections. However, my informal discussions with some politicians reveal they have different views about this. Some agree that their congregations are mobilized to support their candidates in general elections, such as the municipal. One particular Pentecostal politician argued that "we do mobilize [our church] members to mobilize support for our candidates because [the] majority of them are party members just as they are also church members. And I see nothing wrong in their participating in this mobilization" for the party (Ndukwe 2015b).

Except for these exceptional cases, mobilizations in the churches mostly occur in informal and subtle ways particularly after church service in what Marjukka Weide, a Finnish political scientist, describes as "something much more fluid than direct campaigning". Using the Finnish Lutheran church as an example, she explains that there is usually

> … not much room for campaigning [in the church] …. So…I would assume it's something much more fluid than direct campaigning, something more subtle and informal

> that happens when people gather in an atmosphere of trust and community. Someone knows someone who's running for the elections; their name comes up at the after-service coffee [in the church dining room] etc [for discussion] (ibid, p. 11)

This informal campaigning includes also some electoral candidates coming around during this after-service period to informally inform and interact with church members including immigrants while they enjoy their coffee about their political manifestoes. In the process, they give out their campaign cards and fliers as well as explain to members about the information contained therein if need be. Some candidates however prefer to stand outside the church building and give out their campaign cards and flyers.

In the mosques also, a similar phenomenon exists. Farahati (2011) for example argues that the mosque is originally regarded as the first political center in an Islamic society. He explains that "from the beginning of the emergence of the mosque in Islamic civilization… the mosque [was] not only built for worshipping the Unique God" but also as an institution for formal political mobilization and information sharing where Muslims play an active role in monitoring government' activities and declaring their opinions on political issues aimed towards taking significant roles in government's decisions that affect them (pp. 146-151).

However, this is *not yet* totally the case in Finland. The likely reason, as Musa, an African Muslim political campaigner in Tampere explains, is because

> *I think Muslim politicians in Finland rarely use the mosque for political mobilization, not because this is totally out of place I think, but because I personally feel that talking about one's political ambition in the mosque either directly by one or indirectly through the imam would be a distraction to those at prayer…I [as a political campaigner] prefer rather talking to potential Muslim voters in a different setting [outside the mosque] …But, I do use Islamic quotations to persuade them…This is better if my electoral candidate is a good practicing Muslim so that my argument would be more convincing … But in all, I would say that the media, associations, and personal contacts are the more effective campaign mediums that Muslim candidates use in Finland than the mosque or even Islamic center* (Ndukwe 2015b, 13)

Nevertheless, like in the church, informal political campaigning is allowed outside the mosque. For example, Caleb, a Tanzanian Muslim in Vantaa, confirms that during municipal elections, politicians usually come to the mosque on Friday after prayers to distribute their manifestoes and cards to mosque members. "But they don't come inside [the mosque]; they stand at the door" (ibid). Many African Muslims, for example, even confirm that they prefer this kind of campaigning, although a few said they would prefer it inside the mosque as part of the sermon or after-sermon announcements in order "to get the spirits of Muslims when it is still high" (ibid). But they, however, emphasized that for any Muslim candidate to use this medium, s/he must have been known and respected among the Muslim faithful in that mosque, including to the imam. Also, his or her track record of attendance and active participation should also be known" (ibid).

In some cases, Christian and Muslim candidates also paste their campaign posters at the church or mosque boards for church or mosque members to read. Besides, they also use the digital/social media, especially mobile phones,

Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube, to reach out more to members. This is especially because, according to some candidates, many voters no longer attend religious services, or not so regularly, so reaching them out through the digital and social media is a better option (ibid). In consideration of all of the above, the church and mosque can therefore be seen as another opportunity structure for immigrant political engagement in Finland. In chapter five, we would see whether and to what extent this has helped African immigrants integrate politically.

3.2.1.9 ETNO – a consultative body

The idea of consultative bodies has been seen also as an opportunity structure for immigrant political involvement not only in consultations with authorities about immigrants' daily needs but also in electoral mobilization. It is argued that consultative bodies became fashionable in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s when some countries set them up for the consultation of immigrants especially at the local level in order to know their needs and involve them in certain political decision-making that concerns them (Martiniello 1992). Following the Finnish accession to the EU in 1995 and the directive of the Council of Europe Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Local Public Life (Lund 1999) which has urged member states that have ratified the convention on such body to encourage and facilitate the establishment of it where foreign residents, including those who do not yet qualify for voting rights, could air their views to local authorities about issues that concern them, Finland initiated its own consultative body under the name, the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO). According to its Justice Ministry, ETNO comprises of Finns and immigrants in its board which comprise of 34 members elected every four years under the auspices of the Justice Ministry. The board is a network of experts specializing on issues relating to migration, integration, sociopolitical activism, equality, and dialogue between different population groups. Together they deliberate on feedbacks from immigrants and make proposals to the government based on such in order to promote immigrants' and ethnic minorities' active participation in Finnish society, as well as build an atmosphere of positive attitudes between them and the natives (Finnish Justice Ministry 2016). Therefore, its mission is to promote cooperation between immigrants, ethnic minorities, public authorities, political parties, and NGOs.

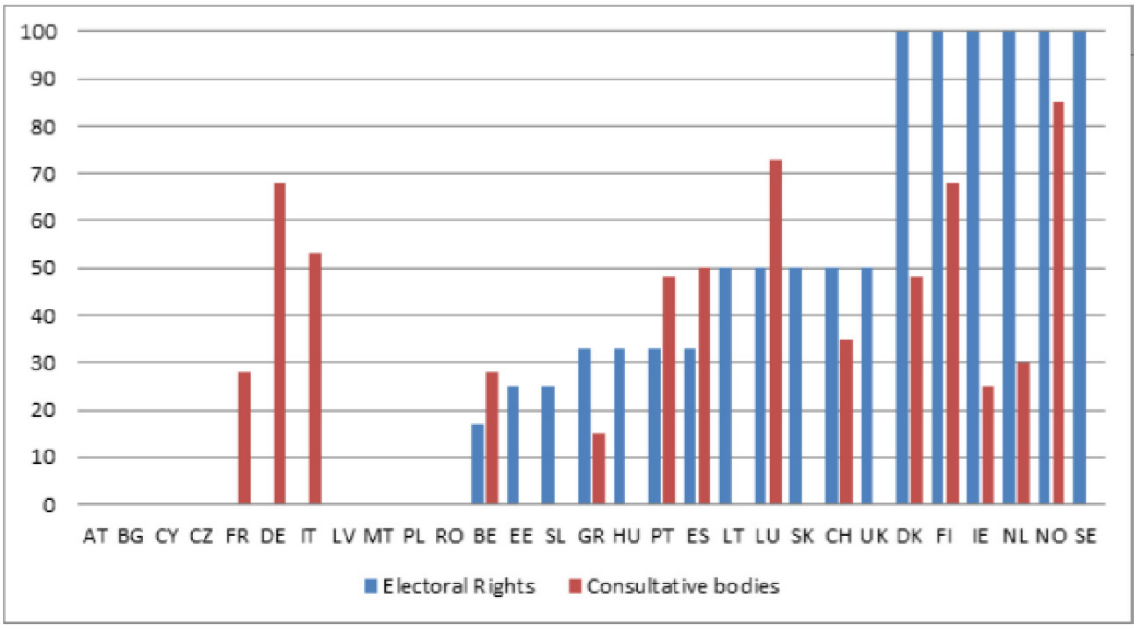

Figure 3. Electoral rights and consultative bodies in the EU, Norway, and Switzerland

This table shows Finland scoring about 68%, indicating that ETNO is existent in its domain, although many African immigrants and some immigrants I spoke with argued they have no idea of its existence.

Regardless, in its regional and local mobilization for elections, it is said to have trained so-called democracy ambassadors from different nationalities in Finland on the art of political mobilization and who thereafter go on to mobilize immigrants with the skills they have acquired (in a similar way that Moniheli does). Its key aim is to spread information about the elections within native and immigrant organizations and networks, to reach out to different populations in the society. Peter Kariuki, the immigrant secretary-general of ETNO (who incidentally is African) explains that the regional ETNOs are coordinated in the local ELY centers (i.e., the Finnish Centers for Economic Development, Transport, and the Environment [53]), where ETNO mainly "focuses on democratic participation from a wider perspective. Be it through civil society work, social activism, political activism or general participation and influence in [the] society" (Email communication: 19 February 2016).

In the build-up to the municipal elections in 2012, for instance, it is claimed that ETNO regional mobilizations were held from August to October 2012 in Helsinki, Lahti, Tampere, Jyväskylä, Kuopio, and Oulu, where immigrants were provided with training on political rights, opportunities for participation and municipal elections. Some of the events also included a panel where invited local political parties presented their parties to immigrants (Finnish Ministry of Justice, 2012, August 28). Besides this, information about the municipal elections is also

[53] In Finland, Ely Centers are responsible for the regional implementation and development tasks of the central government in key socioeconomic and cultural areas, including the integration of immigrants, which importantly have great implications for their political participation as we would see in the case of black African immigrants

available in twenty different languages on the election website of the Ministry of Justice. These include Finnish, Swedish, Sami language,[54] Romani, Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, English, Estonian, French, German, Kurdish (Soranî), Russian, Somali, Spanish, Thai, Turkish, and Vietnamese (ibid). However, it is not yet known how this has increased immigrant political participation in Finland because ETNO is hardly known among immigrants especially African immigrants as I already noted, and so will not be discussed in the empirical chapters because it played no role in their political integration as my interview data show.

Importantly, critics have argued that politically, consultative bodies are a weak form of political participation which has even led to a further marginalization of immigrants while at the same time giving them the illusion of direct political participation (Martiniello 2005, 1999; Ahokas 2010). In short, they conclude that it has led to the political powerlessness of immigrants and their descendants without achieving its key aim of effectively involving immigrants in the key political decision-making affecting them (Martiniello 1993). As Ahokas (2010) argues,

> Though different kinds of consultative structures are in use, they entail only limited political rights…. Since consultative forums do not usually have any power in making decisions, [since] their power is restricted to deliberating and making proposals. Because of these limitations, advisory bodies are not a substitute for political rights… (p. 23)

In any case, the Migration Policy Index (MIPEX) has argued that in terms of having formal favorable political opportunity structures for immigrants, Finland is one of the leading countries in this regard (Huddleston 2015). More so because its assessment of immigrant political integration policies in various countries has been generally based on four main variables which Finland has. They include:

1. Electoral rights
2. Political liberties (such as joining/forming associations/political parties/unions),
3. Consultative bodies, and
4. Implementation policies (including whether the government actively informs foreigners about their political rights) (Weide 2009; Niessen et al. 2007).

Unfortunately, the society attitude was excluded, which is the most important factor in the political participation of African immigrants. Although the government has done well in the Anti-Discrimination Act, the society has done badly in implementing it especially towards African immigrants. So, when looking from the perspective of the institutional channeling theory, this is a big deficit. Therefore, MIPEX's argument that Finland has good political opportunity structures for immigrant political participation at the local level (Huddleston

[54] These first three are officially recognized languages in Finland

2015) falls short, although, in terms of policies and laws, this is the truth. But having a law - such as the anti-discrimination act for example - without the society obeying it and the police doing little to nothing about it is as bad as not having a law. The consequence is that it would continue to negatively affect the victims' lives which could further lead to their being denied in reality, or their passivity, or disregard of, certain rights already given to them by the law, as we would see in the case of many African immigrants in chapters four and five.

Huddleston (2015) hence critically argues that in terms of immigrant integration especially political participation, there could be *gaps* between the opportunity structures stated in the law and the *reality* on the ground which could militate against their full participation in the society. In Finnish society, therefore, while we could say that some opportunity structures indeed work, (and which I would describe as the "positives" here) especially for African immigrants (as we shall see in the empirical chapters) – such as the government in enacting the municipal act and informing them of their political rights as well as the immigrant integration acts which have helped some integrate. Other structures that have also worked include various associations (including the church and mosque), some parts of the labor market and the social life in giving (some) African immigrants good jobs and social life, some aspects of political parties especially in having a favorable immigrant policy, as well as some aspects of the labor and student unions especially in involving immigrants in union political activities. These are all parts of the influences of the *positive* attitude of the native society towards immigrants.

Some others (which I would describe as the "negatives" here), do not work well for them, mainly all influenced by the *negative* society attitude - such as most parts of the labor market and social life, some aspects of (some) political parties especially in poor immigrant recruitment and/mobilization as well as some aspects of the municipal and union elections especially in poor voting for African immigrants by (some) natives, in total disregard of the anti-discrimination law whose enforcement by the police falls far short of expectation as we shall all see in the experiences of African immigrants in chapters four and five.

We now enter the part three of this study which is the last part that consists of the empirical chapters (four and five) the conclusion (chapter six). Chapter four consists of three subchapters and discusses the African migration to Finland (4.0), the concept of the black African as an immigrant in Finland (4.1), and the socioeconomic integration of the Africans in Finland (4.2). Chapter five discusses their political integration and consists also of three subchapters, namely: their political mobilization (5.1), political participation (5.2) and political representation (5.3). Chapter six, which consists of the conclusion, then sums up all arguments and suggests some solutions as earlier noted.

PART III

CHAPTER 4: AFRICAN MIGRATION TO FINLAND

As I noted in one of my publications (Ndukwe 2015a), the African immigrant community in Finland presents an interesting study not only because its presence in Finland has been remarkably growing since the 1990s, but also because it represents an extraordinary internal diversity, stemming from its numerous national and ethnic groups and their divergent immigration histories, socio-cultural backgrounds, and integration experiences. The African migration to Finland started in about the 19th century when some African children were brought to the country by some Finnish missionaries working in Ovamboland in the northern part of present-day Namibia (Rastas 2013b; see also Ericson 1993). Although we do not know what later became of most of the children as their situation was absent in research, the situation of Rosa Emilia Clay (later Lemberg) was particularly present (cf. Ericson 1993). She was born of a Namibian mother and a British father in 1875 but moved to Finland from Namibia in 1888 with a Finnish missionary couple. She studied to become a teacher, and later taught in some Finnish schools, including in Tampere, where she led "an active social life" and was liked and respected by most of her students and colleagues. But despite these, she still "faced prejudices and cruel racism" in the mainstream Finnish society, which eventually led to her leaving for the US in 1904, never to return (Rastas 2013b). After this, there was a long gap in African migration to Finland, not perhaps because of racism; or that Finland was not an immigration country as many Finnish researchers have incessantly argued (Sagne et al. 2005; Valtonen 2001; Forsander 2003), but probably because Finland did not take part in colonialism in Africa like some other European countries[55] did. Finland itself was even under Swedish rule for many centuries. Later it became the so-called Grand Duchy of Russia for more than a century until 1917 when it gained independence. Massive emigration started during the period of Russian annexation and continued after independence, mainly due to structural changes owing to poor economic growth (Heikkilä and Uschanov 2004). This also brought about strict immigration rules against migrant influx (Sagne et al. 2005). Even

[55] Notably, Great Britain, France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and Germany

when the economy started rebounding in the 1970s and 1980s, the emigration did not stop until in the late 1980s when it gradually started coming down.

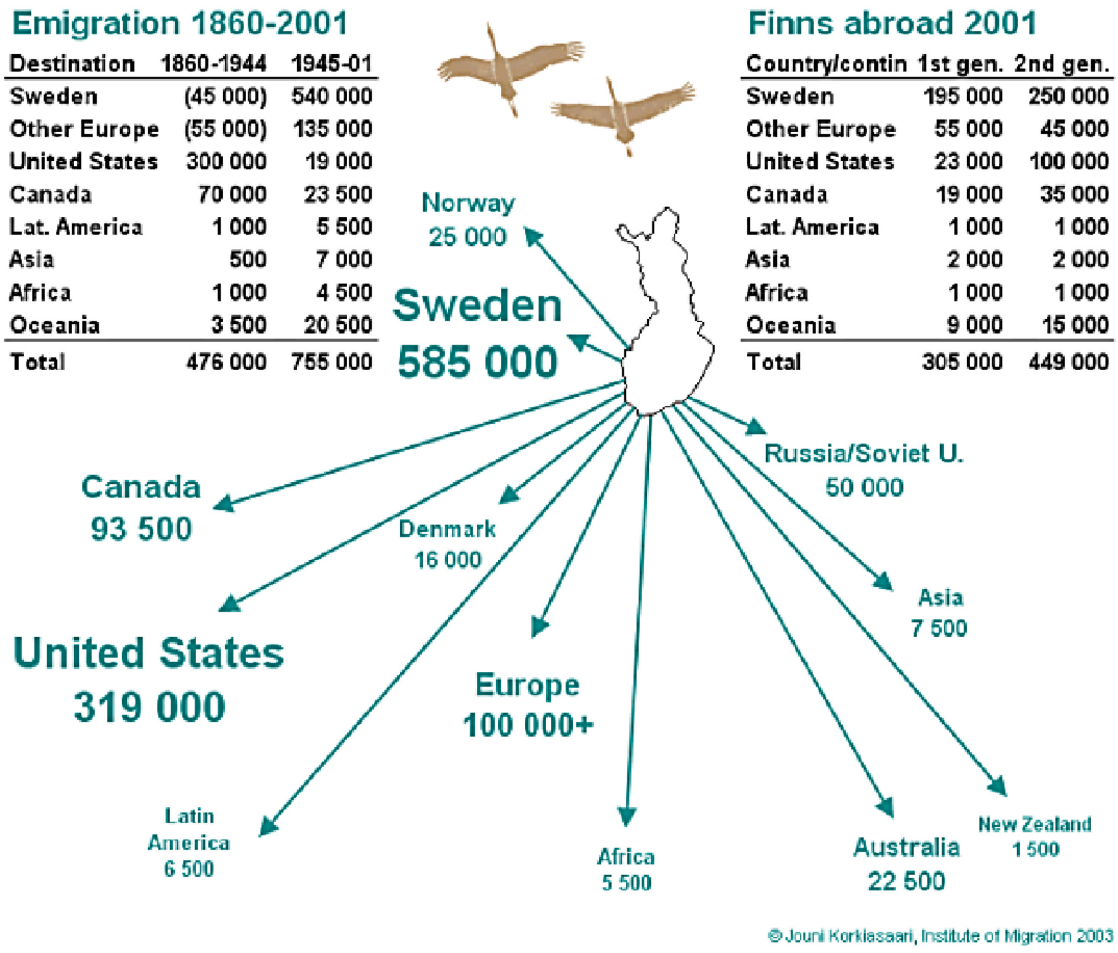

Figure 4 Map of Finnish emigration

Source: Elli Heikkilä & Elisabeth Uschanov (2004)

The massive emigration, as well as strict immigration, implies that not many immigrants were in Finland during these periods, which seems to explain the fact that Finns at home did not have many immigrants to interact with as to master the skills of intercultural relations.

In any case, between the 1900s and 1970s, some immigrants, notably from Europe, Chile, Vietnam, and Africa were said to have migrated to Finland, although in a fairly smaller number (Rastas 2013a). Africans were exceptionally few. As Rastas (2013b) argued, "Only a small number of Africans and other Black people from the Diaspora were living in Finland between the 1900s and the 1970s". Many of them were political exiles, but some were students as well. Rastas also disclosed that their experiences and reminiscences are documented in two radio documentaries and a three-part TV documentary, both of which were broadcast in 2010 by the Finnish Broadcasting Company, YLE (ibid).

From the late 1980s and 1990s onwards more immigrants started arriving in Finland. The first was Finnish emigrants from Sweden, followed by Ingrian Finns and the Somali refugees fleeing their war-torn country. Next were the Eastern Europeans especially the Estonians and Russians; and then the Swedes, other Europeans, Asians - especially Indians, Chinese and Nepalese - Middle Easterners, and migrants from Oceania, Latin America, and North America (Korkiasaari & Söderling 2003). More Africans also arrived, many of whom for studies, labor/economic migration, international protection, asylum-seeking, family reunification, or inter-marriage with Finns. The majority of them came from such countries as Somalia, Kenya, Cameroon, Gambia, Nigeria, Ghana, Algeria, Morocco, South/Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, DR Congo, Eritrea, Uganda, Libya, Rwanda, Liberia, Zambia, Sierra Leone, Malawi, and South Africa.

Overall, the general immigrant population in Finland rose from 13000 in 1980 to about 402, 600 at the end of 2018 (Statistics Finland 2018), and the share of the African immigrant population is about 50,000, up from 1000 in 1980. In the municipalities under our study – notably Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere, and Jyväskylä - the estimated African population permanently resident by the end of 2017 is 19382, divided as follows: 11500 in Helsinki; 3600 in Espoo; 2500 in Vantaa; 1200 in Tampere; 582 in Jyväskylä (Information from respective municipal offices, December 2017). These figures are actually conservative since it is only about those permanently resident. This implies that those who are temporarily resident, as well as the undocumented, are excluded.

In any case, when the African population in Finland is compared to other African populations elsewhere in Europe, particularly in countries with colonial backgrounds - such as the UK, France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Germany, and Sweden[56] - the number in Finland appears the smallest. For example, in the UK, the African population is about 1,021,611 by 2011 British census (cf. British Office for National Statistics 2011); in Belgium, it is about 600,000 by 2015 (cf. Statistics Belgium [StatBel] 2015); in Germany, 740,000 by 2016 (cf. Thomasson 2017; German Federal Office of Statistics [Statistisches Bundesamt] 2016); in Portugal, about 130,000 by 2011 (cf. Statistics Portugal [Instituto Nacional de Estatística] 2011); in Spain,1,045,120 by 2016 (cf. Spanish National Statistics Institute [INE - Instituto Nacional de Estadistica] 2016); in Sweden, 110,758 by 2016 (cf. Statistics Sweden 2016); and in France, although it is illegal to collect data based on race and ethnicity without the express consent of those involved or a special waiver of a state committee in special circumstances (Bleich 2001), some researchers, however, argue that the African population could be between 1.8 million and 5 million (cf. Sabeg & Mehaignerie 2004). However, the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) puts the figure (rather conservatively) at 68 640 by 2014 (Insee – Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques 2014).

Most of these African migrants migrated to these destinations for the same or similar reason as those in Finland. In many cases, their migration started

[56] Although Sweden has a comparatively small history of colonization in Africa, particularly in Ghana, it is worth being included, regardless.

during and after colonial times. It was such that each African group migrates more to the country that colonized them than to others. For example, most Anglophones - notably Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Somalia, and Southern Cameroon – go to the UK ([UK] Office for National Statistics 2011). Most Francophones - notably Senegal, Ivory Coast, Algeria, Niger, Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Northern Cameroon, Mali, and Chad – go to France (Insee – Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques/[French] National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies] 2014). For those colonized by Belgium – notably the DR Congo, and to some extent, Rwanda and Burundi (which were particularly put under Belgian protectorate), they go to Belgium. In Germany, initially, its African migrants came from Namibia – its traditional colonized country, but since the 1970s, many other Africans had chosen there as migration destination. They mostly come from countries such as Burundi, Tanzania, Cameroon, Uganda, Nigeria, Ghana, and many others (German Federal Office of Statistics 2016). In Portugal, many African migrants are also from its former African colonies (so-called Lusophones). They include Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe, and to a small extent, Equatorial Guinea (Statistics Portugal 2011). Finally, Spain, although it colonized mostly the Western Sahara and to some extent, also Equatorial Guinea, many other African migrants had also arrived from Mali, Cameroon, Senegal, Gambia, Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya (Spanish National Statistics Institute 2016). Sweden, although it played very little role in the colonization project, colonizing Ghana to some extent between 1660 -1663, it has however attracted a fairly larger African population due mainly to its generous humanitarian gestures. Its African population hence mostly from Ghana, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Morocco, Egypt, South Sudan, and Gambia (Statistics Sweden 2015)

The majority of these African migrants reside in the capital areas of the respective countries. In Finland, it is also the same just as it is with other immigrants therein (cf. Centre for European Studies & Suomen Toivo 2012; Statistical Yearbook of Finland 2004, 153–154; Pehkonen 2006; Heikkilä & Järvinen 2003). In 2003 alone, for example, Pehkonen (2006) argues that immigrants in the region comprised 5.3% of the population of Helsinki, 4.2% in Vantaa, and 4.1% in Espoo. And recently, Yle also reports that "the capital area is home to 60 to 70 percent of Finland's immigrants, half of whom live in Helsinki" (Yle online English news, 2nd April 2016). Heikkilä and Järvinen (2003) point out that the general attraction to this region is the "diverse employment opportunities and services" as well as the possibility of experiencing a more diverse and open society more than in other regions.

In terms of demography, the accurate number of African men and women, youth and children in Finland, including their ages and native languages, are not comprehensively known because they are not documented. However, suffice it to say that there are more African men than women in Finland, mainly because of traditional family reasons where men travel more as breadwinners (or potential ones) than women to fulfill this breadwinning role (Ndukwe 2017).

African women in Finland are therefore few and are mostly spouses of resident African men. Only a few women came by themselves, mostly for studies.

4.1 The black African as the "only" immigrant in Finland

> For some reason, it seems that most Finnish people think that when you talk about immigrants, it only refers to [the] Somali people, or people with a Somali background, or people who are from Africa… And they neglect the fact that the majority of immigrants in this country [Finland] come from other EU countries (Maryan Abdulkarim, a Somali-immigrant activist, in an interview with Yle (cf. Yle online English news, 22 December 2013)

I made a similar finding in my relatively recent research (Ndukwe 2017) which this subchapter will draw heavily from. In the official sense, the word immigrant in the Finnish language (*maahanmuuttaja*), means "a person who has moved to Finland (and) who resides in the country with a permit issued for purposes other than tourism or similar residence of short duration, (and) whose right of residence has been registered [in the Local Population Register] or who has been issued with a residence card" (cf. The Finnish *Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration* 1386/2010, §3, no.3). This means that an immigrant is *officially* recognized as somebody who has come to settle, or at least, stay for a longer time. It also automatically implies anybody who is not a Finnish citizen by birth. It says nothing about country of origin or color of skin.

However, the term now appears to mean a different thing in the mainstream society. For instance, it now refers mostly to immigrants who look physically different (in terms of color), and this also includes children of mixed parentage (e.g., Afro-Finns) even though they are Finnish citizens by blood and birth. In other Nordic countries, notably Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, such is also said to happen. For example, Gunnar Myrberg in "Who is an immigrant?", argues that the official meaning of the "immigrant" in Norwegian is *innvandrer*, in Swedish *invandrare*, and in Danish *indvandrer* – is officially "a person who is entering" into the country and who is not a native. But also over time, this meaning was upturned in the public domain to mean how un-Norwegian, un-Swedish, or un-Danish one *looks*. (cf. Myrberg 2010, 45 – 48). In other European countries, this is also the case. For instance, in France, Ireland (1994, 15) drawing from Grillo (1985), illustrates that in the pre-1974 period, the word, "immigrant" was mostly used for non-whites especially Africans such that Algerian migrants are often referred to as immigrants while the Portuguese migrants are not referred to so mainly because they look more like the French than the Algerians who look remarkably different.

In Finland, this is also the case. African (and other non-white) immigrants are mostly referred to as immigrants while white immigrants are mostly not referred to so. Johanna Leinonen (2012, 213) for example finds in her study of white American immigrants in Finland that these immigrants are not labeled as

immigrants by Finns mainly because of their white color[57]. She argued that they themselves do not also want to be labeled so, because, for them, their *self-image* does not fit with the idea the term (unofficially) evokes. Instead, they prefer to be called "Americans living in Finland" or simply "expatriates".

Fred Dervin, a British professor of multicultural education at the University of Helsinki, has argued that "the term [immigrant] has got so many negative connotations that it's become dangerous" to use, especially "because we create [a sense of] inequality" in the society among populations through its use "since not everyone is given the same treatment or opportunities" in the usage. He further argues that "As far as we know in Finland… there's a *hierarchy* in terms of different types of immigrants. I am an immigrant myself, but no one refers to me as an immigrant per se because I look more or less like the others" (Yle online English news 16 October 2013. See also Lillie and Ndomo 2021 earlier cited for a similar argument on societal hierarchy of immigrants). In this hierarchy, Africans are at the bottom of the wrung because of their black color and continent of origin[58] which has been so negatively reported by the *Western media* with so *much vilification* and *exaggeration* as a haven of poverty, political instability, war, humanitarian aid, and famine (Rastas 2013a). In any case, the black color makes African immigrants more easily noticed in the crowd than other immigrants. Hence, they typically represent what an immigrant (unofficially) is in Finland. Leinonen (2012) calls this, *visibility*, which is a key mechanism for labeling people "immigrant" in Finland in the public space. This visibility, according to her, also has an audible aspect in terms of speaking the Finnish language well. While some Africans could be found wanting in both, only in the latter could Americans or other white immigrants whose Finnish speaking skills are still poor or not fluent enough be also found wanting. And it is only in this case they are labeled immigrant.[59] Leinonen, therefore, concludes that the issue of being an immigrant in Finland bothers mostly on the *politics of visibility* either in *visual* terms (i.e. skin color) or *audible* terms (way of speaking Finnish).

In the next subchapter, we would discuss the implication of this in the socioeconomic integration of African immigrants in Finland. Discussions will center on the acts of inclusion and exclusion in the socioeconomic arena which produce or leads to their varied political behaviors in terms of (political) integration in chapter five. Discussion in this chapter (four) will mostly draw from my two articles (Ndukwe 2015a and 2017) which I published during and after my doctoral fieldwork. The opportunity structure to be discussed here is mainly the attitude of the native society towards them especially in the labor market and social life.

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[57] Although some Americans are black or (so-called) colored, Americans are mostly seen from this white perspective.

[58] This is also because an average Finn or an average white person is more likely to respect a black American than a black African.

[59] Not anybody who speaks 'broken Finnish' however can be labeled immigrant, since the person could be a foreign-born native Finn who has just returned to Finland from abroad with little or no Finnish language skills. In this case, however, some explanations are needed

4.2 African immigrant socioeconomic inclusion and exclusion in Finland

The perception of the Black African immigrants as the immigrant in Finland greatly influences how they are seen and related to in the social and economic domains, and which positively or negatively influences their socioeconomic integration. As succinctly mentioned earlier, this consequently also influences their political behavior and integration positively or negatively. This is the main reason why we are discussing this socioeconomic integration in a purely political science field. Discussions here however will center on this integration only. The effects on political behavior and integration will come later in chapter five.

As my interview data show, many African immigrants understood socioeconomic inclusion and integration as being socially accepted and feeling welcome, knowing the local language and culture, getting better work opportunities, finding one's place in the community, and also practicing some aspects of own culture (e.g., language and festivals, etc). A similar opinion on socioeconomic integration has also been reported in other research interviews with migrant workers (e.g., Saarinen & Jappinen 2014, 149 - 150). As earlier noted, many African immigrants have however learned the local language and culture but not many have been socially accepted or offered a better job opportunity, which has denied many a place (i.e., inclusion) in the community (i.e., the society).

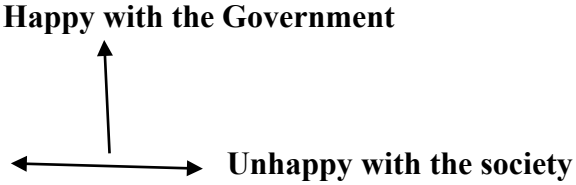
Their socioeconomic integration, as my interview data show, therefore, mainly depends on one key variable: the attitude of the native society which could either be positive or negative (see also Ervasti 2004[60]) in terms of 1) who the African is lucky or unlucky to meet at the labor market or the social spaces. 2) and the ability or inability of the African to *ignore* any racially motivated bad treatment (otherwise known as racism/xenophobia) from the encounter. This essentially puts African immigrants into two DMIS stages: ethnorelative and ethnocentric. Those who are lucky to meet non-racist Finns or are able to ignore racist treatments belong to the ethnorelative category, while those who are unlucky to meet racist Finns and are unable to ignore any racist treatment belong to the ethnocentric. Because of this, those at the ethnorelative have an integrated identity or in a few cases, assimilated identity, whereas those at the ethnocentric have a separated or in some cases, marginalized, identity.

This further puts the two groups into different socioeconomic networks. For instance, those at the ethnorelative usually have vertical networks (usually networks of well-employed Finns and immigrants) through which they access educated/skilled jobs, while those at the ethnocentric often have horizontal networks (networks of poorly employed Finns and immigrants) through which

[60] Ervasti (2004, 43) has argued in his analysis of the 2003 European social survey (Jowell et al. 2003) that the most important background variables influencing native attitudes towards immigrants in all countries surveyed but especially Finland are contact with them (such as in friendship, marriage, etc) which leads to positive attitude, and on the other hand, the conservation value priorities of (some) natives which often leads to a negative attitude.

they access mostly uneducated/unskilled poor jobs that pay comparatively little. Ahmad (2005) confirms in his study of the Indian sub-continent immigrants in Helsinki that those with vertical networks are usually employed in better/higher positions with high salaries and higher chances of moving further up the career ladder while those in horizontal networks are usually employed in uneducated and unskilled with poor salaries with little or no chances of moving up or even crossing over to educated skilled jobs (otherwise known as the white-collar) since their network does not support that access. Among African immigrants at the horizontal level and who constitutes the majority among those studied, this fundamentally determines their feeling towards Finland.

Many African Immigrants' Feeling towards Finland



However, most African immigrants at the ethnorelative stage do not share in the above feeling as they are happy with the government and the society. Many of these are well employed and enjoy positive relations with the natives, and are also already integrated or in some cases assimilated, in the society. In other words, they have "paid their dues" and had "become members of the society in good standing" (Lillie & Ndomo 2021). Some have not yet but nonetheless enjoy such relations due to the kind of natives they meet that do not discriminate. Some are spouses of Finns and/or have close Finnish friends. Some, especially those who came as refugees (e.g., the Somalis, Sudanese, etc), have also benefitted generously from the government integration programs, particularly language and vocational training as well as job placements. Many also received some stipends monthly during the trainings. For example, one of the beneficiaries, Abdul, a 25-year-old Somali male refugee with assimilated identity in Vantaa, narrates that

> *I passed through vocational school, and after the training, I was placed in a job, and I have gradually risen two steps up since then. I feel happy with my job, and I look forward to it every day. By the way, I was also being offered some [government] grants during my training to take care of myself while the training lasted. It helped me a lot!* (Ndukwe 2015a, 159)

Also, Suleyman, a Sudanese refugee in Espoo who arrived about four years earlier (as at 2014), also stated that:

> *The municipal integration officials were helpful to me and my family. They received us well [on arrival]. We have drawn our integration plan, stretching up to the three years, and have already started following them: first by attending lessons about the Finnish society. Now, I am attending a Finnish language course and also receiving nearly 900 Euros every month [as living support] ….* (loc. cit)

Furthermore, Serakat, a 28-year-old female Somali in Helsinki with integrated identity, also attests that:

> *I and my family were [also] well received by the municipal integration officials when we first arrived in 2000. Afterwards, we were given a good apartment in Espoo…. We did some language trainings …sponsored by the employment office. Afterwards, I trained as a practical nurse in Omnia [Vocational College Espoo] and started working in an old people's home -- full of nice grannies including some papas. I did internship there before the employment…. Then after a probational period, I was offered a permanent position. Life has been good ever since. My two siblings are also gainfully employed, including some of my (immigrant) friends…* (pp. 159-160)

Some other African refugees and asylum seekers, including those in Jyväskylä and Tampere, testify they have also benefitted in similar ways. Some argue that the Finnish officials, as well as their Finnish workmates and some others they have been lucky to meet, have been generally nice to them without any discrimination. Bennett (2004) argues that at the ethnorelative stage of acceptance, cross-cultural differences are seen as an inevitable part of human existence, not as a defect of any culture or people. He further explains that people at this stage are good at identifying these differences through 'constructing a kind of self-reflexive perspective that helps them experience others as different from themselves, but equally human' (loc. cit). But this does not mean that the people in question (e.g., Finns) are necessarily experts in one or more cultures (although this might be possible) but simply because they are able to acquire positive cultural categories (e.g., good attitude and/or skills) that help them appreciate people of other cultures rather than discriminate against them.

Nonetheless, not all African immigrants at the ethnorelative stage passed through the government's integration programs[61], or are refugees/asylum seekers. Some came to Finland generally for studies and/or family reunification and sponsored by their spouses or partners, or in some cases, by themselves. Some went through language training and studies, and luckily got good jobs/salaries. For instance, a 28-year-old female Kenyan registered nurse in Helsinki and a 32-year-old male civil engineer in Jyväskylä who is originally from Mali, did so respectively. "I got mine [job] at a Vantaa hospital after a few months of searching after graduation," said the Kenyan who had been in Finland for 5 years (4 of which was dedicated to studying) and secured the job through a Finnish friend whose sister is a nurse in the hospital, "but changed later to a more permanent one at a Helsinki hospital. Life has been good ever since, at least financially speaking, but of course, the job has its challenges too, especially because of my (black) color" (Ndukwe 2015a, 160-1). For the Malian (who had been in Finland for 10.9 years, and had upgraded his qualification to an engineer),

> *Initially, the Finnish construction employers [where he was about to work] were doubtful of my ability and refused. But I begged them to give me some work to do as sample. After some time, they eventually gave me and I did it so wonderfully well. They were so impressed that I was*

[61] This does not however mean that all who passed through the integration programs are well integrated. Some are not. Some became assimilated, while others got stuck at the ethnocentric. It all depends on individual experiences in the society and/or the ability to cope, following the programs.

given the job right away. Within 6 months I was made a supervisor in my section…. I now earn [a] good salary and my family has joined me too. I am really so happy here and feel integrated here. I do not have any problem with anyone (Interview: 20 January 2015).

These two narratives show the power of intercultural flexibility (on the part of the employer). This flexibility is necessary for intercultural acceptance as it could give room for the discarding of stereotypes against the other. Bennett (2004, 1993) argues that cultural stereotypes, especially of a negative kind, by the people of dominant majority (or culture) against those of the minority could prevent them (the majority) from seeing the physical humanism or the essential qualities of the other, unless otherwise changed by a significant cross-cultural encounter. At the same time, the persistence of the African is also a form of intercultural flexibility that is relevant in immigrant attempts to integrate. In the labor market, this is important since it is already commonplace that (many) Finnish employers hardly employ Africans, especially in the professional fields. However, it is also the case that such attempts sometimes do not yield any fruit as it could be seen by (some) employers as an irritating distraction rather than a motivation for them to employ the African as we would see later.

At the socio-cultural spaces too, African immigrants with ethnorelative experiences have good stories to tell. Many testify to good relations with native Finns in the socio-public arena, and often "do not see or notice any ill-motivated treatments" (Bennett 2004) from them. For example, an assimilated Cameroonian man, 27, in Helsinki, who has been in Finland for 9 years, says that "I have not really noticed any problem in terms of racism or xenophobia [here]. I think this is a good country…. The people are nice and polite, and can be helpful if you need help…." (Ndukwe 2015a, 162). Also, an integrated Nigerian female deputy director of youth affairs, 37, in one Finnish city and who has been in Finland for 12 years, attested that:

I love the people here and my job. I benefitted from the largely free education here, and now I am gainfully employed. What again can I ask for? Since I came here, I have not really been abused racially. I have not had any problem as such. Although of course, I have heard some immigrants, including Africans, complain about being racially insulted…. I haven't experienced that [myself]. I am happy here and I can recommend this place to anyone (Ibid).

Similarly, an integrated Gambian male surgical nurse, 29, in Espoo who arrived in Finland 8.6 years earlier, stated that:

I have generally had nice relationships with people here…. I got my job some months after my graduation and started working. I have been doing well since then…. I have also been well treated by the hospital management. I go to work every day by public transport and also walk along busy streets. But I haven't received any racist comment or treatment, not even in [the] supermarkets or bus stops. I also have African friends who live here. [But] None have complained to me about any racial problem, although I am not sure if they have had any such problem. But they all seem happy being here..." (Ibid).

Some other Africans at the ethnorelative stage in one way or the other agree to these narratives in their own way, emphasizing also on the politeness and relative honesty of Finns as among the valuable features they love. Some testified they have at various times lost their belongings in the past and later (surprisingly)

received them back afterward. For instance, a 35-year-old Ivorian man in Vantaa stated that "I have twice lost my wallet on the road, and the next day, it was sent to me by the police who received it from a Finnish Samaritan. It appears they got my contact through my ID card in there in both cases. I was marveled! And on both occasions, everything inside was intact, including my money" (Ibid, p.162). These success stories indicate mutual relations from the native society regardless of color, the strangeness of name (e.g., in the ID card), or country of origin. Bennett (2004, 6) argues that in constructing a kind of self-reflexive perspective that helps them experience others as equally human, people of dominant culture maintain good relations with others and respect their feelings. These successes helped these Africans develop good feelings towards the society which has helped their political integration as we would see in chapter five.

However, not all African immigrants have success stories, and those in this category are in the majority. They often experience the ethnocentric side of the society or otherwise racism and discrimination. Many have acquired the language and cultural skills as well as high academic qualifications (often from Finnish schools) and some social ties but do not yet have a good standing because they are mostly employed in poor jobs with poor salaries as well as immersed in poor social life. In some cases, some are even unemployed. Some already have Finnish citizenship or permanent residence permits with several years of residence. Yet, nearly all of these do not count or have any influence on how the Finns they meet treat or relate with them. In many cases, they are treated with disdain and discrimination mainly due to their color, and/or continent of origin,[62] resulting in a lack of integration in the society.

"No one comes to live in a country and refuses to integrate", says a 38-year-old Ghanaian culinary graduate-turned-dishwasher in Helsinki who has been in Finland for 12 years "with nothing to show for it."

> *It is never our fault not to integrate in Finland. It is the society's fault because they discriminate [against us] a lot. We have learned the language and know the culture and practice them well. We have added more academic qualifications and skills especially from Finnish schools to our old ones from home. We have also tried to make friends with them but many would not want. Only a few shows interest…. Even at this some are not useful to us in terms of getting jobs that we are qualified for or useful social connections. Some do not really have or know how we can access them since we all met in the same menial jobs. But some would also specifically tell you that the kind of people they know that have a better job to offer would not want to employ blacks because they don't like blacks…. Incidentally such people... feel we're not in the same class with them and so should not access such jobs. That is why we do not get the jobs despite our qualification[s]. Only a few lucky of us have succeeded.... Many of us including myself have been unlucky. That is why I am still doing dishwashing instead of cooking which is what I studied in Helsinki [school] 8 years ago. Altogether I have been in Finland for 12 years with nothing to show for it…. I could also not access big loans to help me start my own job [i.e., restaurant] because of my poor [monthly] income. When you have a poor income every month, that is what happens [that is, you would not be able to access big loans] …* (Interview: 20 August 2016)

Many African immigrants interviewed have a similar experience and share his view. Many also argue that whenever or wherever they themselves had

[62] Both are related because being black is synonymous with being from Africa even though in reality it is not always the case.

become ethnocentric in their actions (for example by refusing to get involved in a certain activity such as the political, or getting involved in a certain way or form, as we would see in chapter five, it is because the society has *nurtured* this attitude in them through its racist and discriminatory attitudes.

A Tanzanian bus driver, 30, in Vantaa, argues that as far as racism and xenophobia in Finland are concerned, "it depends on who you meet. If you meet the good ones [i.e., non-racists], you won't have any problem at all. But if you meet the bad ones [i.e., racists], you will regret ever coming here…. Unfortunately, the bad ones are in the majority" (Ndukwe 2015a, 162). Also, a Togolese victim, 30, in Espoo in this regard argues that "once you [a black man] decide to settle here [in Finland], be ready to battle all kinds of discrimination. And even when you get your Finnish citizenship, it does not change anything. It does not change your color or cultural identity. Everything [i.e., the discrimination] is still the same [regardless]" (ibid). To illustrate, Bupe, a 30-year-old integrated Zambian-Finnish female IT graduate in Helsinki, who was born and partially bred in Finland and have been resident for 20 years, narrates that:

> *Recently, I thought I had a successful interview [in Helsinki]. I was told to come and collect a letter of employment the following week. When I arrived, a Finnish woman at the desk looked at me squarely and asked, "Are you really a Finn?" I said, "Hmm…yes." "Really?" [she said]. Well, I have a Finnish mother and a Zambian father and a Finnish passport. She then went inside and came out after a while, and told me that the MD would want to see me…. When I went inside, the MD said, "Ah….we asked you to come today for your letter of appointment, right?" I said, "Yea." "Ok, do you speak Finnish?" "Yes, perfectly!" "What about Swedish?" "Hmm, yes…but a little!" "Oh, sorry, we made a mistake. We're actually looking for a Swedish speaker!" I lost the job. But what saddens me most was not that I lost the job, but that a few days later, a very close friend of mine – a native Finn – who barely understands a word in Swedish was offered the same job. Apparently, the employers do not know we are friends. From that day on, I ceased to be a Finn…* (pp.166-7)

This kind of rare experience of an integrated African could make a migrant develop a separated identity. It is a kind of experience mostly associated with Africans at the ethnocentric stage. Although eventually, Bupe did not develop a separated or marginalized identity because she later got a similar job in another firm, apparently immigrant-friendly, as she later told this researcher, the negative experience in the first encounter nevertheless changed her outlook towards the society in terms of racism and the zeal to fight it as we would see in her political choices in chapter five.

Furthermore, sometimes in order to even get an interview, some African immigrants do the unthinkable. For instance, Abubakar, a Somali-Finnish man, 28, with a master's degree in IT who has been in Finland for 18.5 years but with a poor job and marginalized identity, and whose several applications for a better job had been left unanswered, suddenly out of frustration, decided to change his name to a Finnish one to see if it will work, "and it worked," he said:

> *I was immediately called for an interview…. But when I got there, the [Finnish] recruiter was surprised at my black appearance, and wondered if I was the person who sent in the applications. Obviously, he was expecting to see a white person. Needless to say that he refused to interview me…. But that experience convinced me that it is not about your academic qualifications to get a job here, but your color…where you come from!* (p. 172)

Also, Ugep, a Gambian Business Management graduate-turned cleaner, 41, and resident for 14.8 years in Espoo with a separated identity, who though luckily was invited to a few interviews in his real name, argues that, in all cases, his black color and "Africanness" however proved an obstacle by overshadowing his academic qualifications and skills, making him lose the jobs: He argues that

> *I'm now at a point where I'm getting so frustrated and regretting coming here [Finland]…. The… questions they throw at me in two or three interviews that I've been invited to are just a mockery of who I am. They twist them politely so that a simple mind does not understand… but in reality, it is a mockery of my blackness, my Africanness; that I have nothing to offer Finland, that my being invited for interview was a mistake, and therefore my coming was use-less...* (p. 167)

This kind of treatment showcases evidence of exclusion based on color. The issue of underrating people based on their appearance or place of origin has already been discussed above by Bennett (2004). At the defense level of ethnocentrism, for instance, he warns of the tendency of the people of dominant cultures to discriminate against others whom they feel are inferior, and/or are a contamination or threat to their own culture and an attack on their values. African immigrants who receive these discriminations tend to have negative feelings towards the society as a result, and which, among others, tend to reflect in their behaviors including behaviors towards the political process as we would see in chapter five.

Umayya Abu-Hanna, a Palestine-Finnish female journalist, has argued that the black skin is "a hate magnet" in Finland especially at the social and economic spaces, and that "If you crash into a group of black people in Finland, they are either holding a broom or a rag" (*Helsingin Sanomat*, 30 December 2010) – a sign of poor socioeconomic status engineered by the society's attitude. She further argues that this is why black migrants "do not appear in leadership positions in the Finnish society: be it political, financial, educational, scientific or artistic". On why the black is so much hated, Rastas (2013a) – a Finnish researcher - for example explains that this is because the word 'black' - *musta* in Finnish - has a pejorative undertone with some negative connotations which are incidentally used in racializing categorizations. She also argues that besides this, the Finnish *perception* of Africa is not also good because many things related to Africa in the Finnish media and in the school curricular are presented in a negative light, and these include racist representations, images of war, histories of oppression, and poor people merely seen only as objects of humanitarian aids. This is linked also to a general belief among Finns that Africa is poor, and hence Africans have nothing tangible to offer Finland. This has consequently led many Finns to (wrongly) perceive African immigrants as people who come to Finland to beg and to exploit the Finnish welfare system. In addition, some also see African immigrants as cultural invaders who came to distort the Finnish white race with their black color through spousal or marital relationships with natives that often result in Afro-Finnish children (Ndukwe 2015a). For example, an African man in Vantaa tells of how his Finnish wife was aggressively asked by a middle-aged Finnish man at a bus stop if the Afro-Finnish baby she was carrying was *the kind*

of baby she is *expected* to bear as a Finn. A serious quarrel then ensued between them. And were it not the intervention of an elderly Finnish woman sitting nearby, it could have degenerated into something nasty (Ndukwe 2017).

However, Serakat, the integrated Somali earlier cited, makes a distinction between the Finnish hatred of the black *skin* and the black *person*:

> *The problem is that many of them [i.e., Finns] don't like the black skin. I don't want to say they don't like blacks.... But they hate the skin color. Some would even try to avoid close contact with you, especially in busses and trains. Some would say rubbish things to your hearing, including "go back to your country" straight to your face. It can be very demeaning...!* (pp. 162-3)

This argument – concurred by some African immigrants in different narratives – indicates nonetheless that the hatred of the skin color does transfer to the person in the skin. This is exacerbated by the perception about Africans as argued by Rastas (2013a), which incidentally has resulted in increasing Afrophobia in the Finnish society. Afrophobia is described by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) (2016a) as the dislike, bias, prejudice, oppression, racism, structural and institutional discrimination, racial and ethnic profiling, enslavement, xenophobia, societal marginalisation and exclusion, systematic violence, hate speech and hate crime against Africans and Black Europeans. Bennett would argue that all of these do happen because of people's unwillingness to tolerate intercultural differences. He further affirms that such behaviors could be out of ignorance, naïve observations, or simply outright racism, including the tendency to dehumanize outsiders (Bennett 1993).

Basically, the issue of underrating people based on their skin color or place of origin has been highlighted above (See also Hammer and Bennett 1998). Generally, some Finns also seem to claim that Africans (allegedly) have nothing to offer Finland, and hence should be kept at the lowest stratum of the society. From the perspective of the institutional channeling theory, Ireland (1994, 10) argues that students of immigration since Nathan Glazer (1954) have observed that the dominant groups tend to "create" minorities through their discrimination of the minority by ascribing to them certain low characteristics to justify their maltreatment in the society.

It could therefore be difficult for an African at the ethnocentric stage to crossover to the ethnorelative. Put differently, without a good job, which could guarantee a reasonable salary, immigrant integration is likely to be difficult to attain for many of them. The former Finnish labor minister, Lauri Ihalainen, has argued that "for immigrants, work is one of the keys to sound integration. If the doors to working life do not open, integration often halts half-way…." (cf. Ministry of Employment and Economy, 2012, June 7, see also Saukkonen 2017). Forsander (2008, 81) has been cited as arguing that "the labor market defines the terms of inclusion" in the society because it "grants people their standard of living, social status, and promises of full-fledged citizenship," and if this is lacking, people often feel excluded. But I argue that it is *not* just *any* work, but *an educated/professional* one! "Without a job commensurate with your qualification", says a Liberian female Economist in Tampere, "you cannot be happy or feel belonged to the society… because it means you have wasted your time, money

and energy [in school] pursuing a fruitfulness education…." (Interview: 20 March 2016).

Michel Wieviorka (2010) following Barker (1981) and Taguieff (1988), has argued that there are two *distinct* types of outright racism that could result from intercultural incompetence: 1) classical, inegalitarian racism and 2) a new differentialist racism. Classical, inegalitarian racism

> …considers the Other as an inferior being who may find a place in the society but the lowest one. There is room for inferior people in this perspective as long as they can be exploited and relegated to the unpleasant and badly paid tasks. The second kind (i.e., the differentialist) considers the Other as fundamentally different, which means that he/she has no place in the society, that he/she is a danger, an invader, who should be kept at some distance, expelled, or possibly destroyed (Wieviorka 2010, 268).

Such discrimination has eventually pushed some African victims out of Finland. For example, Sociologist Dunia, a Liberian immigrant, 38, who had lived in Tampere for 13.5 years before relocating to Canada, is among them. He argues that

> *. . . the one [i.e., discrimination] that pained me most was a social welfare (job) vacancy that I applied for in Helsinki and was refused because I was told that I had "no credible experience" for the job even though I've had rewarding short contract experiences in the field . . . Then I purposely asked my Finnish girlfriend who had just graduated from the university to apply . . . She was reluctant at first, arguing that she wouldn't get the job because she had no experience. But I urged her, and she later agreed and applied. Surprisingly, she got the job…. The Finnish interviewer simply told her, "Don't worry. You will learn on the job"! From then on, it became clear to me that I have no future in Finland, and that my being there, as an African, was a big waste of time . . . I then relocated to Canada . . . Today, I work in a big firm in Ontario [Canada] as a branch manager, something that is very impossible in Finland . . .* (Ndukwe 2017, 127-8)

Dunia's inability to secure a meaningful job in Finland despite his rewarding work experiences was obviously a result of racial discrimination. His being told that he has "no credible experience" whereas he has it was a way of deliberately discrediting what he has in preference to his *Finnish* girlfriend who has no such experience. Jérôme Beauchez, a professor at Centre Max Weber, Lyon, France, would argue that such kind of racism is a way of discrediting people in performative constructions of "abnormality" that usually focuses on appearance and its constitution and never on the worth of the individual. He explains that where the most discredited subjects are concerned, a large part of their day-to-day lives remains unknown as it is hidden behind a veil of racial stereotypes and prejudices, which showcase unequal power relations where those who have the least possibility for action struggle to exist, to maintain their dignity, and sometimes to resist, through their bodies, the racism they daily experience in the society (Ndukwe 2017). Before relocating to Canada, Dunia had stopped participating in municipal elections as a result of his experience and had increased his participation in protests against racism as we would see in chapter five.

Critically, although the Finnish anti-discrimination Act (2004) forbids any kind of discrimination against anybody, there seems to be an unwritten rule that requires Finns to be hired in any job first before foreigners. This is not bad if the

Finn has the same or better qualifications than the foreigner. But more often than not, a Finn with a lower qualification is usually hired over an immigrant with a higher qualification. Forsander (2004) has in part attributed this practice to "the homogeneity of the norm base and tight social networks" among Finns as among other Nordics. She argues that ethnic and cultural closeness among them is so strong that it influences their relationship with non-Nordics. This kind of argument on cultural closeness has been highlighted earlier (Jaakkola 2005, Englund 2002. See also Ervast 2004). If this is the case, it would have been difficult for Europeans of non-Nordic origin or white Americans or even the Chinese and Indians to be favored in white-collar or professional employments. But this is not the case, showing that certain group of immigrants is deliberately singled out. Lutz (2011) is therefore right to argue that immigrants from countries perceived as rich or progressive are generally given better treatments than those from countries perceived as poor or retrogressive (see also Lillie and Ndomo 2021).

In short, across Europe, the situation is virtually the same as research has found (cf. Just and Anderson 2012; Saarinen & Jappinen 2014; Sofie Fredlund-Blomst 2014). As earlier noted, the EU Agenda on Immigrant Integration in 2011 had warned member states (of which Finland is among) that "immigrants employed in positions for which they are overqualified are an underutilised resource and a waste of human capital," and that such a practice is also very "degrading" to immigrants involved and therefore should be stopped (European Commission 2011, 5). Therefore, by *denying* professional jobs to (many) African immigrants and with little or no hope of their securing one in the future, some are being forced to rely on the society's social welfare which many Finns hate immigrants for, and which has been the major focus of anti-immigrant propaganda in Finland, spearheaded by the anti-immigrant Finns Party and other racists (Pyrhönen 2013; Ndukwe 2015a).

Nevertheless, even when a professional position is offered to an African, *workplace racism* sometimes becomes a stumbling block to work progress and fulfillment. This has consequently resulted in translocal and/or transnational mobility or migration of some well-educated Africans. In other words, they usually move from one Finnish city to another (translocal) or leave Finland altogether for another country (transnational) in search of belonging and institutional completeness. To illustrate, a Somali registered nurse who worked in a Finnish hospital before leaving for the US, narrates that

> *Workplace racism forced me out of Finland. I didn't find fulfillment in my job because most of my Finnish workmates hated the idea of working with a Somali…. My labor union could not do anything tangible about it despite my several reports to them…. Finally, I left for the US, to the city of Minnesota. There were already successful Somalis there, so it was easy for me to integrate. Incidentally, my nursing qualification was in very high demand… I easily got work in a good hospital. My salary was very good, and racism was almost non-existent…. Now, I own a clinic in Somalia [also], staffed with good nurses and two doctors, and is doing very well…. This is something I would not have achieved were I to have remained in Finland….* (Ndukwe 2017, 128-9)

Some Finnish trade unions have been accused of being *selective* in protecting the rights of their immigrant members. It is argued that they usually do this based

on the nationality or race/color of the immigrant, with those from poor developing countries taking the back seat (Alho 2013). Across Europe in fact, the institutional channeling theory has it that such a thing exists in some trade/labor unions (Ireland 1994). In so doing, they are no longer "institutional gatekeepers" and "linking bodies" between immigrants and the host society, but obstructions to their integration (Ibid). In chapter five, we would find that such is among the reasons why some African immigrants especially those at the ethnocentric stage of experience do not engage in union politics especially electoral, and some who engage, often prefer African/nonwhite immigrant candidates, to help them change the status quo.

At the socio-cultural spaces too, many Africans also experience racism and xenophobia in various forms, from body-language racism to outright verbal abuses. For instance, Yusuf, 28, a Cameroonian man living in Helsinki, who had been resident in Finland for nearly 10 years with a marginalized identity, argues that

> *Body language racism is one of our biggest obstacles to integration in Finland. An average Finnish person especially [some] middle-aged and [some] young people, on sighting you coming from the opposite direction [for example] on a sidewalk or in a shopping mall or anywhere would move far away from you as they come nearer you. Some would shield their faces with their hands, pretending to be scratching their faces or dressing their hairs while some will outrightly close their noses…. This happens even in the busses and trains where they would never sit near you. Some will prefer to stand. Why? Because they think that Africans have a bad smell because of their black skin…. How does color turn to smell? I think many of them are ignorant and even childish…. There are some Finns that smell badly. Do we then say this is because of their color or that all Finns smell? If we act towards them the way they act towards us, this society will be on fire because they will not take it. Yet they derive joy in doing it to us... We Africans are very tolerant…. In places like restaurants and some other public spaces, you see the same thing: as soon as you enter, or worst if you work there, some would not only close their noses but also begin to say some horrible racist things in Finnish about you, thinking that you do not understand Finnish but actually you understand and kept quiet…. So, these are things that make you recoil to your shelf, knowing that these people do not like you and do not want you in their midst and could even kill you if they have a chance….* (Interview: 27 May 2016)

The racist attitudes in this narrative align with Bennett's ethnocentric stage of denial where people of dominant cultures, or specifically the xenophobes and racists among them, tend to see immigrants as a differentiated other whose appearance is "disdainful" and who can only be tolerated, exploited, and if possible, even eliminated, because they (allegedly) pose or would pose a threat to the host society and its cultural values. It typifies what many blacks go through in Finland of today which has made them develop a marginalized or separated identity and hence less or not active in the formal political process and more in the protests. Such experiences also include racist verbal abuses as we saw in October 2015 in Espoo, in a case involving a Kenyan nurse and a Finnish woman who terribly abused her because of her black color. The woman had boldly approached her on a sidewalk and told her straight to the face without any provocation, "You are a fucking African woman. You are zero, you are not human in my eyes", startling the nurse. When the nurse inquired why she was being racially abused, the woman quickly replied: "Because you are black", and added that she (the nurse) should be ready for more of such treatments in the

future "because this country [Finland] will be big racist one day" so as to kick out all black people from its territory who (allegedly) "rape our social [welfare benefits]" system (cf. *Hekaheka* 3 November 2015; Yle online English news, 3 November 2015). The nurse managed to video the ranting as it unfolded and later posted it online. I have discussed *accusations* about blacks benefiting unnecessarily from the social welfare system and found it to be largely false (Ndukwe 2017). Quite alright, some *qualified* black immigrants[63] do benefit but the number is *extremely* small compared to that of the native population. It is also always for a very good reason. The problem however is the high and unnecessary politicization of the issue by some politicians especially those of the Finns party, who do it mainly for political and electoral gains.

Furthermore, African immigrants also encounter racial discriminations when applying for housing, because some Finns do not feel comfortable having Africans as tenants or co-tenants in their buildings or around their neighborhoods. Racist notifications are even sometimes pasted alongside housing vacancy adverts by some landlords such as: "Finns and Asians are welcome. No Africans, please!" Even when this is not written, some African immigrants do not get a response from their rental applications, especially from private landlords.[64] If or when they get, it is often negative.

However, in some cases when the application is successful, discrimination in the neighborhood or in a co-housing arrangement takes its toll in various forms. For example, a 26-year-old Kenyan master's student living in a student co-housing with a Finnish girl, narrates that

> *Most of the time when I cooked my native food, she would complain that my food smells awful and terrible. Can you imagine that? The food [that] I am going to eat, smelling awful? It is so insulting. I felt so bad! It means that she has no regard… for me. Yet despite all these, I never complained about her own food even though most of the time I didn't like the smell. Also, a Vietnamese friend of mine living in Helsinki had similar confrontation with her Finnish flat mate. They almost fought! I'm beginning to wonder whether they think that we [foreigners] enjoy the smell of their foods*! (Ndukwe 2015a, 165)

In the DMIS, at the ethnocentric stage of defense, complaints about unfamiliar foods and their "awful" smells, including also the failure of the other to make them look or smell like ours are one of the failures in intercultural

[63] Finland has a universal and residence-based social protection system. As long as a migrant is considered a permanent resident, he/she is entitled to social welfare, health services and cash benefits on the same bases as national residents. Nationality is not a criterion. Being a permanent resident does not necessarily mean having a permanent residence permit but having a permanent residence or home in Finland and staying also mostly in Finland with periodic visits abroad of not more than 6 months per visit. Eligibility for social benefits can also be gained through employment. The crucial point is thus to become a resident or a worker (Laura Kalliomaa-Puha 2020). This means that African immigrants who benefit from the welfare system meet these requirements and are therefore doing what is legal.

[64] This does not include private housing *companies*. But it might include the municipal or city housing companies since getting an apartment there for many immigrants is usually difficult. The companies usually claim that there are often many applications and few vacancies. This makes it difficult to detect any racial discrimination. In summary, renting apartments from private housing companies is easier but usually very expensive especially for immigrants with poor or relatively poor incomes where some Africans belong.

relations (Bennett 2004, 4; See also Bennett & Castiglioni, 2004). Often, people with intercultural incompetence have disinterest in observing and respecting cultural differences, even when it is brought to their attention. And if this continues, it could lead to their intercultural isolation where they are locked up in their worldviews (Bennett 2004, 10). This experience (and others like it in the society) made the Kenyan student –who previously had a liberal mind as she told this researcher – develop a separated identity and start campaigning against such discrimination in campus housing and on-campus in general by voting for African candidates in the student union elections who she believes could end the situation as we would see in chapter five.

Fred Dervin has argued that although the Nordics are praised for equity and fairness, the reality is often different, because some people are usually not treated so because of their origin or color, even though there is the presumed belief that they are treated so (Yle online English news, 2013, October 20). In an undercover research in Helsinki carried out in 2013 to find out the nature and extent of discrimination in the city, Sam Kingsley, the leader of this research found that

> White-skinned *Westerners* like me – almost without exception – told me they feel welcomed and well-treated here [in Finland]. For others [of different colors] … the reality is different… I was struck that so many [Finnish] people feel it's acceptable to deny someone access to a flat or a job – or treat them with mistrust or hostility – simply because of their ethnicity" (Yle online English news 2013, October 20).

At the ethnocentric stage of defense, Bennett (1993, 2004) has argued that the presence of (certain) immigrants is usually perceived by the dominant culture as disdainful and a threat to its national life and culture.

For instance, a Finnish denizen has argued on social media, specifically Facebook, that "as long as somebody is dressing and behaving like me, I will have no problem with the person. It is only when he is behaving and dressing differently that I fight back" (Facebook posting, August 10, 2015). In fact, a recent poll by Yle showed that the majority of Finns have this mindset. Many of them argue that foreigners "should become as Finnish as possible" if they are to remain in Finland (cf. Egan Richardson 2020). While it should be the case that immigrants should learn the culture and language of their host society as many African immigrants are doing and some have done already, *becoming Finnish* appears to be *more of assimilation* which do not want to do, and which is not even in the government's integration acts. In one of the Sage books on immigrant assimilation, for example, Fernandez Kelly and Schauffler (1996) argue that assimilation is an expectation that foreigners (or immigrants) should shed, or at least contain, their native cultures while embracing the mores and language of the host country. Lalami (2017) also argues that for some people, assimilation of immigrants simply means their relinquishing all ties, even linguistic ones, to their old (i.e., home) country in preference to the new (i.e., host) country; while for some (few) others, the whole idea of assimilation is wrongheaded, and integration — which is a dynamic process that retains the connotation of individuality and the culture of the immigrant — is seen as the better model. This (integration) is what many

African immigrants aim at, and which is also in the Finnish government's integration acts.

Hence, some (African) immigrants who are aware of the above Yle poll, found it difficult to interpret. Some like the Somali activist, Maryan Abdulkarim, describe it as "ridiculous for someone to [say] that immigrants can come to this country, but then they have to become like us." Enrique Tessieri, the editor of the *Migrant Tales* blog, supports her view, and points out that the survey in fact shows that many Finns "are against cultural diversity" (ibid) which contradicts the government's stance on *integration*. The society's stance, therefore, falls into the danger of the ethnocentric stage where expectations of monocultural similarity have the potential of increasing hostility towards others outside one's cultural environment, igniting discrimination if not found (Bennett 2004). This has been reported to be the case in Finland by a body of research (Phinney et al. 2001; Ervasti 2004; Saarinen & Jappinen 2014; Ndukwe 2015a; to mention a few).

"The society does not encourage us to integrate," said a 27-year-old Tanzanian businessman in Helsinki with a separated identity who has been resident for 7.4 years. "We try as much as possible, but the people are not welcoming. Only the government has done well in enacting favorable immigrant integration policies and laws, but the people do not abide by these laws". Also, a 25-year-old African man in Vantaa posted a message on Facebook in September 2014 in this regard, arguing that "All the [Finnish] laws regarding discrimination, racism or whatsoever can do nothing unless [Finnish] people truly realize that it [i.e., discrimination] is NOT a nice thing". And another African immigrant added: "All in all, we all [i.e., African migrants in Finland] should define our goals and when that isn't achievable considering *the restraints* in Finland, I think the best is to say moikka to Suomi". "Moikka to Suomi" means "Goodbye to Finland" (cf. Ndukwe 2015a, 181-2). Eva Biaudet, the Finnish Ombudsman for Minorities, has warned that racial discrimination against immigrants can have far-reaching consequences if nothing is done: "This is more broadly about how people from elsewhere are treated", she said. "Discrimination increases insecurity and threatens peace in [the] society. If people are treated this unequally, without the judicial system doing anything [about it], it can lead to [their] alienation [from the society] …" (ibid). My interview data as well as personal observations indicate that this indeed has alienated many African immigrants from the society, leaving them with either separated or marginalized identities.

Curiously, some Africans with Finnish citizenship (so-called Afro-Finns) have wondered why they also experience racism in the same or similar way as those who are not yet citizens especially in *job applications* where they do clearly state their citizenship as *Finnish* in their CVs[65]. Not even those born in Finland of mixed African and Finnish parentage are exempt, mainly because their African

[65] Outside of this job platform, it is actually difficult to know whether they are Finnish or not as it is not written on the face. Besides they are black which makes it even near impossible for anybody to think of it. However, the essence of the argument is that even when it is known, it does not change anything (socioeconomically and indeed everywhere) by virtue of their color and/or origin. In other words, they are only citizens in legal status, but in practice, it is a different case.

names bring them out. And where they have solely English or Finnish names or a mixed of both, their appearance brings them out also, as we have seen. The answer could be found in the argument of Lillie and Ndomo (2021) earlier cited, which also gains support from Harinen et al.'s (2013, 82) concept of citizenship where they argued that there is a huge gap between "citizenship as a status" and "citizenship as a practice". This gap created by discrimination or racism (Somers 2008) is said to be "a cause and a reflection of the labor market segmentation" (Lillie and Ndomo 2021, 136) being witnessed by such immigrants in Finland (see also Harinen et al. 2013, 82). In other words, "citizenship as a *status*" is a political-legal status that one acquires through birth or naturalization that accords one full relationship with the state and fellow citizens together with the rights, duties, and privileges, including full *access* (in principle) to all opportunities for survival accorded to citizens, while "citizenship as a practice" implies the *actual* access to those opportunities such as the labor market, and which ultimately would make one feel real part of being an *a citizen* (Harinen et al.'s 2013). Going by the experiences of some African immigrants in this category, they could be said to be only "*citizens as a status*" or in principle and not in *practice* (for more on this please see Ndukwe 2017). It also confirms the earlier argument by a Togolese migrant that once a black migrant decides to settle in Finland, s/he should be ready to battle all kinds of discrimination. And even when s/he acquires a Finnish citizenship, it does not change anything. It does not change his/her color or origin. Everything (i.e., discrimination) is still the same (cf. Ndukwe 2015a, 162).

Critically, one wonders why many African immigrants do not usually report their racist encounters to the police. This is because, as my interview data show, they see such reporting as useless since according to them, the police's response is usually very lackadaisical as it is discriminatory (cf. Ndukwe 2015a, 2017; Shote 2011; Egharevba 2004; Egharevba & Hannikainen 2005). A particular 44-year-old Ghanaian man with a separated identity in the Helsinki region makes clear that

> *When Africans report racist or xenophobic cases to the police, they don't usually care to investigate or do anything. They would just tell you, "Don't worry, it won't happen again." And then it happens again, you report, they will repeat the same thing. And again, it happens, they repeat the same, telling you, "It will be difficult for us to catch them [i.e., the racists]." But if any such case were to be reported by a Finn or a white immigrant, you'll see them rushing there in their vehicles. I have seen this happen many times….They don't take Africans seriously. They take us for granted. So, it is just better for us [Africans] to secure ourselves. There is no need of going to the police for help. It is a waste of time* (Ndukwe 2015a, 180; See also Shote 2011).

Surprisingly, a 2013 report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) also found the Finnish police to be racist, arguing that they often engage in "racial profiling against *visible* minorities," especially by "singling out people on the basis of their visible appearance" for treatment and spontaneous checks (Yle online English news 2013, July 7), and that despite many reported cases of racism and xenophobia, including hate crimes, ethnic agitation and discriminations against immigrants, many "are rarely brought before the courts" (by the police); and only a "few convictions" have so far been made (Yle

online English news 2013, August 13). Because of these, many African immigrants, especially those at the ethnocentric stage, go about in fear of racial attack nowadays, knowing that the police, when reported to, would do nothing.

What all of these tell us is that many African immigrants are far from socioeconomic integration in the Finnish society. Shote (2011) has also found this in her study of some West African immigrants in Finland. These findings also confirm the international research findings earlier cited that societies with friendly immigrant integration laws and *practices* (i.e., attitudes not just laws) encourage immigrant participation in its domain and vice versa (cf. Just and Anderson 2014).

In chapter five (coming next), we would see how all these attitudes (positive and negative) discussed influence the African immigrant political behavior and integration. Just and Anderson (2014) argue that the socioeconomic positions of immigrants in the society influence their political involvements (See also Ireland 1994; Shingles 1981; Tolgeby 1999; Verba & Nie 1972).

CHAPTER 5: AFRICAN IMMIGRANT POLITICAL INTEGRATION: I.E., POLITICAL MOBILIZATION, PARTICIPATION, AND REPRESENTATION - IN FINLAND AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL

In this chapter, we would discuss the political mobilization, participation, and representation of African immigrants in the formal and informal political sectors at the local level. In particular, we will see how their positive and negative experiences in the socio-cultural and economic sectors influence their political behavior and integration. Their stages at the DMIS also play a big role in this. In other words, those at the ethnocentric stage (or those with a separated or marginalized identity[66]) tend to be more critical and selective in their disposition to political integration especially in formal politics but less so in the informal one (especially protest politics), while those at the ethnorelative stage (or those with an integrated or assimilated identity) tend to be more positive towards formal politics, but comparatively less in protest politics.

That said! All African immigrants in this study are eligible for the political rights to vote and/or stand as candidates in municipal elections, having met all the requirements as demanded by the Finnish Local Government act (410/2015). They are also eligible for the right to join and/or form associations, including political parties, labor/trade, and student unions (ibid). Therefore, they are fully eligible for political integration at the municipal level in the formal and informal sense. In the institutional channeling sense, Martiniello (2005, 2) argues that the more political rights immigrants have, the better politically integrated they tend to become in the host society, and vice versa. I would however argue that it is *not really* the more political rights they have, but the more they *make use* of the rights

[66] Those with a marginalized identity are those who mostly do not participate in the formal political process except for membership in the student union (for those who are students) which is compulsory by law or in some cases membership in the labor union for the protection of their jobs. In some cases, they participate in protests especially protests against racism and poor labor conditions because they do not consider this as identifying with the society. In general, they do not participate in any election whether municipal or any other.

as we would see in the African immigrants' case. Let us start with political mobilization.

5.1 The Political Mobilization of African immigrants

Here, I will discuss the political mobilization of African immigrants in the formal and informal political sectors. This will be structured under various sub-headings, starting with the role of the municipal government.

5.1.1 The municipal government

As earlier discussed, after giving of political rights, the state - through the municipal government – usually notifies the residents through posted letters of their rights to participate in the election. Many eligible African immigrants acknowledge receiving such letters during municipal elections. However, their reactions to the letters vary according to their DMIS stages. For example, many at the ethnorelative stage (or those with an integrated or assimilated identity) who usually have great feelings of belonging and institutional completeness in Finland tend to be more positive towards it. For example, an assimilated 38-year-old Nigerian sociologist in Helsinki, who has been in Finland for 13 years, argues that

> *I am a researcher [in sociology], so I am well employed and well paid. I enjoy good relations with my Finnish colleagues. They respect my professionalism. I respect theirs. We are in very good terms. So, I do not have any problem [of racism] here. I have every reason to be happy with Finland…. But I have come across some African immigrants in the course of my research and social life who tell me they are not happy here because they are not doing the job they should be doing with their academic qualifications…. They believe that racism is the cause…. To answer your question about the municipal election letter, Yes, I receive it every election year and I feel happy and belonged each time because I see it as government's acknowledgment of my presence in Finland and as my worth as an immigrant who is valued in the political decision-making process... In fact, any election year that I don't receive the letter, I would think something is wrong somewhere, although this has never happened…* (Interview: 12 September 2014).

Also, an integrated African female registered nurse, 39, who works in a medium-level hospital in Vantaa, and had migrated to Finland 8 years earlier, argues that

> *As an African who is well integrated here, I always look forward to that [municipal] letter every year that we have municipal election. For others who are not so integrated it may not be so…. The letter is the first thing that tells me there is election coming regardless of whether I see any campaign posters and stuffs like that around me or not. This letter is very important to me because it makes me feel part of the Finnish society in the way I feel with my job because I am a registered nurse and I am gainfully employed…. In fact, I usually keep the letter as a special collection… from the government. It makes me happy and I look forward to participating in the election each election time* (Interview: 10 August 2015).

On the other hand, a good number of Africans at the ethnocentric stage (or those with a separated or marginalized identity) argue that they do not feel the

same way about the letter. Many of them affirm that although they appreciate the letter, it does not make them happy or excited because of the racism situation. For example, a Ugandan lady, 41, in Vantaa with a separated identity who has been resident for 11 years asserts that "unless I have a good job and enjoy a happy life which is not yet the case, I do not feel happy receiving the letter because I don't know what it can do to my situation" (Interview 8 April 2014). Also, an African man in Helsinki who is a warehouse worker has been resident for 12 years with a separated identity, adds that

> *I don't feel excited about the letter because of the so much racism I have experienced in this society…. For example, I don't have a good job even though I graduated with [a] first class in business Administration.... I'm not also allowed in certain night clubs, all because of my color. In fact I don't have a happy life here. Come to think of it, would that letter give me [a] good job or put money in my [bank] account or make me feel accepted in the public? Can't you see it is of no use to me?* (Interview: 10 April 2014).

Some more Africans at the ethnocentric stage also argue similarly, implying that their happiness or sadness on receiving the letter depends on their having an educated job and happy social life devoid of racism. Some, especially those with a marginalized identity, even argue that they do not bother opening the letter because they already know its content. Not opening the letter of course implies not knowing where and when to vote, which is part of the contents of the letter. Invariably, it means not willing to vote.

Further, there are also some Africans at both stages of the DMIS who argue that they do not usually receive the letters in some municipal elections. Some of them argue that during these periods, municipal elections could come and go without their knowledge because of the quiet nature of Finnish election campaigns unlike in many African countries where election campaigning is boisterous, such that one does not need a government letter to know that it is around the corner.

I asked the relevant municipal officials about this non-receipt of letters, and they (respectively) argue that it is strange because letters are meticulously sent to every eligible voter unless the person changed his or her address without notifying them. They advise that any change of address should be notified through the post office or the netposti – i.e., a post office online platform – as soon as possible. One municipal official particularly summarized the opinions of others by arguing that

> *We rarely get such complaints about non-receipt of letters because we make sure that each address of any eligible voter is thoroughly checked according to the [person's] information in the [local] population register before we post … unless the address was changed without our knowledge. But usually this change can be done through the post office, or even fast through the netposti, so that it goes to the population register and we get it. Whether the person is an immigrant or a Finnish voter doesn't matter... However, it is possible that there could be one or two margins of error in our dispatching of letters, but this is rare… In general, I believe every eligible voter receives his or her letter and on time too…* (Interviews: 6 June 2015)

In a Yle's 2017 press release, following such complaints among immigrants, the Yle media advised any eligible immigrant voters who did not receive the

letter to check with their municipality's central election committee: "If you haven't seen that paper [i.e. the election letter] yet, then you need to check [with your municipality]. You can call your municipality's *'keskusvaalilautakunta'* [i.e., the central election committee] to ask if you are on the electoral rolls, and if so, where you should go to cast your ballot" (cf. Yle online English news, 29 March 2017). Incidentally, not many African immigrants know about this and/or would have thought about it or probably would have time or even the will to do it, especially if the person is at the ethnocentric stage of experience. Besides, the limitation of such advice is that it is only available to those who visit Yle's website, which limits the possibility of African immigrants who might think of doing it as only two out of twenty know about the website, and even fewer visits.

5.1.2 Political parties

Although political parties are generally seen as an important political opportunity structure available for people's political engagement as discussed earlier, many Finnish political parties are slow or lackadaisical in mobilizing or recruiting immigrants into their fold. Instead, they tend to prefer the natives as discussed earlier, although it is recently shown by research that even their mobilization of the natives has also slightly declined in recent decades compared to other decades (Vaalitutkimus 2016). However, such decline may not be compared to the situation of immigrants especially African immigrants who are rarely mobilized or recruited by them. Many Africans especially those at the ethnocentric stage, see this attitude as part of the ongoing racial discrimination of the native society against them. A Ghanaian lady in Vantaa with a separated identity echoes that, "Many Finns already dislike black people, and so this also reflects in their political parties' relationship with black immigrants since party members are also society members. This is part of the racism we are talking about" (Interview: 3 March 2016). Some Africans also argue that it is not even necessary for the parties to mobilize them. "What are they mobilizing about?" asked an angry Cameroonian doctoral student in Helsinki with a separated identity who does dishwashing to support his studies. "Are they not the same people that discriminate against us in the job market? Look at me, a PhD student, doing menial jobs to support his studies and livelihood. It is very bad! If I were a Finn or a white student, the situation would have been different…" (Interview: 20 June 2016).

On the other hand, many Africans at the ethnorelative stage see the parties' lack of mobilization of Africans differently, arguing rather that their lack of profound interest could be because of the small African immigrant population than party discrimination. They assert that the African population appears too small for parties to put their energy and resources in mobilizing since it would not probably make much impact on election results. For instance, an integrated 45-year-old Tanzanian woman in Jyväskylä – resident for 10.5 years with a PhD in Social Anthropology - asserts that

> *Quite alright, the parties rarely mobilize us Africans. But I don't see this as an act of racism or discrimination as some people say. I see it rather that the comparatively small Africa population may not be encouraging to them when compared to other groups such as the native population or bigger immigrant groups such as the Estonians and Russians…. Some people say it is because these large groups are white. But I think it is not so but mainly because of their population which makes [a] significant impact in election result….* (Interview: 20 September 2014).

Further, a 55-year-old Malian man in Tampere, integrated and resident for 30 years, argues similarly, stating that

> *The African population here is not only small but [is] all scattered across municipalities, such that each municipality contains only a fraction except probably the Helsinki municipality. This probably makes us unattractive to political parties….. The only people I usually see during municipal elections mobilizing are electoral candidates who come to campaign for votes in our associations, on the road, almost everywhere, for their own individual elections, and not for parties. They beg you to vote for them for so so and so reason… They may also tell you about their party manifesto only if you ask* (Interview: 4 November 2014).

Some Africans with assimilated identity however claim that the issue is not really about the population or party interest in mobilization but about (some) Africans' readiness to vote. Some clearly asked: don't they (i.e., Africans) receive the municipal letter? Why do they need extra mobilization to vote? Voting however is a complex phenomenon and extra mobilization is indeed needed for the voter to decide on voting.

Meanwhile, some party officials were asked by this researcher about the (alleged) party's lackadaisical attitude towards immigrant mobilization. Indeed, they respectively acknowledged that they (the parties) have not been active in immigrant recruitment or mobilization because they do not yet (respectively) have a concrete recruitment or mobilization strategy for immigrants mainly "due to lack of planning in place yet", or "lack of adequate resources", or in some cases, both. They however argue respectively that this is not an act of discrimination or anything of such as some people might be thinking (Interviews: 2013 to 2015). However, a 50-year-old Ivorian political analyst with a separated identity in Espoo who has been resident for 20 years, counter-argues that

> *[Political] Parties always have a way of evading the right answers, preferring rather only the politically correct things to say. The question is: if they could mobilize fellow Finns so well, why couldn't they mobilize immigrants, especially Africans as well? In my opinion, they are simply avoiding the right answer. They don't want to tell you the truth* (Interview: 2 August 2015).

In any case, it is argued that some political parties left their immigrant recruitment to their party's youth wings (Flack 2009). These youth wings put up their party fairs especially in schools and interact with students as they pass by. My interview data however indicate that some of them tend to be discriminatory on the kind of students they interact with. Many African students at the ethnocentric stage claim that they often prefer white and Asian students to blacks. For example, a 20-year-old Malawian student with a separated identity, and resident for 5 years in Helsinki, argues that

> *When we [black students] pass by the youth wing party fairs in the school, they do not usually call our attention as they do to white students, or the Chinese, Koreans, Indians, Japanese etc… They just ignore you and only talk to you if you stop to ask them some questions about what they do. But even at that, their responses are usually terse and not enriching which makes you regret even stopping to ask in the first place* (Interview: 3 November 2015).

Also, a 23-year-old Togolese student in Vantaa, resident for 6 years with a separated identity, confirms that "In my school, those young boys [in the party fairs] don't look at you if you are black…. So, I don't bother myself stopping by their booths because of this" (Interview: 7 November 2015). Some African students in Jyväskylä and Tampere also argued similarly, pointing out that except in a few cases, they are not usually well attended to. One of the major reasons as one student with a separated identity in Tampere argued is that "Some Finns see all blacks as Somalis who many of them don't like because not only because they are black and also Moslems but also because they believe or presume that Somalis usurp the Finnish economy and exploit the welfare system, which I do not believe … because many Somalis work and pay their taxes just as Finns do. So, what's the difference?" (Interview with a 34-year-old Congolese bachelor's student in Business management in Jyväskylä who works in a construction site: 10 May 2016).

However, many African students at the ethnorelative stage see the situation at the youth wing fair a bit differently and argue that they do not indeed believe that Africans are not approached by those at the booth as they themselves have been approached while passing. Some argue that even when this does not happen, it is not out of discrimination, but probably out of indisposition or something like that, and that one should not expect the party officers to approach or talk to every passer-by, whether white, Asian or black (Interviews: 2 – 4 February 2016).

In any case, it is also possible that some youth wings may have been instructed by their parties to restrict recruiting (black) immigrants. It is argued that these parties do this because they are wary of losing their support from the native base. Kaldur et al. (2014, 4) argue that many "political parties are under pressure to retain power and those who are seen to favour immigrant rights are often at risk of losing elections…." Some even see the presence of immigrants, especially the visibly different ones, as a contamination to their socio-cultural and national life (see also Ireland 1994; Dancygier et al. 2015; Garbaye 2005; Nacarino et al. 2012). In fact, I mentioned this earlier in chapter 1 that during the 2012 Finnish municipal elections the anti-immigrant party – the Finns party - sailed on its anti-immigrant ideology and rhetoric to gain the most seats in the municipal councils thereby becoming the biggest winner, while the immigrant-friendly parties, such as the Social Democratic party (SDP) and the National Coalition Party (NCP), lost many of their seats, becoming the "biggest losers". An SDP official attributed this loss to the presence of immigrants in their electoral list, arguing that "we had immigrants with us and many (Finnish) people don't accept that yet. A lot of (Finnish) voters complained to me that if they give their vote to me or (to) another Social Democrat, the vote also goes to immigrants" (Yle online English news, 29 October 2012).

Ireland (1994, 78) also finds a similar phenomenon in the 1983 French municipal elections and its by-elections, and argues that French local politicians, especially those of the far-right National Front (FN) – a notorious anti-immigrant party – sailed on anti-immigrant ideology and rhetoric in that election, portraying immigrants, especially non-Europeans, as "as dangerous infringements on French sovereignty", and the cause of crime and insecurity in the French society. This gave it impressive gains and it became the biggest winner in that election in several French cities, including the *arrondissements* of Paris. In Switzerland, this was also the case because the Swiss anti-immigrant party - the National Action (NA) - not only demonized immigrants in its daily populist campaigns, but also voted for the *de-foreignization* of Switzerland. This also gave it impressive gains among its many supporters in local elections (pp. 161-162).

In any case, in the absence of direct political party mobilization, electoral candidates do the job themselves, not for the party, but for their own elections although they could mention their parties and their ideologies that are relevant to their electioneering. They do this by visiting various associations and places during their campaigns as already noted. Some African immigrants acknowledge this, pointing out that this does not however make them have interest in a party or party membership. Instead, their interest is mostly on the candidate and what s/he can do for them should in case they see him/her as a candidate worth voting for. Their perceptions of the candidates however also generally differ according to their DMIS stages. For example, those at the ethnocentric stage – especially those with separated identities – tend to be more accepting of ethnic/lower class status candidates (i.e., candidates of African and/or non-white immigrant origin) for reasons of shared discrimination experience and who are likely to speak against discrimination if elected. Another reason is that these candidates also approach them with campaign cards/fliers written in *English*, unlike many Finnish candidates who approach with fliers written in Finnish. Although some of them do understand Finnish quite well, they, however, see approaching them in Finnish language strategy as discriminatory since they do not look like Finns, and so, the candidates should have translated in English for immigrants who probably would not understand, or are not yet fluent in, Finnish (if actually, they have immigrants in mind) (Interviews: 2 – 5 March 2015).

Moreover, some Africans at the ethnocentric stage especially those with a separated identity also argue that even when they receive English fliers/cards from Finnish candidates, immigrant issues are *rarely* included. For instance, a 26-year-old Zambian man in Tampere during the 2012 municipal election asked a Finnish female candidate why "she did not include immigrant issues in her manifesto. Are you not going to do something for us [immigrants] when you get there? Or are you going for the Finns alone?"

> *The candidate, apparently startled at my unexpected question, replied that she is also going for immigrants and claims she will look into the Finnish language learning for immigrants if elected. I then asked her, 'If that is the case, why didn't you write it here [in the flier]? She kept quiet…. So, I see her claim as just a ploy to seek my vote. She is not going to do anything. In reality, people like her might even be anti-immigrant….* (Interview: 30 May 2016).

However even when Finnish or sometimes non-Finnish white candidates include immigrant issues such as the fight against discrimination, some Africans at the ethnocentric stage still believe it is a ploy to win their votes and not an honest attempt to speak against their marginalization. This is also the case even when the candidates approach them in the church or mosque as we would see later in this study. Cameron (1974) argues that a mobilizing agent is expected to adapt his/her promotional drive to address the local discontent of the group being mobilized (see also Ireland 1994; Martiniello 2005). Although some Finnish (and other white) candidates do this when mobilizing Africans, it has not worked well for them. Part of the reason is a confirmation by a 50-year-old integrated African immigrant who was a two-time ex-councilor in a prominent Finnish city. He argued that from his experience in the municipal chambers, many Finnish councilors who got elected through immigrant votes also and with a promise to address general problems such as their marginalized situation, eventually do nothing at the chambers in this regard. He argues that he had on several occasions reminded them to "speak for immigrants" that voted for them, but they do not take him seriously (Ndukwe 2015b). This attitude could be because they do not understand what immigrants are going through since they themselves do not have immigrant experience, and so do not feel the same way. Jamal (1995, 532) argues that it is not enough for an electoral candidate to claim to identify with a marginalized group; it will also be good if the candidate has marginalized experience him-/herself in order to feel what they feel, and hence represent them well.

Conversely, many Africans at the ethnorelative stage are more accepting of any candidate regardless of ethnicity or class as long as the candidate is *competent* enough to represent the *society* and not just the immigrants. For example, an integrated 44-year-old Cameroonian man in Jyväskylä, who has been resident for 16 years, argues that

> *I have always viewed all candidates, including Finns, with optimism regardless of the racism that blacks experience here. I vote for them based on what they can offer the society, not necessarily for immigrants [alone] or African immigrants because we all are part of the society…. I think we Africans should also be more tolerant of Finns because I think it is natural for them to view outsiders, especially those who look different the way they do. I do not see anything wrong with that so long as they also understand that those who look different are also humans and have cultures like them and therefore deserve human dignity and respect…. I believe their stereotype of immigrants is probably because of what they have seen or heard on TV, radio, or social media, or in daily discussions. In most cases, these stereotypes are totally false in reality or do not represent the true picture* (Interview: 3 March 2016).

The problem is that in most cases some racists (if not most) do not see blacks as humans worthy of dignity. That is why they could boldly deny them entering the public busses or housing or having good jobs worthy of their education as we have seen.

5.1.3 Mobilization through the church and mosque[67]

As earlier discussed, the church and mosque are also opportunity structures in terms of immigrant political mobilization in Finland. In other words, pastors and imams do preach about politics and participation during some of their sermons, encouraging members to vote. Some lay leaders of various church and mosque associations also do the same as well as some ordinary congregants. However, African immigrants' response to such pleas could be positive or negative depending on which stage of the DMIS they are also, as well as their proximity to the pastor or imam in terms of social status, nationality/ethnicity, familiarity in ideals and interests (cf. Brown 2011; Dutton 2009). That is to say, while those at the ethnocentric stage tend to adhere mainly when they share ethnicity/nationality or social status with the leader or a fellow congregant, those at the ethnorelative stage tend to do so when they share familiarity in ideals and interests.

For instance, Baariq, 26, an Angolan Muslim at the ethnocentric stage with a separated identity in Helsinki, attests that

> *Our [immigrant] imam sometimes includes politics in his sermon, even outside election time, but more so, during it. He usually encourages us to vote in order that we should have adequate political representation because he believes that this is the key to stopping discrimination against immigrants in Finnish society…and I do usually vote because of this* (Ndukwe 2015b, 15)

Also, a Sudanese Anglican faithful with a separated identity in Jyväskylä argues that he has made two voting decisions on two candidates based on his pastor's views during sermon

> *just because [the] pastor encouraged me to do so. I listened to him because he is my pastor and also because he is my tribesman, and not that I was really convinced of the candidates…. But I believe in the pastor, I believe he knows who is good and who is not…and I voted…* (Ndukwe 2015b, 16)

For Ubara, a 26-year-old Tanzanian Christian at the ethnorelative stage with an integrated identity in Vantaa who attends the Turku Home Church – a splitter of the Finnish evangelical movement (Martikainen 2004) – notes that

> *Some of my church-mates and I used to have political discussions with our [Finnish] pastor because he is good at discussing it. He is a great man in politics and usually reminds us during election time before concluding [church] service that we should remember to vote because our vote counts [in the society] … [and]that we should be part of decision-making* (Ndukwe 2015b, 15)

Religious leaders who encourage immigrants to participate in the political process in order to reduce their social exclusion and/or to be part of society's decision-making, are fundamentally combining a great moral and civic duty to

[67] This subchapter will also draw heavily from my article (Ndukwe 2015b) on the influence of the church and the mosque on the political mobilization of African immigrants in Finland

the society by contributing to its tolerance, fairness solidarity, and democratic growth.

There are also political encouragements from lay leaders in the church and mosque, as well as also some ordinary congregants, especially through political discussions that are usually carried out at/after religious services or meetings during election times. Their political encouragements can be of two types: the ones made towards the end of association meetings and the ones made after they have dismissed. The first is usually selfless, non-partisan, and not a campaign for any candidate or party, but rather a general advice from the leader(s) to church or mosque association members to vote as a civic duty. The second is actively partisan, personal, and selfish, because it is aimed at supporting a particular candidate or party. Usually, both types take the form of a dialogue between the lay leader and the member(s) or among ordinary congregants themselves on why a vote should be cast or not. Adhering to this mobilization, however, also depends on the members' stage of the DMIS as well as proximity with the lay leader or the fellow congregant.

Critically, some African immigrants however sometimes find political mobilization to be discarded even when such mobilization was done in the church or mosque especially by non-African candidates such as Finnish candidates. This is because of their experience of strong and repeated acts of racism and xenophobia. For instance, Toro, a 35-year-old Gambian migrant of the Dominion Believers Assembly at the ethnocentric stage with a separated identity in Tampere, for instance, argues

> *I have been approached on some occasions by some Finnish candidates in my church, claiming that they are not happy with the bad socioeconomic situation of immigrants in Finland…. But I know it is a mere ploy to seek my vote…. I did not believe in their honesty …* (Ndukwe 2015b, 15-18)

Also, Muhammad, a 37-year-old Senegalese Muslim with a separated identity in Vantaa, argues that

> *Some Finnish politicians have asked me to vote for them or their party because they would do things for us immigrants, but I usually ignored them because I don't believe in them at all. I don't believe they would do anything…. They are not immigrants, let alone Africans* (Ibid).

Research has shown that visible minorities are more likely to vote for the members of their own racial or ethnic group than otherwise when they are victims of structural discrimination in the host society (cf. Vermeersch 2011; Bergh and Bjorklund 2011; Fisher et al. 2015; Ndukwe 2015b). In such situations, political mobilization from politicians who are not members of the group could be fruitless because of doubts of their sincerity on the pledges being made as we have seen in the two interviews above. Also, political encouragement from a religious or lay leader, or a fellow congregant, to vote for such people may also be fruitless, and might even be viewed suspiciously in the sense that the mobilizer may have been bribed by the candidate(s) in question. This suspicion - rightly or wrongly - might consequently erode the trust/respect the mobilizer enjoys from the mobilized (for more on this, see Ndukwe 2015b).

In protest politics too, such as in mobilizing church or mosque members for protests or demonstrations, the African churches and mosques in Finland, unfortunately, do not do this. Instead, they prefer writing protest letters and/or visiting the relevant agencies in a civilized manner to lay a complaint on sticky issues rather than go to the streets for protests. For example, Peter, a 48-year-old official of the Church of Pentecost International, Helsinki, confirms that street protest is not the practice of an African religious institution:

> *At worst, we write [protest] letters to the appropriate authority where we table out our concerns or disagreements on issues that concern or worry us and ask for a fair hearing. In most cases, our concerns are addressed accordingly. But even when not, we usually continue to write or visit until it is addressed. We never have to go out to protest. That is not the role of a church. It is instead the role of secular associations I think* (Ndukwe 2015b, 18)

A good number of African immigrant Islamic leaders in different Finnish municipalities also concur with this when interviewed. This is interesting, especially given the Islamic role of the mosque as a political center where such political mobilization is done, as we saw earlier (cf. Farahati 2011; see also Ardıc 2012; Hoffman and Jamal 2014 for Arab Spring). Many African Christian and Muslim respondents also support their leaders and opine that in a quiet country such as Finland it makes sense for the church or mosque to avoid being seen as a radical institution by encouraging its members to roam the streets in the name of protest. However, the writing of protest letters, the contacting of the relevant agency, or the actual visiting of their offices, even if in a so-called civilized manner, is all forms of politics (cf. Martiniello 2005).

5.1.4 African immigrant associations

In municipal elections, African immigrant associations mostly mobilize their members through the Moniheli by sending their volunteers to its training programs especially on the Finnish political system, methods of political participation, and how they (immigrants) could improve their dialogue with the municipal authorities as we have seen earlier. These volunteers then go on to lecture fellow association members during association meetings. Other than this, African associations do not usually move from house to house to mobilize members.

But in addition to this, the associations also serve as *campaign platforms* where (some) electoral candidates, especially Africans/immigrants, sometimes come to mobilize for votes. Usually, these candidates reel out what they would do for them. In some cases, some of the candidates, especially African candidates, are interviewed after such campaigns by an interested association member who usually videoes the interview and posts it afterwards on the association's social media platform such as Facebook or WhatsApp, for all to see and then decide who to vote for. Sometimes, municipal officials also visit the associations to explain the decision-making processes of their municipalities, especially as they affect immigrants.

A 54-year-old African association leader in Helsinki, summarizes all of these when he argues that

> *Our [African] associations are not political strictly speaking, but socio-cultural organizations where we aim to improve our life situations in Finland. This means that we are more interested in the social, cultural, and economic integration of our members in Finland than in anything else. However, we do allow political issues because we know that part of our responsibilities as an association here both to our members and to the Finnish society is to make available the knowledge of essential civic events such as [general] elections, for example, to our members…. In this regard, we can be called an avenue for sharing political information from the government and candidates among our members regarding elections. But Finnish candidates and political parties rarely come. I don't know why. Perhaps they do not think we are important yet to their elections. What we usually see during election time are mostly candidates, especially African and immigrant candidates. Moniheli officials also invite us to come and be part of their seminar on information regarding election mobilization and participation. In this case, we send our volunteers who thereafter educate us on what they learned…. Sometimes, the municipal officials also come to tell us about how political decision-making is made at the municipal level and why we should be part of the electoral process… All of these are important for our knowledge…* (Interview: 2 July 2014).

Why many Finnish candidates rarely visit the African associations for vote mobilization is not clear. But some Africans at the ethnocentric stage (especially those with a separated identity) argue that they are happy with such absence, and wondered what they are coming to do in the first place. One of them, a 27-year-old African man in Espoo argues that

> *It will be contradictory if they come anyway since you can't discriminate against somebody in working life or in social platform [i.e., social life] and then come to seek his vote in the political platform. No, it doesn't work that way. An African proverb says: 'Friendship with a ferryman starts from the dry season so that when the rain comes, you will be among the first to be ferried to the dry side of the river'* (Interview 2 April 2016).

Some other Africans at the same stage see the near absence as "another manifestation of racism against us". Some like a 38-year-old African lady in Helsinki argue that "No one should be surprised at all about this because it is already known that they don't like us. That is why they deny us good jobs that would make our life better… So, coming to seek our votes is ridiculous" (Interviews: 4 April 2016).

Conversely, most Africans at the ethnorelative stage see the rare visits rather differently, arguing that the reason could probably be because they do not know anybody in the associations or because of the quiet/shy nature of Finns rather than because of discrimination. Some also highlight the small African population as a reason. However, even in some cases when some of the Finnish candidates do visit the associations to campaign, many Africans with a separated identity are still more likely to choose African candidates and other visibly different immigrant candidates than those at the ethnorelative stage.

In any case, the African association leaders seem to understand this, and therefore tend to urge all members to reflect on each campaign message by each candidate and make a choice in *clear conscience*. A 40-year-old integrated Ethiopian man in Jyväskylä whose job is food delivery, summarizes this thus:

> *The leaders do not at all force us to vote for any candidate that comes, whether African or non-African; they simply emphasize that we vote according to our consciences…. the door is then left open for us to decide on who to vote and who not to vote… This is also the same even in other associations [that]I belong to* (Interview: 10 April 2014).

This view also shows that although being an African candidate can be an asset among Africans, the leaders seem to be more interested in the electoral motives and competence of the candidates. Some African candidates seem to understand this well, and that is why they often go the extra mile in engaging individual African members after the association meetings, especially the seemingly undecided voters. This they usually do through phone calls, texting, the use of the social media, and/or physical visits to African/immigrant frequented places, including restaurants and churches. For instance, during the build-up to the 2012 municipal elections, Asa, an integrated African female candidate in a fairly big Finnish municipality, where she has been resident since the mid-1980s, was among those. After visiting some African associations, she wrote on the Facebook page of the Association of Nigerian Community in Finland - which also has many other Africans and immigrants as members - that "In [her municipality], there are 38.5% migrants, but there is no migrant background council member at the [municipal] board" who could speak for immigrants in the municipal council.

This information is provoking and strategic because it concerns *all* immigrants in her municipality (not just Africans) and was therefore meant to ignite some interest and urgency among them. At the same time, Asa, although a well-integrated African immigrant, with a high-profile job and salary, knows that many African/immigrants are not yet integrated and therefore decided to exploit this situation to her favor by evoking their collective consciousness through elaborating in her campaign rhetoric the importance of addressing this problem if elected. Cameron (1974, 140) has argued that the extent to which political mobilization involves political induction of people depends largely on the existence and strength of a political agent (e.g., a candidate or campaigner) who through his/her promotional drives or the ability to create a strategic image of him-/herself, as well as adapt his/her political rhetoric the solution to a local discontent thereof, may either succeed or fail in attracting new members to his/her political fold. To this extent, Asa's mobilization is right on the track. Arguing on collective mobilization, Togeby (1999) notes that

> Group-based or collective political mobilisation is determined by interests. It is expressed through a high degree of group consciousness... Collective mobilisation [therefore] depends on lively interaction among people with similar … interests and on stable and lasting patterns of interaction… (p. 667)

From the perspective of the institutional channeling theory, it is argued that the result of such mobilization among immigrants is often possible in the light of their bad socioeconomic conditions which virtually all foreign workers in Europe, especially non-Europeans, have borne the brunt of (Ireland 1994, 7-8, 39). Thus, Asa adds that African immigrants are particularly on top of her list because

> *They seem to be more isolated than all other immigrants… especially in the labor market, in social life, in getting affordable housing; and in virtually everything …. Do you know that I have on some occasions seen a housing vacancy that say Africans are not welcome? It is shocking … despite the fact that we have an anti-discrimination law in this country! Is it a crime to be African or black? The anti-discrimination law is meant to check all these, but it is not obeyed by some Finns, both high and low. I would iron this out in the municipal council if elected…* (Interview: 10 July 2013)

This politicking is *ad rem* in the light of their racial situation in Finland. It also confirms Cameron's (1974) assertion that how a mobilizing agent convinces his audience depends on the extent to which s/he adapts his/her rhetoric to articulate and give solution to the local discontent. The local discontent of African immigrants has been summarized in Asa's narrative. In the case of housing, for example, a 45-year-old Nigerian man in Helsinki confirms that he has also seen a housing vacancy that reads: "Finns and Asians are welcome. No Africans please!" (Interview: 5 January 2016). This has also been found in research. For example, an undercover research in Helsinki carried out in 2013, involving a Somali, a Russian, and a Finn, looking for housing, reports that in one of their search,

> One [Finnish] landlord invited both the Finnish and Russian [undercover researchers without knowing that they are undercover researchers] straight away to look at the flat, but told the Somali [undercover researcher without also knowing that he is one of them], "You can send an email with your contact information and I'll let you know the situation [later]" (Yle online English news 2013, October 16).

In the 1970s France, for example, Ireland (1994, 42-3), drawing from Cordeiro (1985), writes that such a discrimination also existed, where the Italians and Spaniards are often preferred by the French in the job and housing sectors, over the Sub-Saharan and North Africans who are usually kept at the bottom of the wrung.

Asa's campaigning, using such discriminations as rhetoric seems bright, more so, because it creates a sense of collective consciousness among them. In Portugal, for example, among Luso-African youths, Rosana Albuquerque (2000) argues that such was the case. She writes that institutional racism, xenophobic political discourse, and inequalities in daily life became decisive factors in the construction of their collective identity as Luso-Africans that altogether formed the bedrock for their political mobilization.

> Although many of them [have] never walked on African land [since they were born in Portugal], there emerged a symbolic ethnicity strongly rooted in their African inheritance. The feelings of being African were stronger than those of being Portuguese[68] and that was a strategy of resistance to oppose a cold society. Africa was too far geographically but very close emotionally…. They do not want to become white as colonialism forced their parents [to become]. [Instead] They assume their blackness as a right and as a crucial element of their identity as citizens…. African cultural identity [therefore became] the expression of a culture of resistance against assimilation …. So,

[68] This reminds of the famous saying of Kwame Nkrumah, the late founding president of Ghana, that "I am an African not because I was born in Africa but because Africa was born in me" (see also Lexi Hall, "7 Things to be Thankful for as Africans", *Iconic Africa*, 26 November 2015)

> even in an informal way, and many times unconsciously, while [African] ethnic minorities are denouncing discrimination and participating in social life, they are also influencing opinion making, contributing to the construction of ethnic consciousness and forcing political institutions to promote policies towards equality and integration (ibid, pp. 174-180).

In Finland, this can also be said of African immigrants, especially those at the ethnocentric stage with a separated identity whose feeling of being African is stronger than those of being Finnish, and which eventually has become a strategy of resistance to oppose a society they consider hostile. Although Africa is far from them geographically, the racism they face makes it emotionally close, thereby making them respond with some indifference to some aspects of Finnish political life. And this became decisive in the construction of their collective consciousness that altogether formed the bedrock in their response to political mobilizations. So, even in an informal way, they are influencing opinion makings in the Finnish society through this, trying to induce political institutions to promote policies towards a greater immigrant integration so that the equality given to them by the Finnish law would no more be taken away by the inequality they experience in daily life. In the light of this, Asa appears to have the chance of getting as many votes as possible from among them.

However, there is also another candidate, Berekete, also an integrated candidate in the 2012 municipal elections, in his municipality, and resident since 2001, who was campaigning for *equality for all* not only for (African) immigrants. He made this clear from the beginning at the floor of the African Association meeting, that

> *…. I would stand up for everybody, and support policies that I believe would be beneficial not just for the African or immigrant community, but for everyone in the society. This comes from my belief that equality is the essential ingredient in the making of a society that is at peace with itself* (Email communication: 14 November 2014).

Bennett (2004) has argued that ethnorelative individuals have relevant constructs of other's cultures which makes them engage in empathy towards equality for all that is not just cognitive but also a change in the organization of lived experience. And if this process 'is deepened and habitualized,' it becomes the basis of bi-culturality or multiculturality in everyday life. Hence, Berekete, in his bi-cultural mind, argues that his reason for this equality campaign is twofold: first, was the issue of voluntary tax introduced by the government of Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen in 2002, which mandated landowners to pay taxes voluntarily. The second is the issue of privatization of public services. In the first one, he argues that it is unfair because the whole welfare system is based on taxes, and "making a change from one where there is a compulsory tax to one where there is a voluntary tax would mean that the chances of collecting the same amount of taxes would reduce". This, he says, would mean a drop in public welfare delivery, which would affect both poor Finns and immigrants (who are most economically disadvantaged).

On the issue privatization, he argues that "when the provision of a service is privatized, it normally means that the organization providing the service does so to make a profit." The consequence is that "the services no longer become

available to everyone", which creates the inequality between the haves and the have-nots. Subsequently, those who have money will access better services than those who do not have. A good example of this is the division, he says, is in the provision of healthcare services. "We now have a two tiered structure, in which there is the public provider and then the private providers. The public sector charges a fee of around 14 euros, for possibly three visits in [his municipal] region, as compared with about 90 euros an hour that is charged by the private sector." This possibly means that a poor resident, whether a Finn or an immigrant, may not afford it and hence would suffer. Therefore,

> *I thought that these policies were similar to those that create and maintain a divided society... I thought that this was something to oppose, as I would like for my children and their peers to enjoy the benefits of living in a society where the quality of life for everyone was good. This was my reason for running for the local elections, which was [also] an attempt to point out to the Finnish people that what they had was good, and not worth changing, as I had had experiences from societies that were divided. So quality and access, which I regard as the two important pillars of equality, with respect to using [public] services suffer with privatization. As such, if a society wants to ensure equality [for all], it cannot put the provision of [public] services in the hands of private enterprises that are [mostly] formed to make profits. Instead, these services must be provided by the public sector, such that everyone has access, and the providers have got to make sure that the quality remains the same. Statistics, unfortunately show that in the period from 2009 to 2013 the amount of money that councils spent on "purchasing" services increased from €9bn to €13bn, which means that councils are reducing the services that they produce, and instead are purchasing them from the private sector, which for the reasons [that] I had stated, should, in my opinion, be avoided* (Email communication, August 2014).

In this narrative, Berekete x-rayed the side effects of the said policies on the public welfare, especially on the poor. For African immigrants, this is going to be tough on those of them who have poor jobs and low salaries. Berekete even pointed it out when he argues that "When one looks at the [African] immigrant population, it is easy to conclude that the vast majority of us would tend to fall into the group that do[es] not have, which then means that [these] policies that create a division in society, would tend to affect us more when those policies begin to take effect" (ibid).

Meanwhile, other African/immigrant candidates also visited the African association for their own campaigns. Like Asa, the majority of them had their electoral objectives mostly on the welfare of (African) immigrants. This is not surprising as many of them are at the ethnocentric stage. Nonetheless, as usual, the association leaders urged members to vote according to their consciences for the best candidate. When a door is thrown open like this, especially in a multiethnic and/or multinational association - such as the African association- there is the tendency for some candidates and/or their campaigners to start mobilizing along national/ethnic lines instead of on the quality of candidates' manifestoes and the candidate's competence. The consequence is the possibility of dividing potential votes for the candidates, making it potentially difficult for any of them to win eventually. Such (negative) influence of ethnic campaigning has been noted by the institutional channeling in Switzerland. For example, it found that in pre-1980s Switzerland, different immigrant associations in the bid to attract co-nationals/ethnics to their fold in the general and labor union elections, campaigned selfishly on the basis of nationality/ethnicity and

eventually got their votes divided. This consequently made them lose the election to native Swiss unionists who campaigned generally for the welfare of *all* workers regardless of nationality (Ireland 1994).

Therefore, against all odds, some African candidates began to mobilize their co-ethnics/nationals in the association, leaving Berekete on his own. One of the candidates named Boro, in the heat of the moment, exclaimed that

> *After listening to Berekete talk, I was afraid that I have lost the election even before it started. I knew it was going to be difficult in competing with him in the mobilization drive… However, I did not want to give up. So, I decided to start mobilizing my fellow countrymen and tribesmen and friends who could support me for this blood tie* (Interview: 24 June 2014).

The relationship between ethnicity and politics has been said to be emotional, and seldom rational (Wolfinger 1965; Foner 1979; Moore 1975; Miller 1981, 1982; Touraine 1990; Schraml 2010; Vermeersch 2011; Nnabuihe et al. 2014). Long (2008) argues that among the four channels through which ethnicity/race could motivate the selection of a co-ethnic/racial during elections, are (i) affective ties of group membership, (ii) fear, and (iii) prejudice towards ethnic/racial outsiders. Vermeersch (2011, 4) also believes that throughout history, cultural attributes have influenced population groups so deeply that "people from the same ethnic group will have some sort of a fundamental connection because of their shared culture and will therefore organize in similar ways" (see also Schraml 2010).

This can be said of the above ethnic mobilizations which appealed very well to co-nationals/tribesmen, especially those at the ethnocentric stage with a separated identity. On the other hand, the mobilization did not impress those at the ethnorelative especially those with an integrated identity who preferred a quality candidate, regardless of ethnicity. In fact, one of them summarized what could be the thoughts of many when he argues that:

> *…. I would have loved to mobilize for him, being my countryman and tribesman, but I have some reservations about his competence. The truth is this: 1) I don't see him as a very honest person. 2) I don't also see him as somebody who is courageous enough to say anything tangible at the municipal council if elected. He is too quiet for my liking! I don't also trust his person, having known him closely for some years now. I can tell you that I am not alone in this thinking; some of us [his countrymen] share this view too. On the other hand, I have more respect and trust for Berekete, having known him since I came to [the municipality] some years ago. He is a very honest, outspoken, active, and trustworthy person, both when he held elected positions at the association and after it. Many people are talking about it after the association campaign, and even in the school… We know him well. So, even though we are not from the same country, I will vote for him* (Interview: 10 September 2013).

Here, competence takes precedence over ethnicity! The issue of distrust, being "too quiet" and not being courageous enough have eroded whatever ethnic bonding the candidate may have had with some of his co-ethnics and co-nationals. This appears to contradict a key assumption of the ethnic mobilization theory that the relationship between ethnicity and politics is often emotional, and seldom rational, although political scientists such as Martiniello (2005, 9) never believed in it in the first place because for him, "no convincing general theory can explain the link between ethnic and racial belonging and political behavior in

general or electoral behavior in particular." And so, "the existence of an ethnically or racially motivated vote remains dubious". Using the US as an example, he argues that what usually happens during its elections is that "with each election, it becomes more obvious that every candidate [regardless of ethnicity] entering the [electoral] race needs to win the votes of Jews, Blacks, Hispanics, as well as those of sexual minorities" in order to secure a convincing victory (ibid).

This invariably appeared to be true with Berekete in the 2012 municipal election because he eventually got most votes from all races in his municipality which gave him a resounding victory over other candidates in contrast to Asa who eventually failed in her municipality, mostly because her main base was immigrant whose population (in the municipality) was comparatively small in relation to the native population.[69] Berekete's case is also reflected in another African candidate's victory in Helsinki. The candidate, Abdirahim "Husu" Mohamed, an integrated Somali, also campaigned with "a message of hope and belonging" *for all* residents in the municipality during the 2017 municipal elections and eventually won. Hence, he explains that because of the campaign message,

> I was voted in by immigrants and Finns ... [including] Jews, Christians and non-believers. [Many of] my supporters represent Ghana, Nigeria, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, India, Poland, Senegal, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Russia, Estonia and the Swedish-Finnish community… (cf. Yle online English news, 12 April 2017)

This shows that African candidates at the ethnorelative stage are more likely to be supported by both immigrants and natives than otherwise. It is also part of the benefits of being bi-cultural or multicultural.

Be that as it may, in its own internal elections, African associations' internal candidates also mobilize members. In other words, while those at the ethnocentric stage use managing racism in job search and social life, the promotion of African cultures and languages in Finland among others as a tool for the *in-bonding* of members to campaign, those at the ethnorelative stage use learning of the Finnish language and ignoring racism[70] at workplaces and social life among others as a tool for the *bridging* of members with the society to campaign. Various communication methods especially the social media are used in this process. The argument of the first group is that the aim of forming the associations is mainly to bring members together in mutual cooperation, promote their societal integration through managing racism in job search and social life, and also promote the African culture and language as encouraged by the Finnish immigrant integration act, while that of the second group is to bridge with the

[69] It should also be noted that not all immigrants would buy her message as to vote for her, including even some Africans (especially the assimilated) and some other immigrants of various backgrounds (especially whites).

[70] The difference between managing and ignoring racism from the perspectives of these immigrants is that in managing racism, one learns to live with it as something inevitable in the host society without removing one's mind from it which makes it very bitter and painful, while in ignoring racism, one partly or fully removes one's mind from it and moves on which makes it less bitter and less painful.

society by ensuring an ease in the socioeconomic integration of members in the society through the learning of the Finnish language and ignoring racism at workplaces and social life. Besides, the first group also emphasizes joining anti-racism networks to combat racism while the second advises on joining Finnish associations to understand the natives. Sometimes this politicking is so strong that it is videoed and posted on Facebook. For example, during the build-up to the internal elections of the Association of Nigerian Community in Finland in 2014, all the candidates were interviewed on video and later posted on the Facebook page of the association for all members to see and judge before deciding on who to vote for or not.

In mobilizing for protest politics also, African associations are active, although their mobilizations – usually done through digital and traditional methods - are not usually on issues concerning Finland as earlier mentioned, but on the ones about their home countries, especially the ones bordering on governance, economy, and security. By illustration, the Nigerian association in Helsinki in January 2012 mobilized members and even other Africans to come out at the Helsinki central railway station (the venue of the protest) and protest against the fuel price hike in Nigeria. In 2015 such was also done by the Kenyan association in Finland to protest against the massive killing of many students at its Garissa University by a terrorist group. In these two instances, Africans at both stages of the DMIS responded in solidarity and with one voice.

5.1.5 Finnish/Multicultural associations

Some other associations earlier discussed and which (some) African immigrants belong to include the Finnish anti-racist network (such as Rasmus, Rasters, Free Movement Network, Human Rights League, and Right to Live), and the environmental associations (e.g., the Greenpeace). Others include the Multicultural Women's association (Monika), the Society for the Study of Ethnic Relations and International Migration (ETMU), the Finnish Sports Federation (Fimu ry), and the Transcultural Artists in Finland (Catalysti). These associations, when necessary, also mobilize for internal elections to change government and mode of governance. African immigrant members who are interested in electoral posts notify the executives who verify whether the prospective candidate is an active and/or a fee-paying member or not. If the verification is positive, registration is done and the candidate could start his or her campaigning among members, which is usually done also in the Student for Obama style. In these campaigns, the gap between Africans at the ethnocentric and ethnorelative stages is narrowed because racism rarely exists in these associations since many are multicultural. However, some Africans at the ethnocentric stage still campaign that it is necessary for immigrants especially Africans, to get more electoral posts to balance the equation which currently is in the favor of the natives, whereas those at the ethnorelative stage mostly campaign for the continuous improvement of the associations and the wellbeing of all members for the interest of the society.

In protest politics too, this dichotomy is evident, depending on the association and the reason for the protests. As earlier discussed, the associations mobilize according to their work or aim. For example, the anti-racist network (such as Rasmus, Raster, the Finnish Refugee Council, the Right to Live organization, Free Movement Network) usually mobilizes against racism and unfair treatments in the society, while the Greenpeace mobilizes against harm to the environment, etc as we had seen. These mobilizations are usually done through various communication methods especially emails and the social media as well also text messages and person-to-person contacts. Prominent among the anti-racism protest for example is the *Peli poikki* or "Stop this racism Game" earlier discussed, and which is arguably the largest of protest mobilizations in Finland in recent time. As expected, many immigrants were mobilized including Africans, the majority of who are at the ethnocentric stage since they are more disposed to such protests than those at the ethnorelative stage.

5.1.6 Previous political experience (or lack of it) as well as interest/disinterest in politics

The institutional channeling theory has also singled out previous political experience and political interest/disinterest as among the factors that influence people's readiness to be mobilized for political action (Ireland 1994, 2000; Martiniello 2015). Ireland (1994; 2000) for example finds this among immigrants in France, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands, and argues that these have made their political mobilization easy or difficult as the case may be. Fanning and O'Boyle (2009) also find that among immigrants in Ireland, "prior political socialization" or lack of it, has increased or decreased their political mobilization as the case may be. Using African immigrants among these as an example, they argue that those who do not have prior political experience or interest in politics are usually more passive to political mobilization than those who have it.

In Finland, this is also the case with African immigrants. In other words, those who have previous political socialization or experience in their homeland or elsewhere tend to be most positively active towards political mobilization - whether it be in municipal, union, or association elections or protests - than those who do not have it. However, their stages at the DMIS also have some influence in their disposition in the sense that those at the ethnorelative stage tend to be more disposed towards political mobilization in all elections but low in protests than those at the ethnocentric stage who appear more disposed in protests than elections. To illustrate, Bisi, a 27-year-old integrated Ghanaian nurse in Tampere, resident in Finland for 7 years, asserts that although she does not have any previous political experience or interest in home country, she does not mind being asked to vote if her tight work schedule permits (Interview: 7 September 2015). On the other hand, Okala, a 38-year-old Burundian technician in Espoo, resident for 10 years, with a marginalized identity, argues that "I used to have that interest in politics back home but I lost it when I came here [in Finland] because of the staunch racism I have experienced here. I don't feel happy about

my situation" (Interview: 8 October 2015). This is shared by many Africans with a marginalized identity.

From the perspective of the institutional channeling theory, racism is known to kill the interests of (some) immigrants in politics (Ireland 1994, Martiniello 2005) such that those immigrants tend to *shun* formal political activities including mobilization as a result, unless their choice candidate is running. Such racism in Finland also includes the vandalization of the campaign posters of immigrant candidates as I have elaborated elsewhere (Ndukwe 2015a, 152). Sometimes racist abuses and death threats are also issued to immigrant candidates to discourage them from further campaigning (or voting as we would see in the political participation subchapter). For instance, in the 2012 municipal elections, a 33-year-old Congolese man in Helsinki tells of how his 53-year-old Tanzanian friend, Kudoro, a budding politician in Vantaa, suddenly abandoned his campaigns because of such threats. He narrates that during the campaigning, Kudoro was

> *…. receiving some unholy looks from some natives during his campaign in 2012 municipal elections…. As the campaign continued, he also received anonymous death threats and late night calls, warning him to call off the campaign "or you will see". One message specifically read: 'Neekeri, you can't be in our municipal council. So quit!' Initially he did not take these things seriously, but when they started coming frequently, he had to think. And so, he fled to Helsinki where he later abandoned politics and joined a multicultural organization that fights xenophobia and racism in Finland…. These days, he travels around Finland with the organization, holding multicultural seminars and events...* (Ndukwe 2017, 126)

There is no doubt that in the multicultural organization, he will be contributing more to making Finland more tolerant, egalitarian, equal, and multicultural than he would as a councilor. Notwithstanding, his quitting politics portends a bad omen for immigrant political involvement especially because his experience also affected his supporters, some of whom also quit politics. Bennett (2004) argues that the intercultural incompetence of the majority population leads the minority population to turn their back to the host society. From the viewpoint of the institutional channeling also, it is argued that the institutional hostility and indifference of the host society usually leads to the voluntary withdrawal of immigrants from political life (Ireland 1994, 8; 2000). Ireland (1994) particularly illustrates that among immigrants in certain European countries, notably Switzerland, France, Germany, and the Netherlands, this has been the case. Drawing from Barth (1969), he calls it, "isolation", or in Shingles' (1981) phrase, "total separation strategy", from society's political involvement.

Furthermore, there are also African immigrants who do not show interest in politics solely because of their reason for migration to Finland, and regardless of whether they have had any previous political experience or not. Some of them argue that they wish to fulfill their main reason for migrating before indulging in any form of politics and this includes also protest politics. For instance, a Somali man in Vantaa, makes clear that

> *Anybody telling me about politics in any form now is wasting his time because my interest now is to fulfill my reason for migrating here and not to dabble into politics. I came here as a refugee to find rest from the war that ravaged my country and have a good life… As I speak*

now, I don't even have a good job. So, I am still struggling… and until I achieve this, I have got no time for politics (Interview: 10 October 2015)

In his migration prospect theory, Czaika (2012) argues that some migrants tend to focus their attention on achieving their migration goals more than anything else because in most cases, such immigrants had planned their aim right from the home country before leaving. He illustrates that in Europe, for example, based on the analysis of the annual and quarterly intra-European migration inflows to Germany between 2001 and 2010, there is empirical evidence to show this, because, among other things, the migration expectation based prospects about the socioeconomic situation in the destination country bears strongly on many immigrants, such that they are often bent on achieving their socioeconomic goal first before going into any other thing, including politics.

In any case, there are some Africans at both stages of the DMIS who even though have no previous political experience, have nevertheless developed political interests upon arrival and so are actively disposed to political mobilization. While those at ethnorelative stage of experience developed this to identify with the society due to their positive experiences, those at the ethnocentric, particularly those with a separated identity, did so mainly to fight discrimination due to their negative experiences and they constitute the majority among those with ethnocentric experiences that show interest in elections. Nonetheless, some of the two groups have gone to the next level by becoming political campaign entrepreneurs for various candidates and/or parties both in Finland and around Europe for *money*. They crisscross Finnish and European cities campaigning at election times, not only for money but also to acquire political campaign skills (cf. Ndukwe 2017). This kind of political mobility is basically made possible by the constitution of some European political parties where non-party members are allowed to participate in electoral campaigns and some party activities even though they are not members (Mjelde 2014). This is said to be more prominent in countries such as the UK, Ireland, Germany, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Austria (ibid). This constitutional leeway, therefore, provides good opportunities for some African immigrants in Finland to utilize.

For example, a 40-year-old integrated Nigerian named Udo, asserts that he had campaigned in the UK, Sweden, and Ireland in both municipal and parliamentary elections for both conservative and liberal party candidates and got well paid. Similarly, Bong, 43, and Cameroonian with a separated identity, also argues that he had campaigned in Norway, Denmark, and Austria for different candidates and also got well paid. In addition, they both emphasized that they also hone their political skills "for the future in politics," especially in the development of campaign politics in their home countries. Bong particularly argues that he is "now politically well equipped" to lead the opposition party in his native Cameroon to oust the current Cameroonian president "who has been in power for more than thirty years now" in the next presidential election (For more on this, please see Ndukwe 2017, 135 - 6).

5.1.7 Disregard for municipal elections

Some African immigrants shun mobilization in municipal elections because they see the election as unimportant. In some cases, this is also regardless of their stages at the DMIS, although many are at the ethnocentric stage with separated identities (including Dunia, the sociologist that migrated to Canada, earlier cited). The main reason is that they believe that the municipal council is powerless in fighting institutional and individual racism when compared to the parliament. And so, they are more open to mobilizations in the parliamentary elections than in the municipal. Unfortunately, voting in parliamentary elections requires Finnish citizenship which many do not yet have. And so, they often stay in electoral limbo: i.e., neither voting in the municipal nor in the parliamentary. For instance, Zainab, a 25-year-old Senegalese dishwasher with a separated identity in Helsinki who has a master's degree in social anthropology argues that

> *I don't listen to any candidate asking me to vote in municipal elections because I see it as a waste of time! Municipal councils do not and cannot do anything to stop racism and discrimination against immigrants… I have told my friends and countrymen here to stop supporting candidates for municipal elections... If it is parliamentary elections, yes, that is recommendable because the parliament can help change our bad situations for better by making more stringent laws in fighting racism. Unfortunately, many of us do not yet have Finnish citizenship which [participation in] the parliamentary elections require* (Interview: 5 October 2015).

Also, a 36-year-old Congolese man with a separated identity in Tampere argues that

> *To be honest, I think municipal councils are powerless when it comes to addressing the core problem of immigrants in this country… I would rather mobilize for parliamentary elections which could make laws that better our lives better than the municipal. The municipal council can only implement the laws made by the parliament. Can you see it? So, the parliament is the key… It has enacted a law against racism and discrimination, it remains a strong action to stop it and I am not sure the municipal government is capable of doing it* (Interview: 2 July 2014)

Some Africans at the ethnorelative stage, particularly those with an integrated identity like Bupe, the Zambian-Finnish lady, earlier cited, share this view, emphasizing on adequate *implementation* of the non-discrimination act to stop all kinds of racism and discrimination. Notwithstanding, some do not totally share the view that municipal elections are not important because they believe (and rightly too) that most essential services at the local level are run by the municipal administration. They also argue that even if racism is doing too badly, immigrants could still mobilize to elect candidates in municipal elections that could ensure that such is highly checkmated in the society by for example lobbying their party members in the parliament or their friends in government to take *proactive* actions against such social anomalies in the society.

5.1.8 Failure of African Candidates at the polls

The failure of many African electoral candidates at the polls is also singled out as a negative influence on the mobilization of some African immigrants as my

interviews show, especially those at the ethnocentric stage. Recall that Weide (2008) has mentioned this factor earlier as among the factors that weaken immigrants' interest in voting. This weakening affects African immigrants not only in the municipal elections but also in the union (whether labor or student) elections, because they believe that racial/xenophobic discrimination is the cause of the failure of their candidates. The discrimination is said to be two-fold: 1) deliberate refusal of the native population to vote for African candidates, and 2) discrimination by the election umpires (who are mostly natives) during the calculation of the votes cast. For instance, a 30-year-old Tanzanian campaigner in Tampere who has been in Finland for 7.4 years, with an integrated identity, argues that

> *Many Africans that I mobilize for African candidates during labor and student union elections tell me that they feel discouraged each time they remember that African candidates have little chances of being elected. Many of them argue that this is because [the] majority of Finns do not like blacks. Many Finns, they say, do not vote for Africans because they see them as unwanted foreigners in Finland… This is also the case with election umpires* (Interviews: 20 October 2016).

Also, a Ugandan dockworker in Helsinki, 31 and resident for 9 years, with a separated identity, argues that

> *In my posti union, we are mobilized during union elections but some of us don't show interest because they believe that African candidates would not win as it has been the case. This is because they believe that an average Finnish worker does not vote for an immigrant, let alone an African... That is why almost all the executive posts in my union are occupied by Finns. This is also the case in other unions that I know of. This is not good because it has discouraged many of us from running for [electoral] posts in our different unions* (Interview: 20 October 2015).

Many Africans at the ethnocentric stage (including Dunia), and some at the ethnorelative (like Bupe), confirm this, stressing that if discrimination is removed, many African immigrants will be very "responsive to [political] mobilization." At the ethnocentric stage of denial, Bennett has argued that the discrimination of the dominant group is because of their unwillingness to tolerate people from other cultures and that most times this is borne out of ignorance, naïve observations, or the tendency to dehumanize others. He hence concludes that such discriminatory attitude creates the conditions of intercultural isolation that often protects the xenophobes' and racists' worldviews from changing for the better (Bennett 2004, 1993).

On the other hand, many Africans at the ethnorelative stage see the failure of African candidates differently, arguing that it cannot be an obstacle to further political mobilization. Many of them believe that such failure is actually partly because of the low African population[71] and partly because of the little or no interests of some African immigrants in elections. They argue that other residents

[71] A study of immigrant political mobilization in the US also finds that immigrants are more likely to be successfully mobilized when their group's share of the electorate grows larger (Allison Shertzer 2016).

(including the natives) should also be mobilized to support African immigrant candidates otherwise the candidates might likely fail again and again (Interviews: 2 March 2016). This statement reminds us of Martiniello's (2005) earlier argument that for any candidate to win elections in the US, s/he must mobilize virtually all categories of races.

5.1.9 Social (dis) connectedness with one's social/ethnic group/networks

The social connectedness of immigrants with their countrymen, co-ethnics/nationals, and/or friends has been found to be vital for their political mobilization in the host country (Ireland 1994, 2000; Leighley and Verdlitz 1999). Ireland (1994, 2000) for example finds this among immigrants in some EU countries such as Switzerland, France, Germany, and Netherlands, and argues that this has been the case. In Finland, this is also the case with African immigrants. In other words, those who are in regular touch with their co-ethnics/nationals and social groups/networks/associations are easy to mobilize because they are regular at attending meetings and social gatherings as well as keeping in touch, often through phone and/or social media, and in some cases, physical visits. This is sometimes regardless of their stages at the DMIS, although in most cases, those with separated and integrated identities are much better at this than those with assimilated and marginalized identities. The institutional channeling theory has shown that social gatherings of this kind for example are very essential for making political contacts. Using France as an example, Ireland (1994) illustrates that

> Communist-sponsored festivals and social gatherings where North African *cous-cous* [staple food] held culinary place of honor alongside Alsatian *choucroute* [dressed sauerkraut], facilitated contacts between immigrant workers and communist organizations. The local press reported triumphantly the number of new PCF [the French Communist Party] and CGT [the General Labor Confederation] members that never failed to result [from such contacts]. Immigrants active in those movements attended "debates" at election time to pose appropriate questions to PCF candidates about the immigrants' roles in the French social and economic life (p. 109).

Conversely, African immigrants who are not in regular touch with co-ethnics/nationals and social groups/networks/associations are not easy to mobilize since they rarely or do not attend meetings or such social gatherings. In other words, they are naturally cut off from essential issues such as political mobilization. Prominent among these are those with a marginalized identity, and to some extent, also those with assimilated identity. Saksela-Bergholm (2009) argues that within immigrant associations, members who are not in regular touch or who deliberately prefer to stay outside of the association or ethnic network or membership for personal or structural reasons are usually cut off when essential issues (such as the political) are discussed. The importance of social connectedness to political mobilization, for example, cannot be overemphasized.

5.1.10 Student and Labor unions

As discussed earlier, Finnish student and labor unions are essential opportunity structures in the political mobilization of immigrants especially members both in their internal elections and protest politics. African immigrant members are therefore also mobilized in these processes. For example, in the student union, all African students at the bachelor's and master's level who by law are (compulsorily) members.[72] are usually mobilized by both African and non-African candidates and/or their campaigners and/or certain interest groups such as ethnic student groups on behalf or alongside the candidates. The African candidates usually comprise of those at the ethnorelative stage (or those with an integrated and assimilated identity) and a few at the ethnocentric stage (or those with a separated identity). Their mobilizations (just like that of others) usually take the form of Students for Obama methods earlier discussed such as door knocking, phone calls, social media, student issue forums, notice boards, campaign strategy meetings, planning sessions, and some special events to engage a wider segment of the student body for the election. This is usually done on- and off-campus. In their campaigns, some African candidates at the ethnocentric stage usually emphasize, among others, a racism-free campus in all ramifications, including academic racism and racism in student housing, or hostel. Academic racism exists when a lecturer deliberately gives a student low marks because of his skin color or country of origin. Discrimination in student housing relates to the one earlier discussed (which involved a Kenyan student) and more like it. Some African student victims of both have reported them in the African immigrant groups/circles. Conversely, African candidates at the ethnorelative emphasize the welfare of all students for the interest of the society regardless of ethnicity or social status.

In the labor unions - where membership is rather voluntary unlike in the student union- political mobilization by African and non-African candidates also exists. However, while this is usually the case in labor union elections, it is not totally so in the state general elections such as the municipal and parliamentary as well as presidential where the union as a body does not usually mobilize for any candidate or party, except in special election such as the EU parliamentary as noted earlier where the union mobilizes its members for the union's own candidates/party or any union-friendly candidate/party for the benefit of the union at the EU level. In all the cases, eligible African immigrants are also mobilized just as other eligible members[73] through letters and/or emails as well as notices on the office boards.

As usual, African immigrant candidates in their campaigns, campaign according to their DMIS stages. For example, those at the ethnocentric stage

[72] Although they are compulsorily members, those with a marginalized identity do not show any interest in election which some with a separated identity do, mainly to make things better for African students even though they also (like those with a marginalized identity) do not usually identify with the society. But their situation is a lot better (in terms of mindset) than that of the former which may have prompted their little interest.
[73] Eligible voters are most fee-paying members

emphasize emancipation from work racism, employer's exploitation, stoppage of layoffs, bad work conditions, improvement of salaries, and/or work benefits. Overall, they pledge good representation to make these happen. On the other hand, many at the ethnorelative stage emphasize conducive working environment for all and good representation in all matters.

In protests politics too, both labor and student unions also mobilize African immigrants for protests and demonstrations. However, the African disposition to this mobilization differs depending on the reason for the protest and/or their stage at the DMIS. For example, in the student union protest against the introduction of school fees for foreign students, many Africa student members respond positively to the mobilization and even helped mobilize other immigrants regardless of their DMIS stages. In labor union protests, Africans at the ethnocentric stage - whose work conditions and salaries are usually poor and precarious- tend to respond more positively if the protest is about poor salary/work conditions than those at the ethnorelative whose work situation is a lot better. It is however important to recall here that nearly all of the labor protests are usually mobilized when talks with employers or the government (as the case may be) fail or are being unnecessarily dragged. Sometimes they also occur when agreements reached are not properly honored.

From the viewpoint of the institutional channeling theory, this is in order and is a general practice across Europe among labor unions mainly used to emancipate (immigrant) workers from the bourgeoisie. Using France as an example, Ireland (1994, 108) argues that in a breach of agreement or failed talks (such as the above), local French unions – especially those of the General Labor Confederation (CGT), the Democratic French Labor Confederation (CFDT), and the French Communist Party (PCF) - "would … make an express appeal to immigrant workers for their participation in marches, demonstrations, or strikes against [the] company or the government". He hence calls union organizations "weapons of lower status groups" which use group-based mobilization to counteract "the greater motivation and resources of upper-status people" in the society (Ibid, p. 24).

In Finland, one example of such protests earlier discussed is the 2008 massive demonstration and strike called by PAU against Posti Oy after failed talks on Posti's planned salary cuts and layoffs of workers. Many African immigrant employees (alongside other employees) were successfully mobilized. This was also the case in 2017 when PAU again mobilized for protests when Posti even refused to negotiate on another pay cuts and layoffs. PAU clearly explained this to all workers especially members in an information pasted on the work notice board:

> Our employer [Posti Oy] wants to take away our night [work] increase [of] 30% [pay]. Instead, we shall get only 6 -7%. It means about 20% from our work salaries [is gone]. They also want to take away guarantee salaries from old employees. Our employer doesn't want to negotiate with our Union. That is why we are [embarking] on strike. All must be on strike! If you are a member, we [will] pay you allowance of 50 Euros per day [of the strike. So] Make an application [for this after the strike] on (the union's web) pages…. If you are not a member, join at once. We [will also] pay you the next strike day allowance … (cf. PAU notice board information, June 2017, Helsinki).

Summarizing

Thus far, we have seen how the political mobilization of African immigrants at the local level has been, especially when the role of the municipal administration, political parties, electoral candidates, (African) associations, religious institutions, and student and labor unions, are considered. The reactions to these mobilizations by (some) African immigrants, in one way or the other, reflect their racism experiences such that such experiences (especially in the socioeconomic arena) permeate most of their responses. Ugep, the Gambian, earlier cited, for example, argues that

> *Whether I am being mobilized by the government, candidates, political parties, associations, unions or networks, I always ask this important question: Is this really going to fight racial discrimination for us so that we can get good jobs and live a good life? If so, that's ok, but if not, why waste my time listening to them?* (Interview: 28 April 2016)

In the next subchapter, we shall discuss their political participation where we will also see a continuation of the influence of racism, or specifically, their DMIS stages in their responses.

5.2 The Political Participation of African immigrants

In this subchapter, some of the factors discussed in the political mobilization subchapter will also be discussed because it is the same factors that encourage or discourage political mobilization that also, in most cases, encourage or discourage political participation. In other words, the success/failure of political participation often depends on the success/failure of political mobilization. We will also see the influence of the DMIS stages in their responses. In other words, those at the ethnocentric stage (except those with a marginalized identity who do not participate in any election including African association and even membership because they neither identify with the society nor with their ethnic group) tend to participate less or are very critical and selective in candidate choices in municipal or union elections or those of non-African associations except multicultural associations (where racism is said to be invisible), often preferring to vote for African/immigrant candidates to the natives and other white candidates as usual, while those at the ethnorelative stage participate more and are often less interested in the ethnicity/nationality or status of the candidate but rather on the person's competence and ability to deliver for all. In protest politics too, especially the ones against racism and poor work conditions, the former participate more than the latter. Among the latter however, those with integrated identity tend to participate more than those with assimilated identity who do not usually identify with ethnic/immigrant group and their issues.

Meanwhile, it is difficult to estimate the African immigrant political participation rate in Finland due to the absence of comprehensive statistical data in this regard. Available data mostly talks about Somali participation especially

in municipal elections (cf. Statistics Finland 2015, Wass and Weide 2015). Wass and Weide (2015, 42) for example argue that in 2012 municipal elections, about 40% of the Somalis - 41 men and 39 women – participated. They assert that turnout among them was slightly lower than that of voters born in Sweden but clearly topped those born in Estonia and Russia, in spite of their lower labor market integration. However, my finding indicates the opposite in terms of labor market integration and turnout. This is also in line with the finding of Tiilikainen and Ismail (2013) in their study of the Somali in Helsinki. Both findings indicate that the Somali lower labor market integration just like that of some other African immigrants also negatively influenced their turnout. Wass and Weide's (2015) finding therefore may have been influenced by their usage of quantitative method in contrast to our (respective) usage of qualitative methods.

Let us now start discussion on African immigrant political participation with African immigrant political party memberships.

5.2.1 Political Party membership

Martinielo (2005) argues that being a member of a political party is a good indicator of political participation. In Finland however, not many African immigrants have become political party members as my findings show. It also shows that membership moved along the DMIS stages. In other words, many who have become members are mostly socioeconomically comfortable and also have strong political networks needed to navigate through the labyrinths of the Finnish political life. In real terms, they are mostly those at the ethnorelative stage who are already integrated (in some cases or assimilated) in the Finnish society. Only a few Africans at the ethnocentric stage have also become members, some of them are already at the minimization level – the last stage of the ethnocentric platform.

However, an overall number of African party members in Finland is not however known due to absence of data. The party officials I interviewed about this argue that they do not usually register party members based on nationality or ethnicity to avoid discrimination. In any case, I was able to get some list of African candidates that have stood for municipal elections since 2000 under various parties. The list (which can be seen below) is from a compilation prepared by Minna Oksaharju's for the *African Presence in Finland Exhibition* at the Finnish Labor Museum Werstas, Tampere, in October 2015, on which I have also added my own finding. The parties include the Greens, Social Democratic Party, the Left Alliance, National Coalition Party, Christian Democrats and the Center Party. Perhaps this is especially because most of these parties are immigrant-friendly, pro-working class, pro-family and/or pro- Christian (e.g., the CD) in their ideologies/manifestoes. Dinas & Gemenis (2010, 2) argue that party "manifestoes provide more accurate and representative picture of where parties stand in the policy space". Yet, although most of the parties are generally immigrant-friendly, some of their individual native members are anti-immigrant in views and expressions under various disguises regardless (For more on this, see Ndukwe 2015a).

In the below list, those marked with one asterisk had run for office only once, while those with two asterisks had run twice or more. Some of the names also appeared twice in different parties because they had run for elections twice in two different parties, or in the same party but in two different municipalities and times.

The Green League (or the Greens party):

Helsinki – Abdulkadir Isak, Battulo Essak, Salahudin Elmi, Wisam Elfadl, Zahra Abdulla, Fatim Diarra*;
Uusimaa region (**esp. Espoo and Vantaa**) - Abdirahman Ali Jama, Abdullahi Salah, Abdulrahman Abdi Rage, Batulo Essak, Felix Adje, Lamin Touray, Mark Davidson, Said Yusuf, Samira Chakir. **Hame region** – Daniel Lopes Martins, Emmanuel Eneh**, Jama Jama**, John Jakob Mluge, Takura Matswetu*.
Central Finland - Bella Forsgrén*
Southwest – Ahmed Elsayed, Roda Hassan
Kymi region – Abu Doumbia, Tufairi Kawawa
Northern Savonia – Lucien Sene
Oulu – Latekoe Lawson Hellu, Saeed Warsame, Samuel Luak, Abdi Ibrahim, Abudullahi A. Abdulkadir, Speciose 'Jaspe' Mukamutara, Omar Yehia

Social Democratic Party (SDP):

Helsinki- Deek Gurhan, Kadar Gelle, Raphael Tsanga, Zahra Osman-Sovala, Abdirahim "Husu" Mohamed**.
Pirkanmaa region- Regassa Birri
Uusimaa (**esp. Espoo and Vantaa**) – Abdifatah Abdi, Faysal Abdi**, Aadan Ibrahim**, Ali Abrihahman, Habiba Ali*.
Kymi region – Simon Bojang
North Kareia – Sarchi Abdullah Fatah

National Coalition Party (NCP):

Helsinki – Mukhtar Abib**, Saido Mohamed, Ene Ogechukwu**, Ujuni Ahmed*;
Espoo – Oge Oguejiofor-Eneh;
Hame region –Simon Ekpa*, Wilson Kirwa

Christian Democrats (CD or KD):

Helsinki – Riag Mukhtar, Becky Lillian Owiti
Uusimaa region (**esp. Espoo and Vantaa**) – Basil Eneh, Georges Kouassavi-Benissan, Mark Etie*, Maher Gerges**; Adwoa Brewu*, Daniel Anini*, Bizi Christophe*.
Hame region – Yeshi Bogale, and Esther Leander

Center Party (CP):

Helsinki – Abdirahim Hussein Mohamed**
Uusimaa region - Mustafa Hagi
Southwest Finland- Alas Ali and Andi Mwegerano

Left Alliance Party:

Helsinki - Suldaan Said Ahmed*; Zahra Abdulla**
Central Finland – Tsega Solomon, Paul Abbey**
Häme region – Sylvain Kipre

Swedish People's Party (SPP): Uusimaa (Vantaa) – Jean Banyanga*

Source: Minna Oksaharju's compilation for the *African Presence in Finland Exhibition* at the Finnish Labor Museum Werstas, Tampere, coordinated by Dr. Anna Rastas. The list was based on survey responses sent to different political party offices across the country. But I also compiled a few of the names from my own research, including the candidates in 2017 municipal elections. Minna Oksaharju disclosed that the Finns Party, the Swedish People's Party and some regional party offices did not respond to her survey. Similarly, I could not get a list of African candidates in constituency associations as it is said to not to be available. So, while the list above may not be very exhaustive, it is enough to give us a good insight on the number of African candidates so far in the Finnish municipal elections since 2000. Incidentally, only a few of them has been elected.

Meanwhile, all the candidates in the list come from 23 African countries, namely: Benin Republic, Nigeria, Cameroon, South Africa, Gambia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Congo, Liberia, Mali, Morocco, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Egypt, Togo, Somaliland, Ghana and Uganda (Minna Oksaharju's compilation). Looking at the list, we could see that the Greens party took the lead. This is quite understandable given that it has been rated as the party with the *most positive* focus on immigrant issues and immigration (Sagne et al. 2005). This is also seen in its party ideology, where it has the most constructive and developed national strategy on immigrant integration and equal treatment, which tally with the government's immigrant integration acts. Overall, it sees immigrants as assets to the Finnish society rather than a liability (cf. Sagne et al. 2005). Other parties especially the SDP, the Left Alliance, CD, the NCP, and CP, are also immigrant-friendly and come next in line in their African immigrant memberships as we saw in the list. We could also see that the anti-immigrant party, the Finns party, is conspicuously absent in the list.

In general, nearly all the African party members interviewed argue that they are mostly drawn to their respective parties by their ideologies as introduced by family members, friends, workmates or just acquaintances who are party members. For example, Poto, a 50-year-old Congolese woman in

Helsinki with integrated identity, and a Greens party member, who has been in Finland for 20 years, argues that

> *… I became a member of the Greens party through my [African] friend who has been a member for years. I like the party because it stands for non-discrimination! This is something we Africans are looking for in a party to make our life better here. Once you remove anti-immigrant sentiments and treatments in Finland, we all virtually have no problem as immigrants. I believe this party will lead us to that height if it has a substantial access to state governance…. If you check well, you will see that we have had more African candidates in the party than in other parties. That is to show you that Africans love the party very much. I am hoping that more Africans will join in the near future to help make life better for us all....* (Interview: 5 June 2015).

Also, Ahmed, a Somali of the SDP, 48 and resident for 14 years, now integrated after being separated for long, argues that

> *I became an SDP member through my family member particularly my cousin in Espoo who is also a member…. My cousin told me about the party's pro-immigrant and pro-worker ideology and its stance on racism. So far, those have been practically true. The party is living out its manifesto…. I have also integrated in Finland through the party networks… I believe racism can also be fought through politics….I believe [that] in some years to come, this party will contribute more to the multicultural transformation of Finland than any other…* (Interview: 20 May 2016)

Furthermore, an integrated Tanzanian man in Tampere also recalls that

> *….At the time I joined my party [the NCP], I was feeling so alienated in Finland. The racial discrimination was so much… So, I decided to join the Greens party following the advice of a Finnish friend who told me that the party is immigrant-friendly and that I could feel at home there. Then I joined and since then, I have made a lot of good Finnish friends within the party and we have [also] together engaged in many party activities…. In fact, in 2011, some party members asked me to prepare to stand as a candidate for the following year's [i.e. 2012] municipal election, but I told them I wasn't ready yet... But that shows they accepted me in their midst. I feel happy about it, and this has enhanced my life further in Finland…. I have also advised some of my fellow Africans and other immigrant friends who feel marginalized to join the party or any other good party like the Left Alliance to enhance their life here. Some of them have done so already and are getting good results just like me… I never knew that being a party member could help me feel so belonged here…* (Interview: 9 September 2015).

This kind of narrative, especially as regards to alienation, has also been found by research as one of the reasons why immigrants join a party or association in the host country. For example, Fanning and O'Boyle (2009, 30-31) discover this in Ireland among African immigrants. They illustrate that

> One respondent described how being a member of an Irish political party offered immigrants a means of overcoming feelings of alienation within Irish society and also provided a way to "show the Irish people that we can do something together". For this respondent, membership of a political party was seen to provide a sense of belonging: "I think for me it is important to be in a party because that way I feel a part of Irish society" (p.18)

The institutional channeling theory shares this view also in its stance on the marginalization of immigrants and political isolation. Using France and Switzerland as example, Ireland (1994, 58, 176) writes that when immigrants realized that they could "degenerate into political isolation" due to their

marginalization, they started joining political parties and trade unions respectively. While those in France began "involving themselves in French politics through membership in political parties", those in Switzerland engaged in massive enrollment in trade unions because at that time in Switzerland, the Swiss constitution recognized trade unions more than political parties as "important social partners" in the formulation of policies on immigrants and society (p. 49). This massive membership subsequently ballooned, especially in the Swiss Construction Workers' Union Federation (FOBB/GBH), the Christian trade union movement (CSC/CGB), and the Swiss labor communists, in the same way it did in the French political parties. This eventually resulted in championing of immigrants' human and workplace rights (p.156) in both countries.

In Finland, such a rise in membership by immigrants is however only noticeable in the labor unions, mostly to protect their jobs and source of income. No significant rise is noticed in political parties. Recently, probably to attract more immigrant interests, some political parties appear to be proactive on immigrant issues, even to the extent of openly criticizing fellow parties that they feel take anti-immigrant positions. For example, in 2015, the stance of Christian Democrats represented by its former leader, Päivi Räsänen, on the forceful return of unsuccessful asylum seekers was severely criticized by parties such as the Greens, Left Alliance, Social Democrats and the Swedish People's Party. Räsänen has as a minister of interior in 2015 strongly held that failed asylum seekers must be returned home since "unsuccessful asylum applicants are by definition not in need of international protection". Because of this, she abolished the temporary residence permits previously issued to such asylum seekers, arguing that the availability of such temporary residence permits "would effectively serve as a pull factor" for future applicants (Teivainen, 25 July 2017). Other political parties (mentioned above) seeing such stance as unnecessary and harsh, demanded that the temporary permits be re-instated since failed asylum seekers might face persecution/suffering in home country. They also cited section 51 of the Finnish Aliens Act (301/2004, amendments up to 1152/2010 included) as silent on whether unsuccessful asylum seekers should be returned to their home countries or not, and therefore urged that a positive decision is preferable. But Räsänen remained adamant. This Räsänen's attitude made some African supporters of the CD to withdraw their support. It goes to explain how the position of a party head can affect the way the whole party is seen regardless of its apparently good policy.

In fact, some African supporters/members of some other parties have also argued that a similar position of some key officials of the parties have also made them withdraw their support or membership. Many argue that those officials are becoming strong anti-immigrant even though their party manifestos say otherwise. For example, an Ivorian man in Espoo disclosed that he left his party in 2015 "because of some officials have disguised a way of being racist and have blocked the expression of our views in different ways". He further argues that he later joined a constituency association "where racism is non-existent and expression of different views free" (Interview: 10 July 2015). Some other Africans who have experienced such in their parties also argued similarly, pointing out

that it is becoming difficult to know whether they are following the manifesto of their parties or the directives of some officials which are not usually in tandem with the manifesto. Some have therefore also left their parties and joined various constituency associations.

Interestingly, Yle online English news reports that what unites all constituency association members is the ability to run away from party discrimination and think outside the box. As a result, many constituency associations are now full of ex-political party members, including interest and protest groups, lobbyists and established movements with broader agenda to fight discrimination and ensure a real change in the society (Yle online English news, 26 March 2017).

As a matter of fact, some African party members who are still with their parties have threatened to establish an African/immigrant party if party racism/discrimination does not stop. This is because many of them argue that they are not usually given any tangible party positions where they can influence some changes especially for immigrants. Hence, they are mostly relegated to the position of the rank and file. Centre for European Studies, Brussels, & Suomen Toivo, Helsinki (2012) in their study of immigrant political participation also found a similar feeling among some immigrants they surveyed. According to them, one immigrant argues that "Foreigners are neglected [by political parties]. We do not have a voice. Besides the Swedish party, there should be an immigrant party. Finland is a closed system and the foreigners themselves are living in self-deception [by being in the Finnish parties]" (p.18).

Nacarino et al. (2012) argue that party discrimination has in fact prevented many immigrants and their descendants from ascending exalted party positions at the local, regional, and national levels, and hence denied of the ability to influence important decisions related to them. So, the threat by the African immigrant party members to form their own political party appears reasonable. From the perspective of the institutional channeling theory too, Ireland (1994,7) supports that "It is natural, in this optic, that immigrants should organize and articulate their political interests along ethnic or racial lines... in response to [the] discrimination" they face in the host society. He further argues that when immigrants organize politically in this sense, it is primarily because the host-society institutions have nurtured this in them through their discriminatory policies and practices (pp. 10, 33, 47-8). Martiniello (2005, 17-18) even sees such political organizing positively, arguing that when immigrants and their offspring form own political parties based on ethnic, religious or any other reason, such form of political behavior should also be seen as a good indicator of political participation.

Therefore, if the African party members succeed in carrying out their threat, it could therefore be seen as a good indicator of their progress in political participation which could also open doors for a rise in African/immigrant party memberships as well as active involvement in Finnish party politics, where the migrants could emerge in different exalted party positions such as local and national party chiefs, secretaries and party administrators (at various levels and

capacities). Should the party win an election, the holders of these positions could also metamorphose into state administrators, ministers and prime minister that could take proactive socioeconomic and political decisions that could, among others, influence the end of racism in the Finnish society. The Turkish immigrant MP in Helsinki, Ozan Yanar, for example, has predicted that despite the anti-immigrant sentiments in the Finnish society, immigrants would in the future eventually become ministers and business leaders, and that this is something the Finnish racists and xenophobes will have to get used to (cf. Yle online English news, 6 April 2017).

5.2.2 African associations and other associations

Belonging to associations, unions, movements, and networks by immigrants has also been importantly regarded as a positive indicator of political participation by Martiniello (2005, see also Ireland 1994). Bengtsson (2010) especially sees associations, for example, ethnic associations, as the best road to immigrant political integration in the host country. For Jacobs & Tillie (2004), such associations are also good because they usually "serve as a safe haven from which they (immigrants) can approach the institutions of the host country of residence for their needs or any complaints" they may have (see also Predelli 2008).

In Finland, African immigrants have joined several associations (such as Finnish and multicultural associations), the majority of which have been earlier discussed. They have also formed their own (African) associations. Therefore in terms of membership and unlike in political parties, many African immigrants are members of different African and non-African (i.e. Finnish and multicultural) associations except those with a marginalized identity who do not belong to either of the associations since they do not identify with them, and those with an assimilated identity who only belong to Finnish and multicultural associations and not African associations since they do not also identify with their ethnic group/association.[74] African associations, for example, can be grouped into three different types, namely: ethnic (comprising of mainly a particular ethnic group or tribe in a country), national[75] (comprising of the nationals of a country regardless of ethnic groups), and transnational[76](comprising of various African nationalities). The majority of them are located in the capital region (i.e. Helsinki,

[74] Their non-identification is mostly as it concerns formal association and not as individuals because they still have individual friends from among the African group most of who are naturalized Finns and/or assimilated or integrated. In the same vein, the non-identification with the African group by those with a marginalized identity also follows the same manner because even though they also do not identify with the African group/association, they still have some African immigrant friends many of who however are either marginalized or separated.

[75] It can also be called a multiethnic association if the country is multiethnic as many African countries are. However, not all African countries in Finland have their national associations represented. Those with low population especially do not have, and are often members of transnational associations. Prominent among them are Algeria, Senegal, and Mozambique, among others.

[76] Transnational African associations are multinational and invariably multi-ethnic.

Espoo, and Vantaa). Only a few are located in the smaller cities such as Jyväskylä and Tampere and others.

Among these African associations, the most common is the national, followed by the transnational, and finally the ethnic. Prominent among the nationals are the following: the Association of Nigerian Community in Finland, the Somali League [77], Ghana Union Finland, the Gambian Association, Cameroonian Cultural and Development Association in Finland, Association of Angola Residents in Finland, the Zambian Association, the Kenyan Association, and the Association of Tanzanians in Finland. The transnationals include the African Diaspora Finland ry (ADF), African Association of Central Finland, the African Civil Society in Finland (ACSF), and the African and African European Association (AFAES). Prominent among the ethnic include the Igbo Union, Anambra association, Umunna association, Imo citizens association, Kumba association, Ghana Asante citizens association, and the Greater Accra association. The population of registered members in each of the associations is approximately between 20 to 200[78], depending on whether the association is ethnic, national, or transnational: usually the bigger the geographic coverage of the association, the more the members, and vice versa. In other words, there are more members in the transnational than in the national and the ethnic.

Essentially, most African immigrants who belong to their ethnic associations also belong to their national and/or transnational associations. For instance, some Igbos (- a Nigerian ethnic group) who belong to the Igbo Union also belong to the Nigerian Association (i.e. the Association of Nigerian Community in Finland), the African Association of Central Finland, the African Diaspora Finland ry (ADF), and/or the African and African European Association (AFAES) as the case may be. Importantly, most Africans in these associations are made up of those with integrated and separated identities because they usually identify with their home associations, whereas those with marginalized and assimilated identities are not usually members because they do not usually identify with these associations.

Interestingly, most African associations have the same or similar aim of preserving African languages and cultures in Finland as well as helping members integrate in the Finnish society, especially in the social, economic, and cultural aspects, through guidance and advice, for example, on what to do and what not to do in the face of racism (for e.g., ignoring it or calling the police[79] rather than fight), assisting in finding a job[80], and understanding the socio-cultural etiquettes in Finland. According to the institutional channeling, these actions also exist among some immigrant associations across Europe especially in France and Switzerland, where the associations try to integrate their members into the

[77] There are so many Somali national associations but the Somali League appears to be the most prominent and recognized by some Somalis as my interview data show.
[78] This is quite approximate because some members leave Finland without informing their associations, while their names are still in the register
[79] My interview data show that many Africans do not actually have trust on the police in matters of racism. But they are usually advised to call them rather than fight the racist(s).
[80] This job is usually blue-collar as white-collar jobs are usually not accessible to most African immigrants as we have seen.

society through counseling, as well as in the promotion of own culture (Ireland 1994). Ireland also argues that the host state sometimes provides financial resources to facilitate some immigrant cultural projects (see also Predelli 2008). In Finland, such a provision of funding especially by the local authorities is also the case especially for some selected immigrant cultural events (upon their application for funding) where immigrant associations showcase their cultures (and languages) to the Finnish/multicultural public. Some African associations have benefitted so far from such funding. However, these efforts have not really done the actual bridging with the society as racism rages on regardless.

Furthermore, in African associations' internal elections –which hold periodically – many African members participate regularly and actively more than they do in non-African associations (as we would see later below). A 40-year-old Ghanaian cleaner with a bachelor's degree in biochemistry in Espoo who has been resident in Finland for 17 years with a separated identity, explains why this is so.

> *We Africans have high love for our African associations here more than any other association because that is the only place that we gather as Africans. We see the associations as our miniature Africa, our country, ethnic group, and hometown, name it, which we groom the way we want and where we help ourselves. We have the power in it. The association belongs to us! We are connected to it by blood, culture, and shared history. Other associations [i.e., non-African] do not really belong to us in the strict sense. They are not our own. We virtually have no power or influence in them. That is why many Africans that I know participate less in their activities than they do in [the] African associations. Their participation in them is just because of some defined interests, which could be personal, social, economic, cultural, environmental or political. But in the African association, it is all of these put together…* (Interview: 3 May 2016)

Following this narrative, which many African immigrants interviewed agree to be true, in the internal electoral politics of the African associations, many of them (except those with marginalized and assimilated identities) participate actively and regularly. Their high participation and dedication create strong bonding among them, enhancing their sense of belonging to it. Through this, they approach the municipal authorities for the funding of some of their cultural events especially those that are to be displayed to the Finnish and multicultural public as mentioned above. In this way, they create some *thin* sense of bridging with the society. Bengtsson (2010, 247) has argued that immigrant associations can serve dual functions in the host society: 1) as 'bonding social capital' that bind individual migrants together within the association, and 2) as 'bridging capital" between immigrants and the rest of the society. However, in the African immigrant case, bridging is created more with the municipal authorities that represent the society than with the society in general. And that is why the bridging could be described as *thin* rather than *thick*.

Furthermore, in the internal elections of non-African associations (such as Finnish and multicultural), all African members participate. However, participation among them is usually influenced by their positions at the DMIS stages. But there is a little distinction between those with ethnorelative experience. For example, those with an integrated identity tend to participate highly in both the Finnish and multicultural associations while those with an

assimilated identity tend to participate more in the Finnish than in multicultural associations. On the other hand, those with a separated identity mostly belong to multicultural associations (in addition to the ethnic ones) such as the anti-racism network because they do not consider these associations as strictly Finnish due to its multicultural nature but a combination of immigrants and multicultural-minded Finns. Finally, those with marginalized identities do not usually belong to any of the associations because they do not identify with any.

Some African members of these associations have been elected to their executive bodies at different times. For example, an African artist, 36, in one of the multicultural associations, who has been resident for 9 years with a separated identity, narrates that

> *I in particular was once elected assistant secretary. A Finnish member nominated me and vote was cast, majority of which came from Finns who are more in number! I feel happy about it because this is multiculturalism in practice and it really impressed me. As you know I am not yet integrated in Finland especially because of endemic discrimination here. But the multicultural spirit in our association is very strong and encouraging to us immigrants...."* (Interview: 2 March 2015).

Also, a Zambian registered nurse, 34, with a separated identity in Tampere who was elected as vice secretary of her association argued that her votes surprisingly came from both Finnish and immigrant voters otherwise she would not have won. She hence exclaims that "For the first time since I came here [in Finland], I felt so happy. I felt like this is really a multicultural association living out its spirit" (Interview: 10 June 2016).

Some other Africans in different multicultural associations share a similar experience, pointing out that they believe it is because Finns in the associations are mostly multicultural, mostly non-racists as no racist would be in a multicultural association. They hence conclude that such a situation is helping them gradually integrate in the society. To this extent, the multicultural associations can therefore be seen as a bridge between immigrants and the society. Fanning and O'Boyle (2009) have argued that belonging to the association of the host society could help immigrants integrate. It can thus be inferred that African immigrants who belong to both African and Finnish (multicultural) associations are likely to experience in-group bonding as well as out-group bridging than those in either or none.

5.2.3 Participation in associations' protest politics

As earlier noted, African associations do not usually organize protests on issues concerning Finland (they could however write protest letters when necessary) but rather on issues concerning their homelands, particularly issues bordering on governance and security. In these protests, the majority of African immigrants at both stages of the DMIS except the assimilated and the marginalized often jointly participate in solidarity. In addition to the examples earlier given, the protest on the 2014 kidnap of Chibok girls in Northern Nigeria also calls to mind. This protest, which attracted huge international attention under the hashtag,

"Bring back our girls", is still on in Nigeria today (although it is now more of speeches and periodic demonstrations than otherwise) since not all the girls have been rescued.

However, although the protests are about homeland issues, they do attract some Finnish activists, politicians, and friends of Africans who do sometimes join in solidarity. Such solidarity and the good feeling it generates among some Africans, especially the separated, helps them in their integration journey in Finland as some of them argued[81]. From the perspective of the institutional channeling theory, Ireland (1994) argues that such protests are good for the integration of immigrants as well as for the potential development of their home countries. Using France as an example, he argues that in the 1980s La Courneuve, (such) protests on homeland affairs by immigrants attracted the support of the rank-and-file French as well as the French communists, the Unified Socialist Party (PSU), and other French Left who joined in solidarity because they believe that immigrants are "fighting for positive change" in their home countries (pp. 110-111).

Furthermore, in the protests organized by non-African associations such as the Finnish and multicultural organizations, for example, African members of these associations as well as (some) non-members also participate, depending on the type of the protests as well as their DMIS stages. For example, in the protests against racism, all members and some non-members including those with a marginalized identity, usually participate because the marginalized, for example, as well as the separated (or otherwise those at the ethnocentric stage), do not consider such protests as identifying with the society but in fact against its hostile nature towards them. Those at the ethnorelative stage who are members do participate because they were organized by the associations. In addition, (and especially for some with an integrated identity like Bupe), it was also meant to identify with the victims because they themselves have been victims or are still occasionally victims. An example is the "Peli poikki or Stop this [racism] Game" protest earlier discussed where many at both sides of the DMIS participated[82] except a few especially those with assimilated identity[83]. In the protest, many of them carried placards alongside other participants with inscriptions such as "Say No to Racism!" "Racism retards the society", "Racism makes immigrant life bitter in Finland", "Racism deprives us of good jobs", "Racism blocks our integration in the Finnish society", "Finns are also immigrants elsewhere", "Stop racism please!" and so on.

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[81] The help here as many of them argued is actually in overlooking or ignoring racist treatments socioeconomically and hoping for the better due to the gesture rather than in actual giving of commensurate jobs or being treated well socially by racists/xenophobes. However quite a few said they have got good jobs through a Finnish activist or friend they know from the protests.

[82] There is usually no roll call by the associations (or unions) to know who participated and who did not. So, the information is mainly from the interview responses.

[83] Most of the assimilated are not usually members of associations against racism. This does not mean that they support racism however but that they hardly had the experience (just like many natives) compared to some of the integrated and so usually do not understand the sting.

Other protests organized by other associations such as the Greenpeace, especially against environmental destruction, are also actively participated by African immigrants. As noted, one of such protests is the one against the energy company, Fortum. Fortum was building a nuclear reactor in the Finnish Olkiluoto and invariably destroying the environment as the Greenpeace alleged. Greenpeace asked them to stop the work and change to a renewable energy, but Fortum remained adamant since it has the government's backing. In fact, the government voted on permissions for two new nuclear power plants to be built," (Greenpeace Finland 2013). An executive of the Greenpeace angrily argued that "We are protesting and advising and warning Fortum that it should not invest in this nuclear reactor. The people in the Nordic region don't want more nuclear power [instead] they want alternative and renewable energy sources." (TerraDaily Nov. 10, 2003). When it seemed clear that Fortum was not ready to give in, the protests started and lasted periodically from 2003 to 2012. During those years, the project, unfortunately, resulted in 1000 reported breaches of safety standards including highly toxic waste polluting rivers and lakes (Staff Writers, Agence France-Presse 2007, Nuclear-heritage webpage 2012). Protesters were very angry and fumed helplessly at the government's connivance. A Finnish lady who participated in the protests argued that "It is too bad that despite our protests they went on with the project and have now totally messed the environment up! It is too saddening! But even though we could neither stop the company nor advise the government, it is still better than keeping quiet" (Informal conversation: 1 September 2013). This statement was well concurred by many participants including African members of Greenpeace. Many of the Africans however are those at the ethnorelative stage who identify with such issues which many Africans at the ethnocentric stage consider secondary to their socioeconomic survival.

Relationship-wise, the bond formed between African and Finnish protesters in all of these protests cannot be underestimated. Such bonds are known to create opportunities that enhance integration and continuous cooperation. For example, this has led to marriage or relationships between Finns and immigrants. It has also led to the acquisition of good jobs by some Africans. For instance, a Congolese lady, 28, argued that "My present boyfriend is a Finnish guy that I met in an anti-racism protest in Tampere….and we are about to get married" (Interview: 2 July 2016). Another lady, a Somali, 32, in Helsinki also argues that her "participation in the protests has helped me secure my present job in the municipal office which I got through the Finnish lady I met in one of the protests in Olkiluoto …. (Interview: 5 June 2016). Bennett (1997) argues that close and mutual association with people of dominant cultures often helps people of the minority cultures integrate in the society.

5.2.4 Student and labor unions

The majority of African immigrants also belong to the student and/or labor unions as noted. A good number also participate in their political activities such as electoral and protest except those with a marginalized identity that only

participate in (some) protests. In electoral politics, for example, while it is already shown that unions (whether student or labor) rarely engage in the general (i.e., state) elections as unions, they do engage in the internal union elections to enhance their governance. Here, union candidates vie for positions almost in the same way as in the state elections among members. This means that anybody interested to be a candidate could declare his/her interests, register and then campaign in the usual way already explained earlier. A good number of Africans at both stages of the DMIS have been involved in this in the past although only a few have been elected. The support of African members also differs, depending on their stages at the DMIS.

For example, in the student union elections, Tuko, a 40-year-old Beninese, resident for 15 years in Vantaa with a separated identity, ran for a position of a PRO of his student union and incidentally won. According to him "I was voted by the majority of Africans/immigrants in my school who stood by me because they know I would represent them well" (Interviews: 10 March 2015). Also, Benedict, a 51-year-old Liberian man, resident for 12 years in Espoo with integrated identity, argues that he ran for a shop steward seat of his labor union and "got elected by a combination of immigrant and Finnish votes because I promised to work for everybody" (Interview: 8 April 2015). However, another African in Helsinki, resident for 16 years with assimilated identity, who campaigned for the post of a treasurer in his student union failed because according to him "I did not have enough African immigrant votes because perhaps some of them feel the post is not important to their wellbeing on campus" (Interview 12 May 2016). Additionally, it could also be because of his not identifying with them beforehand as many of them had also testified. Recall that those with assimilated identity do not usually identify with their ethnic group. In general, many Africans at the ethnocentric stage in the labor union for example are also likely to do the same (i.e. not voting for him) because they would also want positions that could help their marginalized situation as well as somebody who truly (and not because of election) identifies with them. In summary, the elections showcase the running discrepancy between Africans at both stages of the DMIS in their sense of belonging and worth in Finland vis-à-vis their socioeconomic experiences.

In protest politics too, African immigrants are also active in participation. For instance, in student union protests especially the recent one against the government on its (then proposed) introduction of tuition fees for foreign students earlier discussed, many of them actively participated regardless of their DMIS stages. Many of them carried placards alongside other students with inscriptions, such as: "Please allow the policy of free education to stay", "It is a good international marketing for Finland", "No jobs to finance the proposed school fees", "The Finnish weather is too harsh enough. Let free tuition be a compensation", "The cost of living is too high, please allow education free", etc. A 28-year-old Gambian protester with a separated identity in Jyvaskyla adds that

> *…. One of the happiest things about these protests is that they are organized and led by Finnish students who in no way are affected. I feel elated about it because in many cities, not just in*

Jyväskylä, they are at the forefront. They are doing it solely for us [foreign students] because they are not affected, although some of them argue that if they keep quiet, it might eventually extend to them in the future, like it happened in Britain. (Interview: 22 May 2016).

Some Finnish students I chatted with confirmed this, arguing that education should not be sold. Some even emphasized that "many foreign students are attracted to Finland solely because of this tuition-free education, and that if removed, they may likely leave as we have very bad cold climate here, and our language is also too difficult to learn…" (Informal conversations: 22 September 2014). This caring attitude of the Finnish students may be interpreted as a positive intercultural attitude towards foreigners that could give the foreign students some sense of belonging. Because even though the protests could not stop the parliament from passing the bill, some foreign students, including Africans, who could have left Finland or abandoned their education altogether, stayed back and continued because of this multicultural and hospitable gesture. Bennett (2004) argues that positive intercultural gestures from the dominant culture group are good at giving a great sense of belonging to the minority culture group.

When it comes to labor union protests, African immigrant workers are also active in participation, as it mostly concerns their work and financial wellbeing. One of such protests earlier discussed is the Posti protests in 2008 and 2015 respectively organized by PAU against the employer, Posti Oy. The protest, which recorded a large turnout of African employees of Posti Oy, both union members and non-members, especially those at the ethnocentric stage whose work conditions and salaries are poor (compared to that of those at the ethnorelative that is a lot better), was on unfair working conditions, layoffs and salary reductions by Posti Oy. Many of them carried placards with various inscriptions on fair play. Eventually, Posti bowed down to union demands in the large part.

Another example earlier discussed is the protest organized by the confederation of labor unions against the Finnish government's decision to remove some work benefits such as the Sunday pay allowance, maximum holiday time, and some other work benefits in the law in 2015. This time, many African immigrant workers at both sides of the DMIS actively participated because it affected nearly everybody. Some also carried placards alongside other workers, urging the government to renounce its proposal and make things better for the struggling workers (Yle online English news 18 September 2015; Tony Öhberg in *Finland Today*, 18 September 2015). The government later summoned the labor leaders for a round table talk and the proposal was dropped.

From the point of view of the institutional channeling theory, a situation like this can be seen as a class struggle of workers against the bourgeoisie – in which workers usually use their "weapons of the weak" (such as the protests) to ask for a change of policies they consider unfair to them (Ireland 1994; see also Scott 1985; Robert Michel 1959; Tarrow 1998). Some research also argues that such protests are strong vehicles for change usually used by marginalized groups (cf. Ugba 2005; Polletta 2002; Jasper and McGarry 2015).

Overall, in joining the protests, African immigrants are not only politically engaging in promoting and defending their interests but also exerting (some) pressure on the political and socioeconomic systems of the Finnish society in their collaborative and collective actions. In other words, they are engaging in claims-making by influencing public and political opinion-makings towards a multicultural Finland so that the equality given to them by the Finnish law can also be the equality they experience in everyday life.

5.2.5 Previous political experience and interest/disinterest

As in the previous chapter, some Africans who have previous political experiences (in voting or political party membership) elsewhere, either in their home country or elsewhere, also have the same interest in the Finnish political process and regularly participate actively. And this is regardless of whether they are at the ethnorelative or ethnocentric stage of the DMIS. However, my findings also show that those at the ethnorelative stage who have previous political experiences are twice or thrice more likely to continue with the same interest in Finland than some at the ethnocentric stage. For example, a 56-year-old assimilated Zambian man in Helsinki, who has been resident since 2004, argues that he has been very active in Zambian politics before relocating to Finland.

> *I naturally love politics and I had been active in Zambia before coming here. I arrived here in 2004 and by 2008 municipal elections, I was already active in politics. I have also held some posts. For example, I was the chief political strategist for an [immigrant] candidate under NCP in 2008. In 2012, I was the same for a Finnish candidate who belonged to a constituency association…. I love politics and I have assimilated well through it. In the future, I hope to stand as candidate in both the municipal election and in my labor union. Probably also, in the future, I might give it a shot at the parliamentary since I'm already a Finnish citizenship* (Interview: 14 January 2016).

For a 47-year-old Ivorian taxi driver with a separated identity in Tampere, resident for 11 years,

> *I have been active in Ivorian politics for long before coming to Finland. And so when I arrived I did not waste time in joining politics especially because I already have fellow Ivorians who are also into politics here and who I have known from home as politicians.* (Interview: 28 January 2016).

Fanning and O'Boyle (2009) argue that "pre-migratory political socialization" in the home country often positively influences post-migratory political socialization in the country of residence.

However, some African immigrants especially those with a separated identity argue that although they have political interest or experience before arriving in Finland they have had to wait for a long time before voting or joining politics, or becoming politically active mainly because of their inability to secure good jobs. For instance, Utoro, 39, a Ugandan entrepreneur in Helsinki, who has been resident for 13 years, argues that

> *I had to wait for some 7 years before voting and [eventually] joining [party] politics because I couldn't get a job that matches my qualification as an IT professional even though there are*

vacancies in this sector which I applied for but did not get any response probably because of my African name [in the CV]. So, I was not happy…. In fact, there is a lot of racism out there in the job market…. And you cannot be playing politics on empty stomach…. So, I eventually decided to start my own [business]. To God be the glory, it is currently doing well. That is when I finally decided to join politics.... I am currently a member of [the] SDP which also has the interest of workers and immigrants at heart (Interview: 30 January 2016)

A good number of African immigrants especially those with a separated identity share the same or similar opinion in their narratives.

Furthermore, some Africans who had been politically active in their home countries but were forced out of their home countries by hostile political regimes also joined politics in Finland, which incidentally is helping them integrate. For example, a Sudanese couple who was active in Sudanese politics but was forced out by the regime of Omar Bashir is among them. The wife narrates that

Before we arrived in Finland, we were very active in Sudanese politics. We were in the opposition party against the ruling party, and so were severally hounded by President Omar Bashir's men…. Eventually, we decided to leave as political refugees and arrived in Finland, but we didn't leave our political life behind, we brought it to Finland and joined politics here also…. Although my husband didn't like the idea of continuing with politics, but we discovered that politics in Finland is less brutal than it was at home … So, we decided to give it a try. Since then, we have been active in Finnish politics especially at the municipal level, and have joined the Greens party…. We attend meetings and other party functions. This is helping us know more Finns and we are integrating faster than we expected. Maybe in the future, my husband or I could stand as a candidate in the municipal elections (Interview: 4 July 2015).

Sahlberg (2000, 13) argues that if one was forced to leave one's home country for being politically active, it is often the case that one also becomes active in the politics of one's new country of residence. Martiniello (2005) also argues that immigrants who had been politicized in their country of origin and had also had trouble with the state, often migrate and continue with their political activities in the host country.

On the other hand, there are African immigrants who abstain from political participation because of the negative influence of politics in their homelands. For people like this, whose countries often experienced wars or ethnic cleansing, they came to Finland as refugees solely to have a socio-psychological rest as well as earn a good living. For instance, a 48-year-old Rwandan female refugee in Jyväskylä who argued she was active in Rwandan politics before the 1994 genocide, explains that "everything politics as far as I am concerned died with that genocide. I lost everything: family, relatives, and friends, and I decided to leave. If I go back now, where will I stay? I do not have a single interest in politics anymore!" (Interview: 3 May 2016). Also, for a 35-year-old Liberian man in Vantaa who survived the Liberian war,

My being here is to get my life together again after the brutal war in my country… I came here to relax, and to be economically successful, not to engage in any politics, whether electoral or protest. I have been here for nearly 15 years now but my wildest imagination does not tell me that politics is the answer to my dream. So, I rarely think about politics, talk less of participating, except perhaps if it is in my home association here or a strike action called by my labor union, or a demonstration against racism.… (Interview: 15 May 2015).

In a similar vein, a 40-year-old Somali economist in Helsinki affirms that:

Many of us Somalis came here as war refugees, and you know what that means. It was as a result of the war of politics that our country [Somalia] is in a mess today… I had a booming business before the war but all that lost with the war including my very good friends and some relatives…. So, in my opinion, it would not be reasonable for me to participate in the same thing that brought me here…. I came here to recollect myself and to move forward psychologically and economically.… Although the road to economic success for a Somali immigrant in Finland is not very smooth because of racism, I am prepared to carve a niche for myself…. (Interview: 3 July 2014)

5.2.6 Failure of African candidates at the polls

As in the previous chapter on political mobilization, the failure of many African candidates at municipal elections especially has made some African immigrants, particularly those with ethnocentric experience, not to participate in the electoral process. This is because they feel discouraged by this failure, and subsequently interpret it as evidence of racial discrimination against African candidates. For instance, a Sierra Leonean man with a separated identity in Vantaa argues that

Despite our majority voting for different African candidates in the municipal elections as well as in my own labor union, only one out of ten usually wins. Even in the multicultural association that I belonged to, the situation is not totally different. I don't feel happy about this because I see it as racism just as many of us Africans do. I and some others have therefore decided to stop voting in these elections because it is just useless (Interview 24 May 2015).

Many of these Africans strongly believe that the elections are meddled by the Finnish election umpires – whether it be the municipal, union, or non-African association election - in favor of Finnish candidates. Some also feel that many Finnish voters do not vote for African candidates because of their dislike for blacks and/or the black skin (Interviews: 2 -5 April 2015).

On the other hand, some Africans at the ethnorelative stage do not see the failure of African candidates as a result of any meddling by Finnish electoral umpires, but on the comparatively small population of Africans/immigrants as well as on the lack of voting by some African eligible voters because of racism and other reasons.

Meanwhile, some Finnish municipal election officials interviewed argued that they "do not meddle in any elections…. We only calculate the results provided by voters. Any candidate can win regardless of nationality, ethnicity, sex, and social status as long as people voted for him [or her]" (Interviews: 11-12 April 2015). The Finnish union (and some non-African association) officials interviewed also echoed the same thing, emphasizing that the union elections are usually straightforward and that they don't influence anything in any anyway. They also argue that some Africans and other immigrants had been elected in the past, and that "if there is any such discrimination as accused, this would not have been possible" (ibid).

Nevertheless, Dancygier (n.d) has argued that such discrimination could still be possible even if immigrants have been elected since usually "if immigrants possess similar individual-level resources and confront the same electoral context" as the natives, the native voters could still harbor reservations when evaluating immigrant candidates more than they would for native

candidates (pp.1-2; see also Ruedin 2013; Norris and Lovenduski 1995). Ireland (1994, 54) also finds this in the 1970s French trade union elections, and argues that "Discrimination within the trade union organizations responsible for drawing up slates for candidates" in union elections usually excluded immigrant candidates, especially in the winning stage to give room for the native candidates. At the same time, they pay lip service to immigrant work problems including lower wages, dangerous working conditions, tackling employer racism, employment insecurity, and poor housing so that the immigrants will vote for them (see also Alho 2013).

On the other hand, the success of some African candidates has also been motivating to some African immigrants to further vote. For instance, a 25-year old Ghanaian man in Espoo argues that the twice success of one Somali man in Espoo at the municipal elections has been a motivating factor for him to continue to vote for African candidates in municipal elections as in other elections "because it sends the right signal that hope is not all lost for us (Africans), and that we can still have successful African immigrant candidates regardless of all the racial obstacles" (Interview: 10 July 2006). This was echoed by some other African immigrants in Espoo as well as in Helsinki, Jyväskyä, and Tampere where some African candidates had been elected. Mansbridge (1999) argues that representation by a descriptive candidate (such as an African candidate) tends to send a right signal to the candidate's own ethnic or social group that they still have a stake in the decision-making process, especially if they are victims of marginalization and underrepresentation. Drawing from Gosnell (1948), Pitkin (1972), and Phillips (1995), she uses women in the US legislature as an example, and argues that seeing them elected and storming the steps of the US senate and congress, makes many women feel proud and part of the representation process in ways that a photograph of male legislators would never do (pp. 627-9).

In any case, the failure or success of African candidates at the polls may also in part be viewed from the perspective of retrospective voting by some African and/or immigrant voters. Retrospective voting is said to occur when voters assess the past records of candidates in public office to determine their past achievements and/or future prospects before voting (Fiorina 1981; Plescia and Kritzinger 2017; Till Weber 2006). This kind of voting is fairly common among African voters at both stages of the DMIS. They often examine a candidate's past and present records and assess their ability or inability to deliver electoral dividends before making any voting decision so as to make sure they are making a wise decision. African immigrants at the ethnocentric stage, particularly those with a separated identity, mostly look for what the candidate has done for immigrants while those at the ethnorelative stage mostly look for what s/he has done for the whole society.

This kind of situation is a major reason why Fatima Diarra, a 30-year-old Malian migrant in Helsinki was elected in the 2017 municipal elections. Fatima has been so openly critical of racism against immigrants even though she is already integrated in Finland. This is known to many immigrants who massively voted for her. She makes it clear after the election that many immigrants

> … voted for me because I was quite outspoken about racism. Helsinki needs to be open and to have zero tolerance for racism. When I speak about racism, I speak about my own experiences…I think Helsinki can be a modern and versatile city where there is room for many different kinds of people, and I am one of them. I can draw on my own experiences, training and education for my work [at the municipal council] … (Yle online English news, 12 April 2017)

This narrative implies that it is necessary that a candidate has some past or present good records/performances before voters could decide to vote for him/her. Fiorina (1981) argues that voters "need not know the precise economic or foreign policies" of a candidate before making a voting decision; all they need to look for is the past or present record or performance of the candidate in question before deciding to vote.

5.2.7 Racist threats during elections

There are also African immigrants who abstain from formal political participation because of the racist/xenophobic threats including death threats on African candidates as well as the vandalism of their campaign posters during municipal elections as discussed earlier. These incidents, in addition to discouraging some African immigrant voters from coming out to vote, also make some potential African candidates to shelve their plans temporarily or permanently. For example, Ozan Yanar – the immigrant MP earlier cited – who had received several of such threats during his campaigning - was asked by a Yle journalist if the threats could lead to immigrant candidates shying away from politics, including not daring to run in the future elections again, he quickly answered, "Yes… [because] people will be frightened by the storm of hate they may encounter [if they come out]. And it's not just politicians, but also individual immigrants" (cf. Yle online English news, 6 April 2017). De Miguel et al. (2015) argue that staying away from the polls is one of the easiest and safest ways for *disaffected* citizens to express their disappointments against developments in the society. All these are because of people's unwillingness to tolerate others, which according to Bennett (2004) might be out of ignorance, mere stereotyping, naïve observations, or simply outright intolerance. It is also part of the tendency to dehumanize outsiders because of their appearance or country of origin. Such attitude tends to create the conditions of intercultural isolation that protect the xenophobes' or racists' worldviews from change (see also Bennett 1993).

5.2.8 (Dis) connection from one's ethnic/social group/network

As in the previous chapter on political mobilization, Africans who are in regular touch with their ethnic and/or social groups, also participate regularly in the political process whether it be municipal, union, association elections, or in protest politics more than those who do not. Kranendonk and his colleagues (2015) have argued that individuals' political participation can be motivated by their ethnic or social group network as well as the perception of the groups' position in the society.

In Jyväskylä, for example, Okeru, a 30-year old Kenyan man with a separated identity argues that the reason why he usually participates in municipal and association elections is "because I am always reminded of the elections by my co-nationals and friends who I am in touch with because I am a very busy person…" (Interview: 20 November 2015). Also, Dowa, an integrated Nigerian practical nurse, 28, in Helsinki, argues that "I always vote in most municipal elections, and even participate in relevant protests such as anti-racist protests because my friends and colleagues some of who are my country people always update me on such activities since I am not good at remembering such things.…" (Interview: 1 October 2015).

A significant importance of being in touch is that it also helps voters know electoral candidates well (assuming they do not know them before) before making a voting decision. This has indeed helped some African immigrants at both stages of the DMIS make the right voting decision. For instance, a Tanzanian woman, 24, with a separated identity in Vantaa narrates that

> *In the situation that we find ourselves here, we should usually be careful about who we choose to vote for in any election. For example, if I don't know a candidate well, I ask my friends, co-ethnics, or workmates. Although I could also ask the candidate himself during campaigns if need, I do not usually base my voting decision on their answers because politicians are some-thing else. They can lie whether in municipal, union, or association elections…. they can just lie to get your vote... So, in summary, I always fall back on my ethnic and social circles before taking a voting decision* (Interview: 3 June 2014).

Also, Kazeem, a 29-year-old assimilated Malian in Tampere, echoes similarly, pointing out that his family and friends or workmates who know the candidate well do help him make voting decisions to "make sure the right person with the right motive is elected. This also happens if there is a forthcoming protest that I should partake in" (Interview: 4 June 2014). The importance of the ethnic and social groups in political participation therefore cannot be overemphasized.

5.2.9 Lack of enough information about election or protest

Lack of enough information has also been blamed for the lack of participation by some African immigrants. While Africans who have enough information about a political activity do usually participate, others who do not have, do abstain or remain passive. Some of them are also among those who are not in touch with their ethnic and/or social groups while some are among those who argue they do not usually receive municipal notification letters sent before the election. Recall that Researcher Merja Jutila Roon, of the Social Democratic think tank, has argued that 39 percent of immigrants did not vote in the 2012 municipal election *solely* because they did not have enough information about the election (Yle online English news, 1 March 2017).

This is the case also in some union and association elections. A key reason given here by some African immigrants is the issue of disseminating information in Finnish rather than English, especially by some labor unions. For instance, a 25-year-old Burundian construction worker in Espoo, asserts that

Information about our labor union elections especially is usually written in Finnish and Swedish. Some of the executives claim that these are official languages in Finland and that we should know them. But when it is about protests, they usually write in English. I see this as very discriminatory because they know that it will help us come out en masse for protests but less so in elections since some of us have not yet mastered the languages... I think their strategy is to help Finnish candidates win the elections which has actually been the case. We have complained about this but nothing serious has been done…. We are still thinking of what further line of action to take…. (Interview: 23 October 2015)

This allegation is confirmed by some African immigrants in that union as well as in some (few) other unions. Although this is not a widespread practice among labor unions, such a thing is indeed discriminatory and guilty of ethnocentricity. Bennett's (2004) argues that an attitude of this kind depicts an intercultural intolerance which makes people of the dominant culture to demand that those of the minority culture adjust since they (the minority) are in the minority. Ahokas (2010, 9) has argued that immigrant integration should not be narrowly understood as something concerning only the immigrants but also "the host society and its ability to reciprocally adapt to inter-cultural encounters."

5.2.10 Not thinking of (formal) politics now

There are also African immigrants who do not engage in the municipal or union elections because, as they argue, it is the least thing in their minds. Many of them are at the ethnocentric stage, and argue that what is presently on their mind is the problem of racism and good job acquisition. "I will have to survive [economically] first before thinking about politics", says a 42-year-old Togolese father of three in Helsinki who has a master's degree in computer engineering. "I don't have a good job but I have a family to feed and bills to pay. The only politics I think of now is protesting against racism in the job market because a computer engineer like me should not be doing a Posti delivery work that I am doing now. It is as a result of racism" (Interview 10 October 2015). Some other Africans in his shoes answered similarly, maintaining that they are only more disposed to participate in African association elections than any other because it binds them together and helps them on how to tackle racism, acquire jobs (even if menial), among others.

From the perspective of the institutional channeling, racism is a perennial socioeconomic problem in Europe that immigrants especially non-whites have had to battle with (Ireland 1994). In particular, this is more especially linked to job acquisition where natives are often preferred over immigrants. Research has also shown that this affects political participation. For example, Ireland (1994) argues that immigrants who abstain from voting are more likely those who have poor jobs and poor social status in the host society than those who have (See also Shingles 1981; Tolgeby 1999). Wass and Weide (2015, 58) also argue that the socioeconomic position of immigrants often affects their voting and political citizenship.

5.2.11 Translocal mobility

There are also African immigrants especially those at the ethnocentric stage whose regular translocal mobility or changing of cities in Finland at intervals in search of belonging due to racism makes them ineligible to participate in the municipal elections, assuming they want to participate. The incessant mobility and the resultant ineligibility mean that they might not have resided in their new municipalities for at least 51 days before the election as the law stipulates, or in some cases, may have resided but forgot to register within the first 51 days before the election. Some also could be living with somebody who does not want them to use his/her house address for their correspondences which implies that they would remain without an address [84] and hence unregistered in the new municipality [85] for the time being. In these cases, they would not get the municipal notification letters since they do not have a registered address. This kind of incessant mobility also prevents them from knowing local candidates well as to vote for them or having strong ethnic/social networks that could help them in this regard.

Notwithstanding, they do freely participate in protests/demonstrations if such exist and if they are also aware and are interested in participating since the law does not have any residential requirement for protest participation.

5.2.12 Lack of time and/or problem of Laziness

Lack of time and/or laziness is also among the factors that impede African political participation in all sectors including even in protest politics. Here, it does not matter which stage of the DMIS the Africans are, although a good number is at the ethnocentric stage. For example, an Eritrean man in Espoo with a separated identity discloses that "I do not participate in most of these elections because I do not usually have enough time to participate even though I would like to participate. I have two menial and difficult jobs which take a lot of my time and energy. I don't even have enough time to rest myself not to talk of going out to

[84] One does not register without an address. The reason why someone may not want to share his/her address with someone else often has to do with immigration or Kela issues. On the immigration side, living with someone in an apartment considered not big enough for a particular number of persons negatively affects the residence permit application. If the person is, for example, receiving a housing allowance from Kela, Kela would, upon finding out that the person has a subtenant, for example, reduce the amount of the allowance, requiring the subtenant(s) to contribute the difference (that is if the apartment is big enough to accommodate more than one occupant). This would invariably reduce the amount that is paid to the principal tenant (which is why the tenant does not want to inform Kela in the first place). To avoid this, the principal tenant, therefore warns the subtenant not to use his address as this is the fastest way for Kela (or the immigration service) to know because it usually reflects in the local register.

[85] Unregistered here means unregistered in the *new municipality* of residence, not about eligibility to vote, although both are closely linked in the sense that lack of registration in the municipality automatically means lack of eligibility to vote *in that municipality,* even though, admittedly, the person is by law eligible to vote by virtue of his/her meeting the duration of residence criterion.

vote …. Any day racism *permits* me to have *one decent* job, I am likely to have enough time to participate" (Interview: 12 March 2015).

In a similar vein, an integrated Rwandan nurse in Tampere also argues that

> *I would have loved to be participating in the elections as well as other political activities but I am a stay-at-home mum. I am at home all day taking care of the kids because my husband wants it that way even though I am a nurse. His reason is that the kids need much attention. I have to obey him because that is part of the ingredients of marriage. He is also a hardworking and nice man and takes care of our needs….Being with the kids has also helped me know them well…However, I will start to participate as soon as they grow up….* (Interview: 29 May 2014).

On the other side, there are Africans who, even though have enough time, are lazy to join any political activity. They are usually occupied with mundane technologies such as the social media, mobile phones, TVs, where they enjoy music, movies, etc. This is common with Africans at the ethnocentric stage, but also includes some at the ethnorelative stage. For example, an integrated Gabonese Posti manager in Vantaa, argues that

> *I am so lazy to engage in anything political, whatever it is even though I have been here for nearly 17 years. This lazy attitude actually started in Gabon where I also hardly participate. So, unfortunately it continued when I came here… What I usually do at home after work or during my off days is to watch TV, movies, or chat with friends on WhatsApp or Facebook, etc.* (Interview: 20 March 2016).

Also, an Ethiopian cleaner in Helsinki with a separated identity,

> *I am just lazy to bother myself about politics. Part of the reason is racism… But I participate in protests sometimes. This year [2016] will be 12 years since I came to Finland but I hardly vote…. Apart from going to work and for shopping, I usually indulge myself [at home] with the social media or TV programs and movies….* (Interview: 30 May 2016)

5.2.13 Municipal election not important

African immigrants who pay no attention to political mobilization because they feel the municipal election, for instance, is not important also do not participate in it for the same reason, regardless of whether an African/immigrant candidate is running or not. Although the majority of them are at the ethnocentric stage with separated identities, some are also at the ethnorelative stage with an integrated identity. They are all united in the thinking that the municipal election is not important since municipalities are not strong enough to fight racism and discrimination. Instead, they prefer parliamentary elections. For example, a 30-year-old Mozambican construction worker in Jyvaskylä with a separated identity argues that

> *I do not participate in the municipal elections… because for me the municipal council cannot fight racism…. I prefer instead parliamentary elections where this is possible because the parliament makes the rules that everyone must follow…. Unfortunately, not every Finn has followed the non-discrimination act and that is where the problem is…. In other elections, such as in my labor union or other associations [i.e. non-African], I participate only when an African or an immigrant especially who has a racism experience is running….* (Interview: 10 June 2015).

The problem of not obeying the non-discrimination act has been the cause of continuous racism and discrimination in the society such that Finland has been rated as the most racist country in Europe (cf. Yle online English news 29 November 2018). The Finnish police have also been accused of not only discriminating (Yle online English news 5 June 2020, Keskinen et al. 2018) but also not doing enough to send racist offenders to the courts. The courts are also accused of not giving harsher sentences to the racism culprits already prosecuted (cf. Yle online English news 26 June 2018, and 27 June 2019). In the face of these, eradicating racism appears a long road to walk.

5.2.14 Dislike for politicians/politics

General dislike for politicians/politics is also found to be one of the reasons why some Africans abstain from political participation, especially the electoral. Some naturally do not like politics because they see it as a domain of lies and deceit. For example, Paul, a 30-year-old Guinean migrant in Vantaa with a separated identity, argues that

> *I don't like politics because I see it as a domain of deceit and lies. That is why I don't participate in elections because for me it is useless. I don't like the life politicians live, their lies and deception and siphoning of public funds. In fact, I don't like anybody who has [an] interest in becoming a politician… I have even disconnected myself from my friends who have become politicians or who have the tendency to do so, whether in municipal elections or union politics, or even our association…* (Interview: 22 June 2015).

Some African immigrants – at both stages of the DMIS but especially those at the ethnocentric stage - answered similarly, stressing that their dislike for politicians has made them see politics as a bad vocation. Such dislike has also been found in research. For example, in their study of immigrants' political participation in Ireland, Fanning and O'Boyle (2009, 17) found that negative perceptions of politicians explain why some immigrants discursively distance themselves from political participation. Amongst the East European migrants they studied, especially the poles, they found that many do not even indulge in voter registration, let alone participate in elections, because of this. Kristjan Kaldur et al. (2014, 17) drawing from Romani et al. (2011), argue that non-participation in elections is not always a sign of indifference towards the political sphere, but a conscious choice of people not to support politicians who they consider antipathetic and deceitful.

Furthermore, some African immigrants in Finland also see their racism situation as partly a result of the anti-immigrant rhetoric of some politicians especially those in the Finns party and some others in other parties. They believe that such rhetoric encourages the native public to continue to discriminate against them. Hence, they do not participate in municipal elections especially, as a sign of disapproval. Although many of them are happy with the government, they believe that the aforementioned politicians are nevertheless to blame for the increasing endemic racism in the Finnish society.

5.2.15 Age group and location of residence

The roles that age and location of residence particularly played in the political participation of African immigrants include 1) Young adults (aged 20-35) tend to be especially *more* active in the protest than in the electoral compared to those older (this is not to say that the older are not active as well), sometimes regardless of their DMIS stages. Some were born in Finland, and some arrived at an early age and have been in Finland for years. All had grown up with their Finnish and other migrant peers especially in schools and social life, speaking Finnish fluently and blending in the society's socio-cultural life as well as having the ability to navigate and network between diverse cultures. Yet this has not significantly improved their possibility of getting reasonable jobs. Some are even jobless. And neither has it increased the possibility of their being fully accepted by the society. Hence, many (except a few) tend to be at the ethnocentric stage and are therefore not quite active in the formal or party politics but instead in the protest one for the most part. However, some are still able to politically integrate regardless either through the natural interest they have in the formal or party politics, a friend's or parent's influence, or by sheer determination. A good number of these are already at the ethnorelative stage. This reminds of the finding of Pirkkalainen and Husu (2020) who argue that despite "the unjust treatment" and "discrimination" the four Muslim migrants they studied face in the Finnish society, they are still able to politically integrate through the strong emotional capital they gained from childhood and which has helped them develop the 'political habitus' or a deep inner motivation for political activities as well as the ability to navigate between diverse cultures and network widely across ethnic and linguistic lines.

2) In terms of location of residence, some younger ones tend to reside at the metropolitan area particularly at the city center or near it while some older ones tend to reside in the outskirts of the quiet part of the city. However, contrary to research (e.g., Centre for European Studies & Suomen Toivo 2012, 14), being at the city center or near it has not significantly increased the active participation of most of the young at the elections especially those at the ethnocentric stage, and neither has being at the outskirts decreased the active participation of some old in elections especially those at the ethnorelative stage unless barred by some other factors such as health challenges, etc.

What the metropolitan area has done for the young (as much as also for some old) especially is three-fold: 1) job acquisition (even if menial). 2) strong connection with ethnic and social groups. (This connection, as we have seen, has been effective in getting information concerning political engagements). 3. Active participation in protest politics which usually happens in and around the cities.

In the next subchapter, we would discuss the final stage of the political integration of African immigrants, which is the political representation by their elected candidates. The main emphasis here is to showcase how the candidates have so far represented them at the municipal, union and association executive levels respectively.

5.3 Political Representation of Black African Immigrants

> We need immigrants at the higher level to speak for immigrants [because] you can't have integration without representation (- a response by an African immigrant in Ireland, cited in Fanning & O'Boyle 2009, 30)

This quotation highlights the importance of immigrants' descriptive representation as essential to their integration in the host society. The expectation is that when immigrants are represented by their own especially in key positions in the society, they feel part of the decision-making processes and policies. The institutional channeling supports this idea when it argues that political philosophers and normative theorists have since argued that ethnic minorities have claims to special representation to offset the disadvantages they often face in the host society as discriminated groups whose concerns risk being overruled in the decision-making by the majority population if they are not represented (Ireland 1994, see also Bloemraad & Schönwälder 2013, and Dawson 1994). In this regard, Martiniello (2005) argues that representative assemblies in the host society should (therefore) mirror the composition of the whole society in order to include immigrants.

Many African immigrants in Finland especially those at the ethnocentric stage (with separated identity) agree with this view and this informs their representative choices whether in municipal, union, or non-African associational elections in terms of having a descriptive representative. Put differently, these Africans often prefer African and/or non-white immigrant representatives over Finnish/other white candidates because of the shared discrimination experiences in the society. They believe that such representatives would be able to bring about the required substantive benefits – prominent among which is an end to racism and discrimination.

Mansbridge (1999, 628) argues that descriptive representation promotes commitment to the group's interests and needs more than a non-descriptive representation could because it improves the group's quality of deliberation in council chambers. Geddes (1998, 34) also argues that increased descriptive representation establishes an ethnic minority presence in elected political institutions which makes it easier to promote a group's needs and interests. This makes descriptive representation indispensable in a group's substantive representation (i.e., their needs and interests.)

For example, a 40-year-old Namibian political analyst in Tampere, affirms that

> *As an immigrant, nobody is going to discuss your interests with the authorities for you if you don't have an immigrant representative who could do that and who needs to be at the table where decisions are made otherwise you will get the short end of the stick at the end of the day; you will be marginalized in the entire process* (Interview: 3 March 2016).

This is not to say that substantive representation from a non-descriptive representative (e.g., a Finn representing immigrants) might not be effective, but as Mansbridge (1999) argues, this can only be necessary when a descriptive

representative becomes *ineffective*. In her own words, "When nondescriptive representatives have, for some reasons, greater ability to represent the substantive interests of their constituents, this is a major argument against descriptive representation" (p.630). Many African immigrants at the ethnocentric stage especially those with a separated identity however do not totally agree with this view as they would rather find a descriptive replacement than choose a non-descriptive representative. But those at the ethnorelative stage have no problem agreeing with Mansbridge because they believe that a representative must not be descriptive before s/he offers a good representation: all the representative needs to do (regardless of his/her ethnicity) is to possess the competence to represent well and accurately.

The meaning of *accurate* representation however also differs between Africans at both sides of the DMIS. This difference is based on the method to be used by the representative in representation. This could be either mimetic or aesthetic. Recall that the mimetic holds that all political representations should be an "exact portrait, in miniature, of the people" being represented in such a way that s/he "should think, feel, reason and act like them (i.e. like the represented)" since "a representative is the legitimate one if he or she acts with the consent of those whom he or she represents" (Ruedin 2013, 12)., while the aesthetic holds that a representative should be given the freedom to represent with discretion.

Many African immigrants at the ethnocentric stage strongly want the mimetic method of representation for their representatives because of marginalization. For example, a 38-year-old Kenyan lady with a separated identity in Espoo argues that "Our representatives, whether Africans or non-white immigrants, must follow our set goals. If they deviate, they can't be considered our *legitimate* representatives again and would be summarily sacked in the next election" (Interviews: 4 February 2016). Conversely, African immigrants at the ethnorelative stage instead prefer aesthetic representation, arguing that a representative needs the freedom to represent, including the possibility of deviating from initial set out goals if need be. "There is no need to cage the representative", said a 35-year-old Batswanan man with an integrated identity in Helsinki. "He or she should use his or her discretion in the whole process [of representation] otherwise he or she risks being controlled by the electorate who do not know how representation is done in [the] executive chambers" (Interviews: 5 February 2016).

That said! Let us now examine how African representatives have represented so far. We start with the municipal representatives. In the five municipalities under our study, the following African candidates have so far been elected representatives/councilors at the municipal chambers. They include: 1) **Helsinki -** Battulo Essak (2000), Zahra Abdulla (2008 and 2012), Fatim Diarra (2017), Abdirahim "Husu" Mohamed (2017) and Suldaan Said Ahmed (2017); 2) **Espoo -** Ali Abrihahman (2012 and 2017) and Habiba Ali (2017); 3) **Jyväskylä -** Paul Abbey (2012 and 2017) and Bella Forsgrén (2017); 4) **Tampere -** Emmanuel

Eneh (2004 and 2008) and Jama Jama (2012 and 2017). 5) **Vantaa** none! This makes Vantaa the only municipality that has no successful African candidate yet.

Although their number is small, it is however encouraging since it shows that African immigrants have at least had (and are still having) some representations at the municipal councils despite the racial discrimination. As earlier mentioned, it also makes some Africans feel part of the municipal decision-making. Mansbridge (1999, 650-1) has argued that

> …. [The] knowledge that certain features of one's identity do not mark one as less able to govern all contribute to making one feel more included in the polity. This feeling of inclusion in turn makes the polity democratically more legitimate in one's eyes. Having had a voice in the making of a particular policy, even if that voice is through one's representative and even when one's views did not prevail, also makes that policy more legitimate in one's eyes. These feelings are deeply intertwined with what has often been seen as the "psychological" benefits of descriptive surrogate representation for those voters who, because of selective bias against their characteristics are less than proportionately represented in the legislature.

Let us then ask some of the representatives how they have so far represented. We start with Berekete – the integrated African representative that we saw earlier in the political mobilization subchapter – who is a two-term municipal councilor in a medium-sized city.

Question: How would you assess your representation in the municipal council, especially on behalf of African immigrants?

Answer: First of all, I promised to stand up for, and support policies, that I believe would be beneficial for all, not just for African immigrants or the immigrant community [in general]. This comes from my belief that equality is the essential ingredient in the making of a society that is at peace with itself. Second, before decisions in the Council are made, there is an opportunity for the councilors to air their views about them. It is this possibility that I have used to air my opinions on the changes that are happening in the society [that I had campaigned for], which sometimes it seems to me not a lot of people, even in the Council chamber are aware of. So though I have only one vote, I have aired my views on the issues that are being decided upon, and must add that I have not, as of yet, been able to change votes. For me, change is normally a slow process, unless force, which I do not support under any circumstances, is used. So I believe I have just simply got to repeat the messages, with the hope that one or two people would listen, and see the point that is being made... So in answer to your question, I have always stated my opinions, and called for votes on issues [in my campaign manifesto] that I feel do not protect the equality within the society, as this implies that the rights of the minorities, like immigrants, as well as those of every other person in society, including the poor, are protected.

Question: Is racial discrimination against immigrants, especially Africans, in the labor market, also included in your argument on this inequality?

Answer: Yes, this is a part of the inequality currently present in [the] society. I must, however, say that this has not yet come up for deliberation in the council, during my period there.

Question: I thought you should have been the one to raise it up?

Answer: Yes, this would indeed fall on me. The point with this issue, though, is that it is rather difficult to conclusively prove that there is discrimination against Africans. I can imagine that if employers were confronted with a claim that their practices were discriminatory, they would ask you for a proof. Given that it is rather difficult to prove conclusively, it would not be wise for me to bring the issue up. I am [instead] of the opinion that the correct place to begin such an awareness issue would be in the press, as there would be more flexibility towards opinions, as against in the council, where there is more reliance on provable issues

Question: But you could invite some Africans/immigrants to the council to testify. This is the major reason why they voted you to the council!

Answer: Well, I am not sure what you expect the Council to do on the subject. Are you expecting it to come up with an anti-discriminatory policy? If so, then the Council would be the wrong place for such a policy, as I believe that such policies are normally part of the law, which can only be created in the Parliament, which is in Helsinki. Locally [though], my view is that awareness can be created through media campaigns, something I have just suggested... On this, I have also contributed, looking at the wider picture of the immigrant population, not just the African one. I had the opportunity, three weeks ago, to share some of my thoughts on this subject in the *Suur Jyväskylä lehti* paper. This is something that could be supported by your offering the results of your work to them or the *Keskisuomalainen* paper. I believe that this is the way to bring awareness, as well as implement change locally. Of course, I might be wrong, and am open to suggestions.

Question: Ok. What exactly did you share in the paper, and if published, the date of publication and number, or alternatively the web link?

Answer: I have written a number of articles that relate to the immigrant situation in Finland, with the latest being the one that I did not write but was based on a paper that I had presented in England to mark the 50th anniversary of the first law against racism in that society, The Race Relations Act. The paper [where it was published] was the *Suur Jyväskylän lehti*, publication number 360, published on the 29th of July 2015. I think that the issue you raised is one that we need to think about on how to tackle. As I mentioned, the Council is not, in my opinion, the place where it could be resolved, as even if the will is there, it would be acting beyond its mandate. Of course, with the Council, it could be suggested that they employ more immigrants, apart from those in the care area, which could be their

way of addressing the situation, a bit like Annika Forsander was able to influence in Helsinki, where there used to be a policy of not including the names of applicants, as to do away with the possible discrimination that might arise from the use of foreign names. It should be pointed out, that this can only be within the Council's own employment policy, as it cannot dictate to other employers [on what to do] (Interviews: September 2014 and August 2015).

Berekete's narrative is rich in information and nondiscriminatory to say the least. His views are a typical example of the views of an integrated African immigrant that he is. But his position would disappoint many Africans at the ethnocentric stage, particularly those who voted for him on the ground that he could argue their case out in the council. For example, a 30-year-old Burundian Posti worker in his city, with a separated identity, argued that

> *I voted for him because he said he would fight racism for us. But he has not done anything yet because I am not seeing any effect. I am still doing my fucking odd job because the racism situation here [in the city] is still high and has not allowed me to get a good job that matches my bachelor's degree in accounting* (Interview: 10 September 2015).

I pointed this out to Berekete during a follow-up interview, and he reminded that he made himself *clear* from the *beginning* that it will be difficult to prove that racism against Africans exists due to lack of proof. Besides, his concept of inequality seems not exactly the same as racism since he talks about inequality in a non-racist sense, anchoring it on certain events (such as tax and privatization issues) that had happened in the Finnish society which affects all residents – natives and immigrants alike. So, it appears that some sections of the African community in his city misunderstood this to mean a fight against racism. However, his reluctance to raise the topic at least at the council chambers might seem saddening to many Africans at the ethnocentric stage but his opinion that it is the duty of the parliament to take care of it appears to justify the stance of those who do not vote in the municipal elections because they see the municipal council as incapable of fighting racism.

Nevertheless, contrary to his opinion, some African councilors in other cities especially those at the ethnocentric stage (with a separated identity), argue however that racism against Africans is provable and that they have actually done it at the council chambers. For instance, one of them in a fairly big city under our study, argues that

> *I did that during my tenure as a councilor because I owe it as a duty to my African voters. It doesn't matter if it is the responsibility of the council to make a policy against racism or not, the issue is that it can be tabled and discussed there... Let me share two of the important cases [that] I handled in this regard. The first involved a Gambian Posti employee who was being victimized by his supervisor because he often refused to do extra work on his off days. The off days are his days of rest, and the supervisor is quite aware of this. But he was subtly cutting his monthly salary by 5% to 10% amidst other indirect victimizations because posti salaries for such workers are not the same every month. This employee finally found out and asked the supervisor about it, but the supervisor denied, claiming that the salary he receives is exactly what he worked for every month. Then the man reported the matter to his Finnish shop steward who unfortunately played it down obviously because a Finnish oppressor is involved. Frustrated, the Gambian then reported to me. After making my own investigations and found the*

accusation to be true, I called the supervisor but his response was hostile. Then I took the case to the municipal council…. Eventually, the supervisor was found guilty and consequently sacked by Posti and the victim's accrued salaries paid.

The second example involved an African nurse whose contract was not renewed by a particular hospital because she is allegedly incompetent. Again, she brought the case to me after her labor union was not forthcoming in pursuing the case. And I followed it up as usual… Finally, I found out that the reason was simply because she is black and not that she is incompetent. Eventually, that supervisor who accused her was charged to court and convicted on discrimination charges. The nurse was reinstated and subsequently given a permanent contract by the hospital management. So, I encourage all my African voters as well as other immigrants to come up with any of such cases. If available, they could also bring evidences as they make investigations faster. However, even without any video, investigation could still unravel everything. We [councilors] should always be ready to assist our immigrant constituents in fighting racism… We can't just keep quiet and claim it is difficult to raise this in the council otherwise our immigrant voters will see us as incompetent, and would not vote for us in the next reelection (Interview 10 March 2016).

It is clear, judging from these narratives, that African councilors at the ethnocentric stage are more likely to raise discussions on racism than those at the ethnorelative who look for tangible proofs/video evidence first. Looking for a piece of video evidence for example is not the main issue anyway – even though such is not easy to come by - but the political will to address the issue tangibly. As another African ex-councilor in another city who, even though is at the ethnorelative stage with an integrated identity, is much worried about the racism situation nonetheless, argues that

During my time as councilor, I pushed against racial bullying of immigrant pupils and students by their Finnish counterparts in primary and secondary schools because of the complaints I have got from my immigrant constituents, including Africans. I did not need any kind of evidence to believe it because racism against immigrants is already high in the society. But I nevertheless investigated the report and found it to be true…. Again I also handled the case of access to municipal housing for immigrants especially Africans who are often marginalized. Some have been waiting for years without a decent accommodation, and so on... I brought the case to the municipal table and the issue was strongly tackled…. Part of my campaign promises to my immigrant voters is to cushion the effects of racism for them since racism appears to be getting stronger everyday in the society….I have discussed this with some municipal council members as well as also with some of my friends who are MPs to find a lasting solution to this so that everybody can live a normal life, and we are working on it (Interview: 10 November 2016).

Be that as it may, there are political representations in the municipality that happen outside of the elected municipal council chambers. This especially concerns candidates who fell short of securing enough votes to win a seat in the council but who have enough votes to be included in various municipal boards/committees. Some African immigrant candidates are in this group, and are therefore representatives of their constituents on these platforms since it is the constituents' votes that got them there. Like the elected, they are (also) expected to represent well. In their representations, the dichotomy between their DMIS stages is surprisingly not so obvious. For example, an ethnorelative candidate (with an integrated identity) who is a member of a municipal committee on transport services, explains that

I am a member of the [municipal] committee on transport in my municipality, and I try to represent the interests of all my constituents during deliberations.... For example, the issue of discrimination against blacks in the busses by some Finnish passengers and drivers has been brought to my attention and I have discussed this in the committee as well as forwarded it to the transport management company. They have instructed their drivers to be at alert against such in their busses. This is important because sometimes some immigrants especially blacks are prevented from entering the busses by the racists and some drivers do nothing. We cannot accept that. Finland is not an apartheid country! (Interview: 5 May 2015).

Also, an ethnocentric candidate (with a separated identity) and a member of a health and environment committee in one municipality, argues that

Representing my immigrant constituents in the committee is very important for me because without their votes, I will not have been in the committee … So I encourage them to bring their complaints and some of them do so. For example, one black woman complained to me that a cashier in one hospital refused to use her Kela [Finnish social insurance institution] card in making payment, claiming that the payment is not subsidized by Kela. But this [African] woman knows that this is not true. So, she called me and complained about this. I investigated by calling the Kela office and Kela told me that they subsidize such payments. At the end, I found out that the said cashier does not like blacks at all …. So, the hospital management refunded the money to the woman… There was also a similar case in one supermarket where a cashier refused to put some clothes bought by a black man in a free polythene bag. Instead, he charged him for it. The black man clearly knows that this is not right since he has bought such from there before. So, he complained to me. I called the supermarket and inquired and they said it [i.e. the polythene bag] is free for such purchase… My investigation again showed that the cashier is Afrophobia…. and everything was rectified. So, I always try my best to represent my constituents well… Nearly all of them have my phone numbers for easy report because the numbers are written in front of my office and also on my website (Interview: 2 March 2016)

Representational efforts such as these are great performances on which these candidates could be judged retrospectively should they decide to run again in future elections. It is already argued that some voters engage in retrospective voting where they assess the past records of candidates in electoral office to determine their electability and/or future prospects if elected again (cf. Fiorina 1981; Plescia and Kritzinger 2017). The *implicit threat* of losing the next election, argues Ruedin (2013), is the most significant incentive for elected representatives to act in the interests of their electorate/constituents should they decide to run again.

In the unions/associations also, African representations are also similar. For example, in the multicultural associations, racism is virtually nonexistent not only because such a practice is against its mandate of being multicultural but also members are usually non-racists. In their representations, the influence of the DMIS stages of African representatives is not noticed. In Moniheli for example, many African associations have representatives as already noted. For instance, a 29-year-old representative of the Sudanese association in Helsinki, explains that,

Moniheli is a racism-free association. We hold our activities in equal dignity and mutual respect. I represent my Sudanese association. I take part in the discussions on the seminars and lectures about political participation especially at the local level, the modalities of such participation especially for immigrants and the reasons and gains for them to participate particularly in municipal elections.… (Interview: 3 September 2015)

Some other African representatives in the Moniheli concurred with this narrative. In other multicultural associations such as anti-racist network or the Greenpeace, Africans also have representatives who also join in discussions on equality and end to racism in the Finnish society or end to environmental degradation in the case of the Greenpeace. According to an African representative of an anti-racist network in a small city, besides the aforementioned, he and another African representative have also promoted the use of cultural displays (such as dances, folklores, and songs) and recreational activities to encourage (good) relations/bridging between the natives and immigrants in Finland aimed towards making Finland a better and more open society in intercultural relations.

In the labor union, for example, the issue of racism at workplaces or by some union officials (in immigrant representations) is often raised by African immigrant representatives at the ethnocentric stage, especially the shop stewards and their assistants. They disclose that they receive such reports fairly regularly from their African/non-white immigrant constituents, particularly reports bordering on workplace assignment discriminations, secret salary cutting, lackadaisical attitude on immigrant issues, and other forms of discrimination by some Finnish supervisors and union officials. For example, a Kenyan shop steward narrates a particular case brought by a Namibian immigrant against a supervisor who was in the habit of assigning difficult places and/or aspects of work to him and other African immigrants only. According to the steward, "the supervisor uses them as a beast of burden for the company while giving less difficult places or aspects of the job to Finns and other white immigrants. So, when I asked the supervisor about it, he claimed that it is because Africans are usually stronger and more hardworking than Finns and other white workers, and that it is not at all racism in his opinion (Interview: 20 July 2015). Even if this is true, it could be misunderstood (as it is already the case) because it could also be a case of *deliberate punishment* due to his disregard of them because if it were to be in less difficult work, it is unlikely that more could be assigned to them. So, an act of discrimination appears to be the case. Eventually, as the shop stewards further disclosed, the supervisor was strongly reprimanded by the union executives, and then asked to quickly revise the trend or face "discrimination charges" in the court in addition to the union's disciplinary measures he already faces (Interview: 20 July 2015).

In the student union also, African immigrant representatives are at work and their representations include also issues of racism especially on campus including academic racism. For example, a Ugandan representative with a separated identity in one higher institution in Helsinki, argues that

> *I try to intervene on issues relating to African and immigrant students particularly on discrimination issues, academic issues, hospital issues, etc. But not exactly the way they would want me to though. I intervene in the way that it will be well understood by Finns because the way we understand things is different from the way they understand. And this includes discrimination on campus among students which many African students for example have complained about…Academic racism is also among them whereby a racist lecturer deliberately gives a low mark to an African or another immigrant student even though such a student has done better. I and some other immigrant representatives raise these issues at the union executive*

meetings where the union deliberate on them and take appropriate action and in most cases we are successful (Interview: 7 March 2016).

In this narrative, among other points raised, we could see the influence of aesthetic method of representation over the mimetic clearly. Research has already shown that many representatives often prefer the former over the latter while many represented prefer the latter over the former as earlier pointed out. Aesthetic method may be good if it is bringing the same benefits expected of the mimetic. This is supported by the argument from another African representative with an integrated identity in a prominent school in Tampere who makes clear that

I prefer to represent with some freedom and discretion because as an immigrant representative, you are not only a lone voice in the executive board, but also one making claims that are different from the majority population's, having come from a different background…. So, when it comes to such [an] issue as racism on campus, for example, many Finns do not totally understand what you are talking about because they do not experience such ... What I usually do when discussing such is not to discuss it flatly as many of African or immigrant constituents would want me to or else my Finnish co-executive members would see it as rude, but to use discretion. For example, I first speak to my Finnish colleagues individually and politely, especially those I think could support the complaints… Sometimes I also take them out for coffee. When I would have gotten their support, I table the issue at the executive meeting. More often than not, I get a positive answer… (Interview: 5 March 2015).

In any case, one integrated African ex-councilor in a prominent Finnish city argues that sometimes the problem of not pushing initiatives forward successfully in the council chambers (or other platforms) may not have anything to do with the mimetic or aesthetic, but the way the initiative is *worded*. Using his experience as an example, he illustrates that he had once used the word "self-defense" instead of "self-awareness" in proposing an initiative that will teach schoolchildren how to cross the traffic light when the light turns *simultaneously* green for both the pedestrians and the motorists. "At first, the council members wondered whether this self-defense is the Chinese karate type, or what? So, they rejected the initiative. Then I went back to my party members and discussed the matter. They suggested that I change the self-defense to self-awareness. I did it and the initiative was quickly approved by the council" (Interview: 10 March 2015). Bennett (2004) argues that the kind of words used and/or the way of they are spoken could either be a barrier or bridge between people of different cultures.

In African associations, racism among members, for example, does not exist because all members are African. However, discussions about racism in the society particularly in job acquisition and other matters of integration feature prominently on some occasions, among others. Many elected executives argue that they represent their members well both in their internal affairs and externally also, and in the process have engineered and strengthened in-group bonding among members and in some cases also bridging with the society. Notwithstanding, their DMIS stages play some role in this. For example, while those at the ethnocentric stage (particularly those with a separated identity) often raise matters bordering on racism and job acquisition, those at the ethnorelative (particularly those with an integrated identity) raise matters bordering on the

bridging with the society such as understanding the Finnish socio-cultural life, learning the Finnish language or showcasing of African cultures (e.g., dances) to the Finnish public.[86]

For instance, Sesay, a 42-year-old man and an executive of the Gambian association in Helsinki at the ethnorelative stage (with an integrated identity), argues that he has promoted the Gambian presence in Helsinki through cultural displays such as African idioms, songs, and dances as well as helped some Gambians learn the Finnish language, get good jobs and/or housing. On the other hand, a 30-year-old lady and an executive of the Togolese association in Espoo who is at the ethnocentric stage (with a separated identity) argues that she has represented her association well, especially against school bullying

> *… when I get reports from the Togolese immigrant parents about bullying of their children in primary and secondary schools here, I take them seriously because not only is bullying against the law but also it could destroy the kids' future [psychological & academic] development. What I usually do as a representative of my association is to go with the parents or guardians to the school as the case may be, and if the school does not do anything tangible about them, I report to the Ombudsman for Minorities, and they take it up… I do not usually report to the police because I personally do not trust their judgment in matters like this just like some Africans [do] also* (Interview: 7 March 2016).

For the Somali association, it was difficult to get recognized representatives due to the fact that their clear representation in Finland is in doubt as many Somalis argued during interviews. Their reason is that there are many fragmented Somali associations – often consisting of small Somali clans and tribes - each representing just a tiny fraction of the Somalis in Finland, making it difficult to have a united and strong front in varied representations but especially in the municipal. This lack of unity was also found in a 2013 research by Tiilikainen and Ismail. In one of their focus group interviews, they report that one Somali man argued that

> There are no organisations that can be described as representatives of the Somalis or forwarding the need of the Somalis. Somaliliitto [Somali League] is the closest I think, in doing anything for the Somalis and their issues, but all the rest of the hundreds of organisations that are spoken about in this country do nothing. There is a law that [says] any 2 or 3 people can register an organization. So, they only convey their own needs and 100 per cent of them are related to self-employment … (Tiilikainen and Ismail 2013, 110).

Another Somali, a woman, adds that

> There are many [Somali] organisations in this country but they can only benefit the [Somali] people when they are united. When they achieve a centre that unites them then they can do something for the [Somali] people. Personally, I have not seen [a Somali] organisation that helps the [Somali] people, or people saying that they are going

[86] This does not mean that either could not raise either of the issues. But one (the integrated) does that more than the other (the separated). It is important to recall however that many African immigrants with separated and marginalized identities have learned the Finnish language(s) and known the culture including work culture but this has not helped them bridge with the society. So, it is not surprising that their representatives hardly talk about bridging but instead the racism that obstructs the bridging.

to an organisation for help. They carry the Somali name as title, but they don't represent me (ibid, p.111).

Another woman even added that

> We have lived here [in Finland for] more than 20 years …but… We don't have people who argue for our rights, even if we are dead, no one will speak for us, and if we live, no one can speak for us. Be it an NGO, or community group, or a lawyer … we as a community has a problem, because we don't have lawyers to defend our rights. We don't have professionals who can advise us on our problems; men or women who can do something about the issues. We have problems in schools, we have problems everywhere. That's why the Finns treat us like this, we are like [a] dead prey that doesn't have anyone standing up for their rights (ibid).

In any case, I was still able to get some representatives of the Somali League – deemed the most prominent Somali association in Finland. They countered the above arguments, pointing out that the problem of not being united is because many Somalis refused to join the League and instead joined their small tribal associations. One of the executives – a 45-year-old man - in Helsinki particularly argued that

> *The Somalis are not interested in joining the Somali League because of their [different] tribes, and so, we the executives of the Somali League have nothing to represent about them since we don't know their needs or interests. We represent only those who are our members because we know their needs and interests. Some of them do not have jobs. We help them find one or go into entrepreneurship if capable. Some do not know the [Finnish] language well yet. We encourage them to learn it more. Some are battling with the racism situation in the society. We advise them to report to the ombudsman [for minorities] or the police if severe or otherwise ignore and move on…. Some have done this and are gradually moving on but it is difficult for some to do. You know, people are different…. We have only a few representatives at different municipal councils and labor union across the nation. They help us in some of the representations in their sectors…. Please tell the Somalis to join the Somali League if they want to be represented. Let them stop complaining! We are open to more members….* (Interview: 17 July 2016).

When a group has no strong representation in the society, its integration in that society could be difficult since representation is indeed necessary for integration. This appears to be the case with many Somalis in Finland.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This study has examined and analyzed the political integration of black African immigrants in Finland at the local level in the light of the institutional channeling and the DMIS theories as well as the theory of immigrant identity formation. The composition and geographical extent of the interviews conducted were strategically meant to reach out to many African immigrants as well as Finnish officials in five municipalities that have their highest population of African immigrants combined. The aim was to have a comprehensive opinion on the matter. The interpretation and analysis of the interviews are properly done from my own point of view, also in accordance with research ethics.

The importance of the interviews, as well as the society's political opportunity structure approach used, lies in their ability to unravel the nature and extent of the African immigrant political integration. The study finds that not all African immigrants participate and those who participate do so in a variety of ways for varied reasons as we have seen. Factors such as duration of residence, age, education and language played little to no role. Other factors such as natural interest in politics, political party mobilization, previous experience in political participation, availability of information, and location of residence played some role but not as significant as that of a new factor, the society attitude, which directly influenced factors such as job acquisition and social relations, and indirectly to factors such as (dis)interest in formal politics, interest in protest politics, failure of African candidates at the polls, municipal election not important, racist threats during elections, and translocal mobility. Other factors found that seem independent of the society attitude but nevertheless significant are lack of political party mobilization, dislike for politics and politicians, (lack of) previous political participation, religion (church & mosque), (dis)connection with ethnic and social group, lack of time and the problem of laziness. However, some of these are still indirectly linked to society attitude.

The importance of the society attitude to this study therefore cannot be overemphasized. Following this, it is, therefore, possible to grasp some key issues resulting from it. 1) It has motivated and de-motivated their political integration through the sense/feeling of belonging and institutional completeness it has

fostered or deprived them in the society. In this regard, 2) it serves a dual function: either as a linking body or mobilizing structure to their political integration, or a delinking body or demobilizing structure, to the same. The DMIS theory also helped distinguish the beneficiaries and losers (so to say) of this dual function by grouping their experiences into ethnorelative and ethnocentric. The theory of identity formation further helped pinpoint the impact of the experiences through the identities that formed as a result. All these consequently helped influence the nature of their political involvements at different forums or platforms.

The respective societal (or DMIS distinguished) experiences and consequent identities also reflect in their political representations. For example, representatives at the ethnocentric stage, or in particular, those with a separated identity, are more likely to raise immigrant-specific issues (e.g., racism and discrimination) than those at ethnorelative particularly the integrated who tend to raise both society and immigrant issues, while the assimilated raise only society issues. To some extent, this is also good for immigrants since they are also members of the society (e.g., in the case of teaching school children how to cross the traffic light above). But to the extent that some ethnorelative representatives look for concrete evidence (such as a video clip) especially as regards to racism before acting, worry those at the ethnocentric as they (the ethnocentric) believe there are other ways of establishing evidence, such as the availability of witnesses or proper investigation. However, although the insistence on concrete evidence has not stopped African immigrant voters from voting ethnorelative candidates especially the integrated, the possibility of the representatives losing reelection if they run again could be higher than those of ethnocentric.

I, therefore, conclude that the society's attitude and the sense of belonging (or lack of it) that it fosters, lays a strong or weak foundation for African immigrants to better accumulate forms of interests and disinterests, dispositions and indispositions, or anywhere in-between, in their political involvement in the Finnish society. The sense of belonging also explains why they have acquired different identities in accordance with their experiences. In other words, while those at the ethnorelative stage tend to have integrated or assimilated identities which help them navigate through the Finnish socioeconomic and political networks, those at the ethnocentric stage tend to have separated and marginalized identities which deprive them of this navigation. Incidentally, the number of those at the ethnorelative stage (or those with a high sense of belonging to the society) appears far below that of those at the ethnocentric stage (or those with a low sense of belonging) who still do not feel themselves as 'members' of the society, despite many years of residence as well as knowledge of the local language and culture. This implies that the integration process is not working well yet. In other words, it seems currently more of a one-way process involving only the (African) immigrant than a two-way process involving also the society.

Therefore, when we look at the state of the Finnish opportunity structures for immigrant political participation at the local level and where these might be going in the future, I argue that the Finnish democracy in relation to immigrant

participation is not working so well yet. Saarinen & Jappinen (2014, 145) argue that when we take into account the lack of political participation by migrants, it becomes clear that the Finnish democracy and working life are not as *migrant-friendly* as often assumed. Nonetheless let's first look at which structures that actually work before looking at which do not work, and where should be focused in order to change things for the future.

The structures such as the municipal act, immigrant integration acts, the associations (including the church and mosque), and the *positive* society attitude have worked well for some African immigrants and helped them integrate or otherwise assimilate into the society. This is especially in working and sociopolitical life. On the other hand, the one that does not mostly work well is the *negative* society attitude towards (some) African immigrants especially also in the working and sociopolitical life which has influenced their lack of integration. This is often in total disregard of the anti-discrimination act whose enforcement by the police has been said to fall far short of expectations as some policemen have even become discriminatory in the enforcement as well as been guilty of ethnic profiling (see for e.g., Keskinen et al. 2018, Ndukwe 2015, among others).

Nevertheless, the government has made some efforts to improve the intercultural relations between natives and immigrants, through the Ministry of Interior which helped launch (together with partners[87]) a "Good Relations Project" from November 2012 to October 2014, sponsored by the European Commission. This project was adopted from the "Good Relations Measurement Framework" (GRMF) developed in Great Britain. Four domains of good relations were included in the project such as attitudes, personal security, interaction with others, and participation and influence in the society, especially at the local level. The aim is to combat racism, xenophobia, Afrophobia, antiziganism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and other forms of intolerance and promote good relations between people from different backgrounds (European Commission 2014). The project involved many working groups such as several public authorities at governmental, regional, and municipal levels, various associations, foundations and civil society organizations, advisory boards, and agencies. It was to be carried out locally and in phases based on systematic monitoring and information gathering, on the gaps and needs related to combating the aforementioned society problems. Participants visited different homes and talked with people especially in the Helsinki metropolitan region.

A second similar project - The Trust project - was also launched in 2016 as a kind of follow-up. It was carried out locally and in phases. In the first phase, the activities were said to focus on the reception center's operating environment in seven pilot locations. Project staff were said to have visited these locations,

[87] These partners include the Finnish Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO) and the Centers for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of Southern Finland, Pirkanmaa, Southwest Finland, and Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy as well as from other countries where the project was also scheduled. They include the Swedish Ministry of Employment, and the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM),

provided training and information, and led discussions on the importance of good relations for peaceful coexistence and conflict prevention. The second phase consisted of promoting the good relations' model among different stakeholders. An effort was said to be made to simplify the model by creating tools for the work on good relations and by clarifying the message about good relations. While the model is suitable for working with all population groups, the emphasis in the Trust project has been on factors that affect immigrant integration (cf. TRUST - Good relations in Finland - Equality.fi (yhdenvertaisuus.fi).

However, many African immigrants I interviewed and some non-African immigrants I informally interacted with about these projects, argued that they have never heard about them and were never contacted or approached by anyone in that regard. Only a few, including some in some asylum reception centers, acknowledged having heard or been approached. It appeared that the dissemination of information about the projects as well as the actual execution was quite limited. Besides, organizers also wrote that the final document of the projects was not to be intended as official statements, guidelines, recommendations, or proposals for the governments in the participating countries (European Commission 2014) but just a report. One probably wonders then the essence of the project. In any case, despite the good intentions of those behind them, it can be said to be a failure, because of the aforementioned gaps which could be corrected if the projects were to be done again. I suggest that this *should* be the case. In this regard, I suggest that the society should be educated on the following points:

First, on those natives who see (African) immigrants as unwanted because of their color/continent of origin as well as being (allegedly and presumably) parasitic on the Finnish economy and welfare system, they should be taught that 1) the black color is as natural as any other human color and that being from a developing continent has nothing to do with being parasitic because 2) many of them work and pay their taxes and other bills, regardless of the kind of work they do, and so, are not parasites on the Finnish economy but actual contributors to it. It has also been proven by research that immigrants in Finland contribute more to the economy "than they use in public services". For instance, a 2013 study in Finland carried out by OECD finds that immigration has generally more positive economic effects than negative on the society. In particular, it finds that "in Finland, immigrants contribute more money to national and local governments than they use in public services" and that "immigrant inflow was usually almost irrelevant to overall public expenditures relative to gross domestic product, — generally not exceeding 0.5 percent of GDP" (Ndukwe 2015a).

For employers, they should be taught that denying immigrants jobs or putting them in low-paid jobs despite their high qualifications hurts the Finnish economy as much as it hurts the immigrants just as offering immigrants jobs also benefits the economy. For instance, a survey by the Government Institute for Economic Research (VATT) in Finland in 2013 argued that giving immigrants more jobs will attract much revenue to the Finnish state in general, and the municipalities in particular, than they cost in health and social services.

Particularly, the report argues that if employment among immigrants is brought to the same level as the natives', Finnish society would benefit in tax revenues of €58 million each year. The City of Helsinki, for example, would benefit to the tune of €24 million, whereas the Finnish state would get a boost of €34 million. There would also be high savings in social welfare costs. Glick Schiller & Caglar (2009) thus argue that if given the chance, immigrants, especially the educated ones, are marketable assets in the places where they settle because they enable their host societies to reposition themselves well within a geopolitical hierarchy (For these and more please see Ndukwe 2015a).

For political parties, who are supposed to be great agents of mobilization, they should be taught that their lack of enough mobilization of immigrants especially African immigrants, has been interpreted by many as a sign of racism and xenophobia rather than unavailability of resources or lack of plan as some officials have claimed. This has consequences for the parties: 1) it makes them lose votes and (potential) members from the African immigrant community (and perhaps also from other non-white immigrant communities). 2) the negative attitude of racist natives prevents them (i.e., these natives) from voting for African or non-white immigrant candidates at the detriment of the party as we had seen. 3) the lack of inclusion of (African) immigrant members in exalted party positions also shows the party to be intolerant and discriminatory which does not match the official stand of the government on non-discrimination and multiculturalism.

To check all these, political parties should 1) know that every vote counts (no matter from which voter it comes) and that one vote has the power to make them win or lose an election. In this regard, they should make great efforts to mobilize as many immigrants including Africans as possible. This could be done through visits to their association meetings as well as through the use of different communication methods especially the social media and posted letters (the addresses of which could be gotten from the local population registers). In terms of recruitment, this could be done by establishing physical structures such as offices around the municipality, staffed with immigrant-friendly officials. They should also have a comprehensive English version of their respective websites and actively inform immigrants about the same through public adverts, especially in paper print (e.g., newspapers, flyers), electronic (e.g., radio, TV) and digital (e.g., social media) as well as personal contacts. 2) They should educate their native supporters on the importance of tolerance and fairness in dealing with people of other cultures and colors so as to accommodate them well in the society fold just as in the party fold also. This is not only a nice and useful thing to do in an evolving diverse society such as Finland but also it will reflect the government's stance on anti-discrimination and multiculturalism. 3), they should also try to incorporate immigrant party members, especially Africans in their party leadership cadre as part of this intercultural tolerance in order to make them feel accommodated. This would help calm the nerves of agitating African immigrant party members - not necessarily to stop them from establishing an immigrant party if they really want to, and which is even a sign of political

multiculturalism - but that the party should be able to show that it respects the law especially on equality and anti-discrimination.

For the police, they should know that they play a key role in the safeguarding of the anti-discrimination act and a harmonious society. In other words, the societal integration of immigrants virtually lies on them in terms of the implementation of the anti-discrimination act. In the situation where an (African) immigrant complains to them about racial discrimination, and they directly or indirectly push it aside especially repeatedly, this becomes a big discouragement from further report as they would then be seen as racist and/or protector of racists or both. It is also the same or even worse when the police engage in clear ethnic/racial profiling during its daily patrol as has been reported. Therefore, rather than being part of the stumbling block to immigrant settlement and integration, the police should make itself a steppingstone to such by avoiding these issues mentioned above, and severely punishing offenders.

The theoretical conclusion of this study is therefore twofold. First, my aim is to contribute to the wider literature on immigrant political participation, especially in Finland, through the inclusion of, and discussion on, the native society attitude as a very critical institutional structure on immigrant political behavior and integration. Second, and related to the DMIS framework, is to highlight how this society attitude operates especially in the socioeconomic space, and its resultant effects in the development or underdevelopment of immigrants' sense of belonging and institutional completeness in the society. Understanding this psychosocial feeling explains therefore why some immigrants could be more or less socioeconomically integrated, and hence more or less politically integrated than others despite the favorable immigrant integration policies and laws especially the anti-discrimination act (2004) and the Local Government Act (2015) that the state has enacted to give immigrants socioeconomic and political accommodations.

I, therefore, suggest –as an added recommendation to the above - that to ensure that these accommodations happen in real life contrary to what it is now, some legal solutions are inevitable. In other words, in order to check discrimination especially in the labor market and the political sector, the following can be done: 1) the use of a *quota (or reserved) system* for immigrants, which could be put into law as "Immigrant Quota Act". 2) To check discrimination in the social space, a massive nationwide public education is very necessary. Let us discuss them briefly.

Ruedin (2013) defines a quota system as a system where some numbers (or percentage) of positions are apportioned to a group of marginalized and/or underrepresented people in the society to encourage their full participation. Such a system, he argues, has been used to encourage the political participation and representation of women and minorities in some countries where they are considered marginalized and underrepresented (ibid, see also Matland 2006; McLeay 2006; Childs et al. 2012) and so could work in Finland.

For example, in the labor market, some percentage of job vacancies in all sectors but especially in the white-collar sector - where immigrants (particularly

African immigrants) are highly underrepresented – should be allocated to them in relation to their population in the national population register as well as the level of marginalization/underrepresentation. For example, if 6 percent is their percentage, 6 percent of all vacancies should go to them. This could further be distributed to each migrant group according to their marginalized situation/underrepresentation. In the event of the lack of enough qualified immigrants in certain sector, available qualified natives could be used instead.

A similar method could also be used in the political sector, especially in key electoral or appointed positions. In other words, some percentage of seats should be allocated or reserved for immigrants to contest during respective elections or appointments in relation to their population in the national population register to alleviate their marginalization and/or underrepresentation in the same way as the above. For example, like the above, if 6 percent is their percentage in the population register, 6 percent of all electoral and appointed positions should go to them which could be further distributed to each migrant group according to their percentage and level of marginalization or underrepresentation or both. In the event of the lack of enough qualified immigrants, available qualified natives could be used instead.

In the employment space, this is likely to help many immigrants, especially Africans, get commensurate jobs that match their qualifications/skills without discrimination. In the political sector, it will also encourage more immigrant candidates, especially non-whites to emerge which will also encourage more immigrant voters, especially blacks to turn out en masse and vote, knowing fully well that they have a quota to fill. In municipal elections, for example, this will also encourage political parties to mobilize and recruit more immigrants, especially Africans/non-whites. One of the best ways for them to do this is to introduce a *physical* platform(s) for recruitment (e.g. an office), and then advertise it in public and social media, not just on their websites as not all immigrants, especially African immigrants, visit these websites or even know of their existence. I expect that the end result would be massive as more immigrants especially blacks are likely to come out and enroll if the quota system (both in the labor market and the political sector) is duly followed. This will help mitigate immigrant underrepresentation in the councils and boards of the municipality, as well as in other forms of political engagement.

In the social space too, a massive public education against discrimination could be done to inform or refresh the mind of the public on the issue and the consequences of prosecution. Such education or information could start from the school curricular (Alemanji 2018), and continue outside of it possibly on TV, radio, newspapers and the social media. Immigrants could also be urged to come up with information about their bitter experiences. Such a wide information circulation and education have been known to improve interracial harmony in the society (Lynch 1992) and celebration rather than ridicule of diversity and multiculturalism (Fleras and Elliot 1992).

Overall, I believe that these measures, if well implemented, are likely to reduce discrimination drastically in Finland, and subsequently give immigrants,

especially non-whites (e,g, blacks), the equality that the law has given them but which is being denied of them in daily life. Although Ruedin (2013) worries that the quota system might not work well in a society with a mostly hostile attitude towards immigrants, I believe that if the government however strictly and effectively implements it, the society would have no other option than to obey it.

TIIVISTELMÄ SUOMEKSI (SUMMARY IN FINNISH)

Tässä tutkimuksessa on tarkasteltu ja analysoitu mustien afrikkalaisten maahanmuuttajien poliittista integroitumista Suomeen paikallistasolla institutionaalisen kanavoitumisen ja DMIS-teorioiden sekä maahanmuuttaja identiteetin muodostumisen teorian valossa. Tehtyjen haastattelujen koostumuksen ja maantieteellisen laajuuden oli strategisesti tarkoitus tavoittaa useita afrikkalaisia maahanmuuttajia sekä suomalaisia virkamiehiä niissä viidessä kunnassa, missä yhteensä on eniten afrikkalaisia maahanmuuttajia. Tavoitteena oli saada kattava mielipide asiasta. Haastattelujen tulkinta ja analysointi on tehty omasta näkökulmastani oikein, myös tutkimusetiikan mukaisesti.

Haastattelujen ja käytetyn yhteiskunta poliittisen rakenne lähestymistavan tärkeys piilee niiden kyvyssä selvittää afrikkalaisen maahanmuuttaja poliittisen integraation luonnetta ja laajuutta. Tutkimuksessa todetaan, että kaikki eivät osallistu, ja osallistujat tekevät niin monin eri tavoin eri syistä, kuten olemme nähneet. Sellaiset tekijät kuin asumisen kesto, ikä, koulutus ja kieli eivät vaikuttaneet juuri lainkaan. Muut tekijät, kuten luonnollinen kiinnostus politiikkaan, poliittisten puolueiden mobilisaatio, aikaisempi kokemus poliittisesta osallistumisesta, tiedon saatavuus ja asuinpaikka, vaikuttivat jonkin verran, mutta eivät ole yhtä merkittäviä kuin uusi tekijä, yhteiskunnan asenne, joka vaikutti suoraan mm. työn hankinnassa ja sosiaalisissa suhteissa sekä välillisesti sellaisiin tekijöihin kuin (epä)kiinnostus muodolliseen politiikkaan, kiinnostus protesti politiikkaan, afrikkalaisten ehdokkaiden epäonnistuminen vaaleissa, kunnallisvaalit merkityksettömiä, rasistiset uhkaukset vaalien aikana ja trans lokaalinen liikkuvuus. Muita yhteiskunnan asenteesta riippumattomia, mutta kuitenkin merkittäviä tekijöitä ovat poliittisen puolueen mobilisoitumisen puute, inho politiikkaa ja poliitikkoja kohtaan, (puute) aikaisemmasta poliittisesta osallistumisesta, uskonto (kirkko & moskeija), (kalkkeutuminen) etniseen ja sosiaaliseen ryhmään , ja ajan puute ja laiskuuden ongelma. Jotkut näistä liittyvät kuitenkin edelleen epäsuorasti yhteiskunnan asenteeseen.

Yhteiskunnallisen asenteen merkitystä ei siis voi liikaa korostaa. Tämän jälkeen on siis mahdollista ymmärtää joitakin siitä johtuvia keskeisiä kysymyksiä. 1) se on motivoinut ja demotivoinut heidän poliittista integroitumistaan kuulumisen/tunteen ja institutionaalisen täydellisyyden kautta, joka on edistänyt tai riistänyt heitä yhteiskunnassa. Tältä osin 2) se palvelee kahta tehtävää: joko yhdistävänä elimenä tai mobilisoivana rakenteena heidän poliittiseen yhdentymiseen tai erottavana elimenä tai demobilisoivana rakenteena samaan aikaan. DMIS-teoria auttoi myös erottamaan tämän kaksoisfunktion edunsaajat ja häviäjät (niin sanoakseni) ryhmittelemällä heidän kokemuksensa etnorelatiivisiin ja etnosentrisiin. Identiteetin muodostumisen teoria auttoi edelleen paikantamaan kokemusten vaikutusta tuloksena informoineiden identiteettien kautta. Kaikki nämä auttoivat näin ollen vaikuttamaan heidän poliittiseen toimintaansa eri foorumeilla tai alustoilla.

Vastaavat yhteiskunnalliset (tai DMIS-merkityt) kokemukset ja niistä johtuvat identiteetit heijastuvat myös poliittisiin esiintymiseen. Esimerkiksi

etnosentriset edustajat tai erityisesti ne, joilla on erillinen identiteetti, nostavat todennäköisemmin esille maahanmuuttaja kohtaisia kysymyksiä (esimerkiksi rasismi ja syrjintä) kuin etnosuhteen edustajat, erityisesti integroituneet, jotka nostavat esiin sekä yhteiskunta- että maahanmuuttaja kysymyksiä (koska he identifioituvat molempien ryhmien kanssa), kun taas assimiloituneet nostavat esiin vain yhteiskunnallisia kysymyksiä (koska he samaistuvat vain yhteiskuntaan). Tämä on jossain määrin hyvä asia myös maahanmuuttajille, koska he ovat myös yhteiskunnan jäseniä (esimerkiksi kun opetetaan koululaisia ylittämään liikennevaloja). Mutta siltä osin kuin jotkut etno keskeiset edustajat etsivät konkreettisia todisteita (kuten videoleikkeen) erityisesti rasismista ennen toimintaansa, huolestuttavat etnosentriset, koska etnosentriset uskovat, että on olemassa muita tapoja vahvistaa todisteita, kuten todistajien saatavuus tai asianmukainen tutkinta. Vaikka konkreettisten todisteiden vaatiminen ei ole estänyt afrikkalaisia maahanmuuttaja äänestäjiä äänestämästä etno suhteellisia ehdokkaita, etenkään integroituneita, mahdollisuus, että edustajat menettävät uudelleen valinnan, jos he asettuvat ehdolle, voi olla suurempi kuin etnosentrisillä.

Tästä syystä päätän, että yhteiskunnan asenne ja sen edistämä yhteenkuuluvuuden tunne (tai sen puute) luo vahvan tai heikon perustan afrikkalaisille maahanmuuttajille, jotta he voivat paremmin kerätä etuja ja välinpitämättömyyksiä, taipumuksia ja epäsuotuisia muotoja poliittisessa roolissaan suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa. Kuulumisen tunne selittää myös sen, miksi he ovat hankkineet yhteiskunnassa erilaisia identiteettejä kokemustensa mukaisesti. Toisin sanoen, kun etnorelatiivisessa vaiheessa olevilla on yleensä integroituneita tai assimiloituneita identiteettejä, jotka auttavat heitä navigoimaan suomalaisissa sosioekonomisissa ja poliittisissa verkostoissa, kun taas etnosentrisessä vaiheessa olevilla on yleensä erottuneita ja marginalisoituneita identiteettejä, jotka riistävät heiltä tämän navigoinnin. Muuten, niiden lukumäärä, joilla on korkea yhteenkuuluvuuden tunne (eli etnorelatiivisessa vaiheessa/kokemuksessa olevat), on paljon pienempi kuin niillä, joilla on alhainen kuulumisen tunne (eli etnosentriset), jotka eivät vieläkään tunne itseään yhteiskunnan "jäseniksi", huolimatta monien vuosien asumisesta sekä paikallisen kielen ja kulttuurin tuntemisesta. Tämä tarkoittaa, että integraatioprosessi ei toimi hyvin. Toisin sanoen se näyttää tällä hetkellä enemmän yksisuuntaiselta prosessilta, jossa on mukana vain (afrikkalainen) maahanmuuttaja, kuin kaksi suuntaiselta prosessilta, johon osallistuu myös yhteiskunta.

Siksi, kun tarkastellaan suomalaisten mahdollisuuksien rakenteita maahanmuuttajien poliittiselle osallistumiselle paikallisella tasolla ja mihin ne voisivat olla menossa tulevaisuudessa, väitän, että suomalainen demokratia maahanmuuttajien osallistumisen suhteen ei toimi vielä niin hyvin. Saarinen & Jappinen (2014, 145) väittävät, että kun otetaan huomioon maahanmuuttajien poliittisen osallistumisen puute, käy selväksi, ettei Suomen demokratia ja työelämä ole niin maahanmuuttaja ystävällistä kuin usein oletetaan. Katsotaan kuitenkin ensin, mitkä rakenteet todella toimivat, ennen kuin tarkastelemme mitkä eivät toimi, ja mihin pitäisi keskittyä, jotta asioita voidaan muuttaa tulevaisuutta varten.

Rakenteet kuten kuntalaki, maahanmuuttajien kotouttamis lait, yhdistykset (mukaan lukien kirkko ja moskeija) ja myönteinen yhteiskunta asenne ovat toimineet hyvin joidenkin afrikkalaisten maahanmuuttajien kohdalla ja auttaneet heitä integroitumaan tai muutoin assimiloitumaan yhteiskuntaan. Tämä näkyy erityisesti työelämässä ja yhteiskunta poliittisessa elämässä. Toisaalta, mikä ei toimi hyvin, on yhteiskunnan negatiivinen asenne joihinkin afrikkalaisiin maahanmuuttajiin erityisesti myös työelämässä ja yhteiskunta poliittisessa elämässä, mikä on vaikuttanut heidän integroitumattomuuteensa. Tämä on usein täysin huomiotta syrjinnän vastaista lakia, jonka täytäntöönpanossa poliisin on kerrottu jäävän kauas odotuksista, sillä jotkut poliisit ovat jopa tulleet täytäntöönpanossa syrjiviksi ja syyllistyneet etniseen profilointiin (ks. esim. Keskinen et al. 2018, Ndukwe 2015, mm.).

Tämän tutkimuksen teoreettiset johtopäätökset ovat siis kaksijakoiset. Ensinnäkin tavoitteenani on edistää maahanmuuttajien poliittisen osallistumisen laajempaa kirjallisuutta, erityisesti Suomessa, sisällyttämällä ja keskustelemalla alkuperäis yhteiskunnan asenteesta erittäin kriittisenä siirtolais poliittisen käyttäytymisen ja kotoutumisen institutionaalisena rakenteena. Toiseksi ja DMIS-kehykseen liittyvänä on tuoda esiin, miten tämä yhteiskunnallinen asenne toimii erityisesti sosioekonomisessa tilassa ja sen seurauksia maahanmuuttajien kuulumisen ja yhteiskunnan institutionaalisen täydellisyyden kehittymiseen tai alikehittymiseen. Tämän psykososiaalisen tunteen ymmärtäminen selittää siksi, miksi jotkut maahanmuuttajat voivat olla enemmän tai vähemmän sosioekonomisesti integroituneita ja siten enemmän tai vähemmän poliittisesti integroituneita kuin toiset huolimatta suotuisista maahanmuuttajien kotouttamis poliitikoista ja laeista, erityisesti syrjinnän vastaisesta laista (2004) ja paikallishallinto laista (2015).), jonka valtio on säätänyt tarjotakseen maahanmuuttajille sosioekonomisia ja poliittisia mukautuksia.

Siksi ehdotan - lisää suosituksena yllä olevaan - että jotkin ratkaisut ovat väistämättömiä sen varmistamiseksi, että nämä mukautukset todella tapahtuvat tosielämässä toisin kuin nyt. Toisin sanoen erityisesti työmarkkinoiden ja poliittisen sektorin syrjinnän valvomiseksi voidaan tehdä seuraavaa: 1) maahanmuuttajien kiintiö (tai varattu) järjestelmä. Tätä voisi kutsua "Immigrant Quota Act". 2) syrjinnän hillitsemiseksi yhteiskunnallisessa tilassa massiivinen valtakunnallinen julkinen koulutus on erittäin tarpeellista. Keskustellaanpa niistä lyhyesti.

Ruedin (2013) määrittelee kiintiöjärjestelmän järjestelmäksi, jossa tietty määrä (tai prosenttiosuus) tehtävistä jaetaan yhteiskunnassa syrjäytyneiden ja/tai aliedustettujen ihmisten ryhmälle kannustamaan heidän täysimääräistä osallistumistaan. Hän väittää, että tällaista järjestelmää on käytetty naisten ja vähemmistöjen poliittisen osallistumisen ja edustuksen rohkaisemiseen joissakin maissa, joissa heitä pidetään syrjäytyneinä ja aliedustettuina (ibid, katso myös Matland 2006; McLeay 2006; Childs et al. 2012), joten se voisi toimia myös Suomessa.

Esimerkiksi työmarkkinoilla tietty prosenttiosuus avoimista työpaikoista kaikilla sektoreilla, mutta erityisesti toimihenkilö sektoreilla - joilla maahanmuuttajat tai erityisesti afrikkalaiset maahanmuuttajat ovat erittäin aliedustettuja

- tulisi kohdentaa heille suhteessa heidän väestömäärään kansallisessa väestörekisterissä. Jos esimerkiksi 6 prosenttia on heidän prosenttiosuus, niin silloin 6 prosenttia kaikista avoimista työpaikoista pitäisi mennä heille. Tämä voitaisiin edelleen jakaa kullekin maahanmuuttaja ryhmälle heidän syrjäytyneen tilanteensa ja aliedustuksensa mukaan. Jos tietyllä alalla ei ole riittävästi päteviä maahanmuuttajia, tilalle voitaisiin käyttää saatavilla olevia päteviä syntyperäisiä.

Sama koskee myös poliittista sektoria, erityisesti keskeisissä vaali- tai nimitetyissä tehtävissä kunnallisissa, ammattiliitoissa ja ei-afrikkalaisissa yhdistyksissä. Toisin sanoen, jokin prosenttiosuus paikoista tulisi jakaa tai varata maahanmuuttajille, joista he voivat kilpailla vastaavissa vaaleissa tai nimitysten aikana suhteessa heidän väestönsä kansalliseen väestörekisteriin, jotta voidaan lieventää heidän syrjäytymistään tai aliedustusta samalla tavalla kuin edellä. Jos esimerkiksi 6 prosenttia on heidän prosenttiosuus väestörekisterissä, 6 prosenttia kaikista vaali- ja nimitetyistä paikoista pitäisi mennä heille, jotka voitaisiin edelleen jakaa kullekin maahanmuuttajaryhmälle heidän prosenttiosuuden ja marginalisoitumis- tai aliedustuksen tai molempien mukaan. Jos päteviä maahanmuuttajia ei ole riittävästi, tilalle voitaisiin käyttää saatavilla olevia päteviä alkuperäiskansoja.

Tämä todennäköisesti rohkaisee lisää maahanmuuttajaehdokkaita, varsinkin ei-valkoisia, mikä rohkaisee myös enemmän maahanmuuttaja äänestäjiä, erityisesti mustia, lähtemään joukoittain äänestämään tietäen varsin hyvin, että heillä on kiintiö täytettävänä. Erityisesti kunnallisvaaleissa tämä rohkaisee myös poliittisia puolueita mobilisoimaan ja värväämään lisää maahanmuuttajia, erityisesti afrikkalaisia/ei-valkoisia. Yksi parhaista tavoista, joilla he voivat tehdä tämän, on ottaa käyttöön fyysinen alusta(t) rekrytointia varten, joka voisi olla toimisto, ja mainostaa sijaintia voimakkaasti julkisissa paikoissa ja sosiaalisessa mediassa, ei vain heidän verkkosivuillaan, koska kaikki maahanmuuttaja, varsinkin afrikkalaiset, eivät vieraile sivustoilla tai edes tiedä niiden olemassaolosta. Odotan, että lopputulos olisi massiivinen, koska maahanmuuttajien, erityisesti mustien, tulee todennäköisesti aktivoitua ja ilmoittautua, jos kiintiöjärjestelmää (sekä työmarkkinoilla että poliittisella sektorilla) noudatetaan asianmukaisesti. Tämä auttaa vähentämään maahanmuuttajien aliedustusta kunnan valtuustoissa ja hallituksissa sekä muissa poliittisen osallistumisen muodoissa.

Yhteiskunnallisessa tilassa tarvitaan massiivista julkista syrjintää koskevaa koulutusta, jotta yleisöä tiedotetaan tai virkistetään ja muistutetaan syytteeseenpanon aiheesta ja seurauksista. Hallitus voisi myös ottaa käyttöön tiukempia seurauksia rikoksentekijöille sopivaksi katsomallaan tavalla. Tällainen tiedottaminen tai koulutus voisi alkaa koulun opetussuunnitelmasta ja jatkua sen ulkopuolella (Alemanji 2018) mahdollisesti televisiossa, radiossa, sanomalehdissä ja sosiaalisessa mediassa. Myös maahanmuuttajia voitaisiin kannustaa kertomaan katkerista kokemuksistaan. Tällaisen laajan tiedonsiirron ja koulutuksen on tiedetty parantavan rotujen välistä harmoniaa yhteiskunnassa (Lynch 1992). Sen sanotaan myös takaavan juhlan mieluummin kuin monimuotoisuuden ja monikulttuurisuuden pilkkaamisen (Fleras ja Elliot 1992).

Kaiken kaikkiaan uskon, että nämä toimenpiteet vähentävät merkittävästi syrjintää Suomessa ja antavat myöhemmin maahanmuuttajille, erityisesti ei-valkoisille, sen tasa-arvon, jonka laki on heille antanut, mutta joka heiltä evätään jokapäiväisessä elämässä. Vaikka Ruedin (2013) on huolissaan siitä, että kiintiöjärjestelmä ei ehkä toimi hyvin yhteiskunnassa, jossa on enimmäkseen vihamielinen asenne maahanmuuttajia kohtaan, uskon, että jos hallitus panee sen tiukasti ja tehokkaasti täytäntöön, yhteiskunnalla ei olisi muuta vaihtoehtoa kuin noudattaa sitä.

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