

# **RATIONALIZED REALITIES**

**An Interpretation of the Narrated Lived Experiences of African International Student Migrants Staying in Finland.**

**Quivine Genevieve Aoko Ndomo**

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## ABSTRACT

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An Interpretation of the Narrated Lived Experiences of African International Student Migrants Staying in Finland.

*Author:* Quivine Genevieve Aoko Ndomo

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*Supervisor:* Dr. Hasu Päivi

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The purpose of the thesis is to find out the migrant rationality of international African migrants who make the decision of staying in Finland. The purpose is to examine these migrant's specific framework of reasons, logic, practices and motivations. The point of view of the thesis is that theories of international migration are limited by the structure agency disunion in the social sciences. Further, the migration phenomenon is perceived as complex, dynamic and diverse thus requiring alternative approaches. This thesis applies the social constructionist approach to examine the stance of actor agency in the context of migration. The method of analysis is the data driven technique developed from Corbin and Strauss's techniques and procedures of qualitative data analysis. The data of the thesis is composed of transcribed interview audio recordings of 20 International migrants from Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia. The data is a collection of detailed migrant accounts shared by migrants during individual semi structured in-depth interviews. My research results suggest that migration is a time and a domain specific process that undergoes key transformation over its time span. In light of my data, it can be argued that the migration trajectory of these group of migrants is influenced by a configuration of constraints emanating from the structure, and the migrants' agency freedom. Individual transformation is pursued and achieved collectively within migrant networks. Based on the research results, it can be concluded that African migrants in Finland collectively engage in the development and acquisition of a migrant habitus that directs their migration trajectory towards perceived success.

**Key Words:** Agency, International student migrant, Migration, Rationality, Social constructionism, Wellbeing

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

<b>CHAT</b>	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
<b>UNDESA</b>	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>NELM</b>	New Economic Labour Migration
<b>IM</b>	International Migration
<b>ISM</b>	International Student Migrant

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background and scope of study

International migration refers to the process of movement that people engage in across national boundaries of political and administrative units for certain minimum periods of time (UNESCO). Different categories of migrants engage in international movements for a variety of reasons. A key feature of international migration today is the spread of ethnic, cultural and racial diversities in societies around the globe (Castles et al., 2014, p.57). International migration instigates variant outcomes for individual migrants and the affected societies. Therefore, people experience migration in different ways. Some migrants assimilate, thereby abandoning their cultural and ethnic roots while they take up the cultural ways of the host society. However, others integrate by incorporating some of their ethnic and cultural predispositions into the host societies social, economic and political culture. Human movement is an age-old activity and studies of migration predict that international migration is likely to continue as a significant feature of future demographic arrangements (Castles et al., 2014, p.5). Additionally, international migration is inherently pervasive and thus its capacity to affect the entire global populace. International migration makes a complex, diverse and highly contextualised subject of study (Castles, 2010, p. 1569). It is widely acknowledged that theorization in the field of migration faces formidable obstacles that have rendered the development of a general theory of migration impossible. As a result, the body of knowledge on international migration is fragmented and polarized following the general social scientific structure-agency dichotomy among others. (Castles 2010; Castles et al., 2014; Massey et al., 1993; De Haas, 2010). In fact, the vast majority of literature on migration discuss this problem of theorization (cf. Castles 2010; Castles et al., 2014; Massey et al., 1993; Massey et al., 1998; De Haas, 2010). To address this challenge to theory formation, Castles (2010) and De Haas (2010, p. 228) have proposed a revision of the conceptual framework used in migration studies. This conceptual revision includes a shift from the ambition to construct a general abstract theory to constructing a middle range theory of migration. Such a theory should have the capacity to accommodate all the aspects and dimensions of the migration process (Castles, 2010, p.1575).

In their transformative approach to theorizing migration, Castles (2010), and De Haas (2010) propose that migration studies should aim at embedding the process of migration to the larger

social, economic and political process, thereby catering for context. They predict that by achieving this, migration theories could manoeuvre the complexity and diversity of the migration process.

Most migration pursuits are voluntary except for forced movements of refugees, asylum seekers and victims of external factors like environmental catastrophes and development displacement (UNESCO, 2017). Due to the perceived volitional and voluntary aspects of most migration processes, it is assumed that migratory movements involve well thought out and calculated plan and actions that are aimed at particular ends. Thereby implying that rationality is inherent in the migration process, in particular the decision making part (Norkus, 2000; Satz and Farejohn, 1994). For the purposes of this thesis, rationality is defined as a framework of reasons, logic and motivation that guide migrants through the decision of staying in the host society. In this thesis, rationality is treated as a feature of human agency. Decision making is an act of human agency, particularly where decisions concern goal oriented action like voluntary migration (Sen 1985, p. 208). According to Sen, agency has intrinsic importance, an instrumental contribution and a constructive role in value and goal oriented action (Sen, 1985, p. 15). In this thesis, human agency refers to the freedom of the process available to individuals which delimits what they are able to do by themselves on behalf of goals and values that they value and are motivated to advance (Sen, 2002, Chapter 19, Sen, 1985, p. 205). In migrating, individuals' geographical, historical and temporal contexts change significantly. As a result, migrant activities are negotiated under unique conditions and circumstances (Castles, 2010, p.1573). Migrants' agency freedom can be positively enabled or negatively limited by these conditions and circumstances.

This thesis examines how the migration process transforms migrants' agency. The exploration focuses on the degree, scope, nature and form of these transformations and the implication of these on the migrant's well-being freedom. As a hallmark of the 21<sup>st</sup> century globalised world, international migration is incorporating many new countries as host and sending countries (Castles et al., 2014 p.21). As a result, the international migrant population is changing in form becoming significantly different from what it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to UNDESA, approximately 3.4% (an estimated 258 million persons) of the global population reside in countries other than those in which they were born (UN Population Division, Migration Facts 2017). New and different migrant categories are emerging in different migration destination countries

(UNESCO). Therefore, international migration takes on a very transformative form. According to the transformation theory of migration, human movement correlates positively to other changes such as demographic changes in the society (Castles et al., 2014, p.47).

Development and transformation theorists explain that development enhances individual agents' capability sets and migration aspirations, thereby inferring a positive correlation between migration and development. Thus, it is predicted that development and demographic changes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world mean that human mobility is bound to continue. These and other complexities of migration explain the magnitude of political and social salience that the migration phenomenon has gained over the last decades. According to Massey et al. (1993), international migration has developed into a basic structural feature of all industrialized countries (Massey et al., 1993, p. 431). According to them, this makes the underlying forces of international migration strong, consistent, far-reaching and resilient. The capacity of international migration to affect both individual human beings and institutions highlight the critical nature of the need for a comprehensive framework for understanding international migration.

The transformative nature of the migration phenomenon underscores the need for comprehensive, contextual and up-to-date knowledge base on the subject. Although only 3.4% of the global population are international migrants, the remaining 96% of the global population are affected in different ways by the migratory activities of the 3.4%. The non-migrant global population is affected as either sending country or receiving country citizens. The topic of migration is common in mainstream discussions in today's society. These mainstream sentiments are used by politicians to influence voter choices while the general populace discusses the same matter colloquially on other platforms like the social media (Castles et al., 2014, p. 13-20). These public discussions influence the types of migration policy that are lobbied for in countries that receive and send migrants (De Haas, 2010, p. 230, 238; Massey et al., 1993, p. 463; Castles, 2010, p.1570-1572). Therefore, migration policies are influenced by a body of knowledge that is incomprehensive and polarised by the agency structure disunion (Castles et al., 2014, p. 2). The extent of inherent bias or misinformation in migration policies hold significant consequences for the well-being of migrants whose lives are subject to these policies.

## 1.2 Research question

The aim of this thesis is to examine and interpret the lived experiences of African international student migrants who make the decision to stay in Finland. The main research question is formulated into three sub-questions in order to improve the efficiency of data collection and analysis, thereby ensuring that the main research question is sufficiently addressed.

Main research question and the three sub-questions are as follows:

1. What is the migrant rationality of African international student migrants staying in Finland?
  - 1.1. What is the lived experience of African international student migrants staying in Finland?
  - 1.2. How do international student migrants staying in Finland present their lived experience in Finland?
  - 1.3. What are the meanings of these presentations and what purposes do they serve for the immigrants who construct them?

### **1. What is the migrant rationality of African international student migrants staying in Finland?**

This is the overall research question of this thesis. It is aimed to limit the approach of the study to the individual migrant's perspective. For the purposes of this thesis, rationality refers to the framework of reasons, logic and motivation that guide African international student immigrants who stay in Finland. Thus, this study seeks an understanding of the migration behaviour and choices of African international student migrants staying in Finland. The study focused only on African international student migrants because of the following four reasons. First, the student migrant is the least researched migrant category (Findlay 2011 p.162). Second, the number of student migrants is growing six times faster than international migration in general (UN, population division, Migration trends report 2017). This research question aims to explore the nature and quality of life that student migrants from Africa afford in Finland.



Third, the student migrant is a dynamic multidimensional individual (Geddie, 2013, p. 201-4; Mosneaga and Winther, 2013, p. 182). According to Geddie (2013), the higher education age coincides with a transitional stage that individuals undergo. Geddie analyses student migration through the concept of transition. She describes the transition age as the period when individuals begin partnering, parenting, and starting a family simultaneously (Geddie, 2013, p. 204). Murphy-Lejeune adds to this argument, explaining that at this age, students have the capacity to adapt to new environments and cultures with relative ease compared to other migrants like labour migrants (Murphy-Lejeune, 2012). Therefore, this study aims at contributing to the body of knowledge on the student migrant.

Fourth, migration of international students from African countries to Finland is unique due to the particularity of Finland as a destination country. Finland offered free high quality tertiary education to both EU/EEA and non EU/EEA students till January 2017. In Finland, higher education is regarded as a fundamental right. Additionally, the Finnish education policy emphasizes equal opportunity for all and this facilitates immigration by international student migrants from Africa in Finland. Therefore, high quality affordable tertiary education is a major motivation for immigration of Africans in Finland. This thesis is focused on the African international students who make the decision to stay in Finland after finishing their studies as active participants in the Finnish labour market. This interest is informed by the fact that immigrants face a greater difficulty integrating into the Finnish labour market due to high unemployment rates for migrants in particular.

In 1994, the rate of unemployment for immigrants in Finland was three times higher than that of the entire population and although the employment situation improved over time, the disparity between immigrants and natives stagnated. In 2004 the unemployment rate for immigrants was still three times higher than that of natives (Heikkilä, 2005, p. 489). Precisely, the integration of immigrants into the primary Finnish labour market has not been very successful for all immigrant categories. For instance, educated immigrants who are considered culturally distant have been the most negatively selected by the Finnish labour market (Valtonen, 2001, p. 423-5; Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002, p. 6). In the Finnish labour market statistical discrimination is based on the premise that foreign degrees are of a lower value in spite of official recognition. Migration for higher

education imply a goal orientation and an incongruence emerge when student migrants chose to stay in the host society despite very limited freedom to use the acquired academic skills.

International migration involves moving from a familiar geographical location to an unfamiliar one. Geographical roots provide rich historical and cultural contexts within which individuals interact and construct their societies as these societies construct them in turn. Sampson's 1990 theory of the ecosystem defines the delicate interaction between an individual and the society. He explains that humans and society engage in a cyclical process of producing one another in alternation at different points. Alternatively, Berger and Luckman (1966) describe a dialectical interaction between individuals and society. According to them, there is no ontological existence of the society or social world separate from people and their interactions. They argue that the world as we present it is the product of an objectification process carried out by individuals' through 'seeing' (Berger and Luckman, 1966, cited in Burr, 2003 p. 185). These arguments underscore the importance of context in the life of social actors. Migrants operate in particularly unique geographical positions, which in turn shape the outcomes of their lives. Thus, the overall aim of this study is to determine the manner in which being an African migrant settling in Finland determines the nature of life that an individual lives and negotiates.

Question 1.1: What is the lived experience of African international student migrants staying in Finland?

In order to understand the migrant rationality of African international student migrants in Finland, the study has to obtain a holistic image of the life of these student migrants in the host society. Such a holistic image encompasses all the dimensions of the life process that these students encounter in Finland. Rationality is exercised intermittently as individuals negotiate their life experiences, making decisions, acting or failing to act. Capturing as much as possible of this entire process guarantees a more comprehensive coverage of the migrant's rationality. Additionally, experience encompasses the whole set of actions and the expected outcomes of such actions. It is this focus on the expected outcomes that makes the holistic experience of migrants the most relevant object of focus in a study aiming to understand how different actors exercise rationality.

Question 1.2: How do international student migrants staying in Finland present their lived experience in Finland?

This question seeks to discover the lived experience of international student migrants in the most natural form possible. The study aims to capture this by seeking the holistic accounts of participant's lived experiences.

Question 1.3. What are the meanings of these presentations and what purposes do they serve for the immigrants who construct them?

This last question is a descriptive analytic question seeking to understand why participants present their accounts in the manner that they do. This study also serves the objective of identifying the message participants aimed to send to the world with regards to their experience of immigration in Finland. This question aims to instigate reflection on the motivation and goals that drive migration by African international student migrants. The findings of this question hold noteworthy potential in policy dialogue. This question will generate specific information regarding African student migrants' lives, wellbeing, satisfaction, success or failure in the host society. This is information that can be useful in developing migrant integration strategies for the host society. The participants chosen for this study are legal residents in Finland. Therefore, they fall directly under the responsibility of the ministry of the interior. Furthermore, among the 20 participants, there are six citizens and four permanent residents of Finland. Of these ten, if not to all the twenty participants in this research, the Finnish society owes integration services aimed at ensuring that migrants can forge dissent livelihoods in the host society, comparable to the life that their Finnish counterparts afford.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

#### **Contributing an agentic perspective to the body of knowledge on international migration.**

Firstly, this thesis aims to contribute an agentic perspective to the discussion of international migration. The focus of the study is on how the consequences of migration affect migrants' agency which in turn affects their well-being. Therefore, this thesis attempts to build a migrant-based thick description of migrant lives in host societies with a focus on how migrants' agency transforms through the emerging migration trajectory.

Secondly, this thesis aims to challenge the mainstream conception of migration by drawing attention to the perspective of migration as a spatial and temporal process. This draws attention to the underlying roots of migration and migration decision making. It underscores rationality as the key dimension behind particular migratory pursuits. Thus, this thesis aims to illuminate a fresh perspective for interpreting and understanding migrants. The key significance of this perspective is its focus on migrants' self-reflection on their migration processes. This perspective draws focus to the goal-orientation dimension of migratory pursuits and links this to the aspect of agency transformation in migration processes. As a result, this exploration could initiate two reactions: 1. Migrants can be stimulated to evaluate their migration trajectory against the original migration plan and therefore make necessary changes where possible towards improving their well-being freedom. 2. The other outcome can be that the host society can initiate integration practices that are more practical, credible and useful for the wellbeing of the migrants and the host society. This would be the ideal and the true meaning of integration.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

This study traces the migration trajectory of African international student migrants in Finland, following their migration process from the initial motivation phase through to the decision to stay in Finland after studies. The study is also focused on the well-being status of immigrants while in the host society. Underlying this study is the key assumption that a holistic understanding of the trajectory of this population can be of significance in the following three areas. 1. Social scientific body of knowledge on migration. 2. The African international student migrant body in Finland and other similar host countries. 3. Dialogue on the social, economic and political issues that are of significance to migration policy.

A study of the migration trajectory of international student migrants highlights the socioeconomic status of these migrants. Education, employment and income are key determinants of socioeconomic status. The education and employment conditions of African student migrants in Finland are of importance in this study as well. Migration accounts are likely to include

information on integration and socioeconomic interactions in the host country. Therefore, the outcomes of this study should contribute useful information on the socioeconomic status of these migrants in Finland. Additionally, such information can be used to derive a correlation hypothesis forming the background for migration socio economic policies.

The African student migrant community in Finland stands to gain a holistic understanding of their migration process. Migrants are also poised to gain general insight and awareness of their migration status. When widely shared among immigrants, migration awareness can encourage dialogue among immigrants. Such dialogue can eventually contribute a migrant voice to migration policy debates in favour. Dialogue among migrants can also increase the scope of awareness to include political awareness. This would include dialogue on migrant privileges and rights. All these are key topics in migration policy consideration. A general understanding of migration can also be a useful guide for proceeding migration decisions which would be based on a reviewed understanding of the current migration status.

Migration policy makers in host societies can benefit from a comprehensive understanding of the migration experiences of immigrants. A study of migrants' holistic lived experience in the host society is likely to contribute useful information regarding migrants' adaptation and degree of integration in the host society. In the case of legal migrants like international student migrants, the host country's responsible ministries hold the responsibility of integrating such migrants. Therefore, the findings of this study are likely to be useful for integration policy makers in Finland. At the same time, migrants' accounts of their lived experiences in Finland will lend a human face to the mainstream migrant discourse by making the debate specific and local. It is predicted that an improved public perception of migrants would improve the degree of cooperation between migrants and the host country's populace. Ultimately, this can improve migrants' freedoms and capabilities to pursue the life that they have reason to value in Finland.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Introduction**

This thesis draws from three primary areas of theorizing. First, the study relates to the theories of international migration. Second, it draws from theories of human action and agency in understanding the actions, decisions and self-reflection of the African student migrants in Finland. Third, the analysis applies the approach of social constructionism in order to make sense of the lived realities of the migrants.

In this chapter, I first discuss the structure-agency divide in social scientific theorizing in general and international migration theories in particular (subchapter 2.2.) before moving into discussing some of the most prominent theoretical approaches to migration. In the sub-chapter 2.3. I present a review of functionalist perspective and migration initiation. In sub-chapter 2.4. I discuss historical-structural theories of international migration. In sub-chapter 2.5. I discuss migration perpetuation and human agency. Migration perpetuation theories attempt to explain how the migration phenomenon persists and recreates itself in society. How new migratory pursuits keep emerging and how old migratory pursuits proceed, altering and taking more migratory paths. These are theories of international migration that attempt to manoeuvre the functionalist-structural divide. I then discuss in more detail the principles of human and migrant agency (subchapter 2.6). At the end, I present my approach to social constructionism and the construction of migrant reality (subchapter 2.7.).

## **2.1 The structure-agency divide in international migration theories**

Theories of international migration have often followed the more general social scientific paradigms in understanding human action in the society (Bakewell, 2010, p. 1689). In the social sciences, there has been a long-standing debate over the primacy of structure or agency in shaping human behaviour in the society (Bakewell, 2010, p. 1690). In the social scientific theories, structure refers to the arrangements which influence or limit the opportunities available in the society. Agency, on the other hand, refers to the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices. The structure versus agency debate can be understood as determining whether an individual acts as a free agent or in a manner dictated by social structure (Bakewell, 2010, p. 1694-5). The debate over the primacy of structure or of agency relates to an issue at the heart of both classical and contemporary social theory: Do social structures determine

an individual's behaviour or does human agency? Scholars have developed conceptual frameworks that conflate both agency and structure. For instance, Anthony Giddens' 1984 structuration theory. In this theory, Giddens conflates both structure and agency, thereby blurring the obvious division between the two as was initially popular. He presents an argument of a duality of structure in which both structure and agency coexist, each impacting the development of each other. Bourdieu's 1977 concept of habitus, developed in an outline of a theory of practice, is another formidable attempt at negating the structure agency impasse in social science theorization. Habitus, which is a socio cultural trait that human beings embody is developed through an interaction between culture, societal norms and personal predispositions.

In migration theory, a divide emerges between approaches that focus on agency and those focusing on structure (Bakewell, 2010, p. 1689). Bakewell has suggested that the structure-agency impasse continues to manifest in a variety of forms such as the conflict between micro and macro level of analysis, or in the individual voluntarism and determinism debate. In fact, it has been argued that this divide supports the continuity of old theories by inhibiting new theories from innovatively challenging the old theories. Instead, new perspectives are constantly developed to only address the challenges that emerge due to this impasse. Arango (2000), adds against the old theories that in their failure to address the structure-agency dichotomy comprehensively, they are limited only to providing explanations ex-post. But, they are incapable of guiding empirical research with hypotheses and facts (Arango, 200, p. 294, cited in Bakewell, 2010, p. 1693).

Consequently, current migration theories have a significant shortcoming in their incapacity to merge or overcome the agency-structure divide. The theory fragmentation problem in migration studies stems from their inability to negate the structure-agency impasse (Bakewell, 2010, p. 1690). Bakewell adds that migration theories are either strongly single sided, taking a determinist structural stance, or focusing too much on human agency while ignoring the structure. In migration theories, attempts to address the agency-structure impasse rely heavily on Giddens' structuration theory. Thus, adopting a narrow and widely challenged approach to the study of agency (Bakewell, 2010, 1690). In this theoretical review, theories of international migration are discussed to illuminate the scope of human agency coverage in each. Additionally, the literature is reviewed to

examine the diversity in migration theories and the variability of the implications of these theories on individual migrants.

The existing theories of international migration can be categorized according to their underlying assumptions. Massey et al. (1993) argue that the utility of migration theories is improved when they are categorised and linked since migration theories are often complementary despite variance (Massey et al., 1993, p. 463). In their 1993 work, Massey et al. conducted a review of migration theories according to the subjects addressed. According to their results, they explain that although the assumptions, perspectives and hypothesis derived from these theories are not inherently contradictory, they prescribe propositions that hold significant implications for policy (Massey et al., 1993, p. 463). On the variability in migration theories, Castles et al. (2014 p. 52) describe the body of knowledge on international migration as fragmented along disciplinary, thematic and epistemological lines. Migration theorists attribute this fragmentation in theory to the complex nature of the migration subject (Castles et al., 2014, p. 52). The problems that arise from the application of these fragmented theories of migration abound, and these cannot just be wished away. Massey et al. (1998) present the problem of theory fragmentation in the field of migration authoritatively:

All theories play some role in accounting for international migration in the contemporary world, although different models predominate at different phases of the migration process, and different explanations carry different weights in different regions depending on the local circumstances of history, politics and geography (Massey et al., 1998, p. 281).

In what follows, I review migration theories that have significantly addresses the issues of agency and structure. The main approaches discussed are first, functionalism and the theories of migration that emerge from this perspective, second, historical-structuralist theories, and third, perpetuation theories of migration. Perpetuation theories are theories of international migration that attempt to manoeuvre the structure-agency divide. They focus on migration continuity, linking this to the interaction between structure and agency.

### **2.1.1 The functionalist perspective and migration initiation**



According to the functionalist social theory, society is a system, a collection of interdependent parts which come together to form the whole (Bakewell et al., 2012, p. 419). According to this perspective, the focus is on wholeness and an inherent tendency towards equilibrium (Castles et al., 2014 p. 28). The society and social reality is somehow analogous to that of the biological organism. Different parts perform specific roles, which all contribute in turn to the smooth, machine like functioning of the organism (Bakewell et al., 2012, p. 419). According to Massey et al. (1993), two economic theories of migration in the functionalist tradition, namely the macro and micro-level neoclassical economic theories and the new economic labour migration theory explain the initiation of international migration (Massey et al. 1993). They explain how individuals begin the process of international movement. Although all of these theories explain migration initiation, they focus on disparate analytical units. As a result, they offer variant hypotheses and predictions regarding future migration trajectories. Castles et al. (2014) add that for functionalists, migration is an activity with the potential of enhancing equality within and among nations as the result of the economic activities rendered possible by migration. Therefore, according to the functionalist theories, migration is a positive phenomenon serving the interest of most people and thereby pushing societies towards greater equality (Castles et al., 2014, p. 27).

This section discusses three theories. The macro neoclassical economic theory of migration, the micro neoclassical economic theory of migration by Todaro (1969) and Harris and Todaro (1970), and the new labour migration theory by Stark and Bloom (1985). The micro-level neoclassical economics theory addresses the individual migrant as the primary unit of analysis while the macro neoclassical economics theory focuses on whole states. Although different, these theories share remarkable similarities. They share an epistemological orientation and an analytic standpoint at the micro, meso or macro level. According to these three theories, migration decision is based on a rational cost benefit calculation of the wage differentials between the host country and the target country (Massey et al., 1993, p. 434). According to these theories, a migrant is a socially isolated actor who reacts passively and predictably to external factors (structure) in the decision to migrate (Castles et al. 2014, p. 31). These approaches vary mainly with regards to the level of analysis addressed and the assumptions made concerning the future trends of these migratory pursuits. The discussion that follows aims to determine the extent to which human agency is addressed in these

theories of migration. Additionally, the discussion aims at delineating the kind of agency addressed in migration theories.

Todaro's micro-level theory of migration (1969, 1970) treats migration as a rational process that individuals engage in due to geographical differences in the supply and demand of labour (Todaro, 1969, p. 139). Migration facilitates the progress of societies towards equilibrium. Equilibrium is a state where a balance in the flow of labour and capital between countries. According to these theories, individuals have perfect knowledge of their context, thus facilitating optimization through the exercise of rationality. Although the micro-level neoclassical theory addresses the individual actor, the individual agency of actors is overlooked. This implies that primacy was awarded to structure rather than individual agency. In fact, Bakewell et al. (2012, p.419) argue that in the functionalist definition of the system, ideas were phenomenal and agency was non-existent.

Stark and Bloom's (1985) New Economic Labour Migration (NELM) theory developed from the household perspective, an emerging perspective in the 80's. Therefore, according to this approach, the primary unit of analysis is the entire household. Additionally, this theory expands the scope of motivations that initiate migration to include the capital market, security market and the futures market as key influences in the decision to migrate. Stark and Bloom (1985) argue that migration insures the household from undeveloped markets in society. According to these theories, the decision to migrate is made by the family. Although NELM theory delineate the household as their primary level of analysis, actor agency is addressed significantly in this theory. For instance, migrants create social networks with family members in the country of origin. These social networks are strategically used by the migrant and the family to overcome the structural constraints of society (Castles et al., 2014, p. 37-8). The following paragraph answers the question of the extent to which agency is addressed in the NELM theory of migration.

The NELM migratory processes are a means of insuring the household and improving the collective livelihood of the members of the household. Intra-household inequality and conflict disputes the assumptions of the NELM approach which reify the household as a united front (Haas et al., 2010, p. 556). Haas et al. (2010 p. 549-556) argue that although this theory incorporates the exercise of agency, this theory's strength is challenged by intra-household conflicts, inequality and power struggles. Additionally, this theory highlights the problem in the mainstream conception of

agency as direct procedural control. When agency is defined in this manner, the intrinsic, instrumental and constructive elements of agency are disregarded. Agency as procedural control focuses on the freedom to choose; here it does not matter whether an individual succeeds and attains that which is chosen and indicated as preferred (Sen, 1985, p.209). However, agency as effective power focuses on the extent to which one can achieve specific preferred outcomes so that one's will and desires will be respected so that their choices come to bear (Sen, 1985, p. 209). The former conception of agency is substantially empty and Sen describes it as inferior to the agency perspective of effective power (Sen, 1985, p. 209).

As theories explaining the initiation of international movements of people with a particular focus on the micro level, the individual actor (explicitly in two of the theories), failure to incorporate agency in the construction of these theories, present a significant knowledge gap challenging the capacity of migration theories to explain migration in a the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The neoclassical theories fail to examine agency at work in the migration process (Castles et al., 2014, p. 31). The NELM theories also fail to provide a comprehensive and realistic explication of the household livelihood dimension (Haas et al., 2010). As far as migrant agency is to be addressed, the functionalist theories of migration fail to present comprehensive arguments for agency in migration.

### **2.1.2 The historical-structural theories of international migration**

Theories of international migration that follow the historical-structural perspectives adopt a skeptical and a pessimistic stance towards international migration. They question the surface assumption that individuals migrate out of free will. They challenge the perception of migration as an entirely voluntary process. The underlying assumptions of the historical structural theories of international migration are: One. Migration is not a voluntary one-time choice made by individuals. Two. Migration is entrenched and influenced by the historical context of the world. Three. Migration is intrinsically embedded in global transformation processes, thereby making it a function of the political interest for people in powerful positions in the global world order. The following discussion is focused on three historical structural theories of international migration: 1. Dependency perspectives and international migration, 2. The world systems perspective and the segmented or dual labour theory of migration (Castles et al. 2014; Massey et al. 1993) and 3. The

globalization perspective of social transformation and theorizing international migration. The aim is to determine the status of agency in these theories. But first, I begin by demarcating the epistemological background of the historical–structural theories of migration.

The historical-structural theories of migration emerged as a critique of the functionalist theories of migration. Their epistemological roots are in the neo-Marxist perspective of dependency and world systems. The key assumption in these theories is that the development of the core of the globalized world (European countries and the United States of America) was the result of an active underdevelopment of the periphery (non-European world) making it less developed than it had been (Peet & Hartwick, 2015, p. 188). According to these views, there is extensive inequality between geographical locations. Additionally, these views suggest that capitalism is a global political system operating to extend the existing disequilibrium rather than bridging it. In this approach, capitalism is a global political and social system that favours monopolization, accumulation of wealth and restricted competition (Peet and Hartwick, 2015, p. 189).

Historical-structural theorists see migration as a function of the global capitalist system aimed at furthering the material success of the core western countries. Which is achieved by moving labour surplus from the periphery to the core. This approach is pessimistic of migration, development and the drive towards a global economic equilibrium. Immanuel Wallerstein’s world systems theory supports the argument that the globe is segmented into core and periphery. He adds semi periphery as a third element to this classification. According to Wallenstein, world history is a process through which a single system, a single geographic entity with a single division of labour develops (Wallerstein 1979, cited in Peet and Hartwick, 2015, p. 195). This argument brings capitalism into the discussion of international migration, the movement of individual beings across international borders for a variety of social, economic and political reasons. For the historical-structuralist, historical events such as colonialism and the advent of the capitalist world economy in the 16<sup>th</sup> century determine and influence world relations today because we are indeed living in a global world joined by the wide reaching arms of capitalism (Peet and Hartwick, 2015).

Historical events prior to the contemporary period of international migration are examined to determine how they affect the evolution of migration in contemporary times. Before the Second World War people were already engaging in international migration. However, the amount of

attention given to the phenomenon was meagre. Between 1846 and 1939, an estimated 59 million Europeans emigrated to settle in North America, South America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. The magnitude of this migration led Hatton and Williamson (1998) to call this period ‘the age of mass migration. According to them, contemporary migration has not even matched this magnitude of human movement. The direction and prominence of migration today is dependent on other changes taking place in the world. These changes can be perceptual, hierarchal arrangements and global relations. Action and the meanings that are intrinsic in action do not take place in a vacuum. Therefore, historical and current contexts are critical in interpreting social phenomena like international migration. The context of international migration is a world system interlinked by economic, social, political and cultural relations and interactions. The world system is a complete integrated unit where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Chase-Dunn and Grimes 1995, p. 388, cited in Pete and Hartwick, 2015).

Pete and Hartwick suggest that when it comes to goals such as development, it is the whole system that develops and not the individual parts like the nation states. This argument is relevant to the discussion of agency in migration theory (Peet and Hartwick, 2015, p. 199). It implies is that there is really no space for individual human agency in migration decisions taken within the system. Accordingly, structural theorists argue that the type of movement, such as the mass migration undertaken by Europeans in the past was voluntary, and therefore that is the only kind of migration that is theorized by the neoclassical theories. According to Castles et al. however, migration is not voluntary in contemporary times (Castles et al. 2014, p. 32). The difference is in the context and the time. It can be argued that changes in time can change the nature of the migratory pursuit chosen thereby altering the definition of migration. This change can be attributed to the functions of capitalism.

### **2.1.3 Migration perpetuation and human agency**

In migration theorization, the functionalist and the historical structuralist approaches focus on migration initiation. They examine migration initiation only. On the other hand, the main focus of perpetuation theories of migration is migration perpetuation. These theories explain why once started, migration processes tend to be self-reinventing and continuous (De Haas, 2010).

Perpetuation theories explain that the internal dynamics of migration are driven by feedback mechanisms that facilitates the continuity of migration processes. These theories attribute the continuity of migration processes to emerging migrant networks and migration systems. Perpetuation theories' analytic level is the meso level. Therefore, they focus on migrant networks and migration systems which constitute the meso level of analysis in migration. Consequently, perpetuation theories do not attribute most of migration to the external macro element of the structure. Instead, they focus on the meso level of analysis and it is here that the link between perpetuation and actor agency emerges.

De Haas (2010, p.1591) explains that migration perpetuation is driven by first order contextual feedback dynamics which are endogenous to the migration process. They include the migrant industry, smugglers and traffickers. Actor agency arises out of the assertive nature of these networks, industries and systems. Below, I explore the treatment of actor agency in the following three perpetuation theories of migration: One. Migration systems theory (Mabogunje, 1970) and cumulative causation (Myrdal 1957; Massey 1990). Two. Migration network theory (Faist 1997). Three. Transnational and diaspora theories (Basch et al. 1994).

#### 1. Migration systems theory and cumulative causation

The migration systems theory explains that international migration is an intrinsic part of the larger system of exchanges between nations. These exchanges include the flows of goods, capital, ideas, money and ultimately, human beings through migration (Castles et al., 2014, p. 43). According to the migration systems perspective, international migration processes are instigated by historically existing acts of exchanges like those of capital and goods in trade through certain pre-existing links between nations. According to the migration systems theory, migration systems develop when migrants remit positive feedback about the host country to families in the country of origin (Mabogunje, 1970, p. 11-13). The migration system develops a feedback mechanism which facilitates future migration (Mabogunje, 1970, p. 12). According to Mabogunje (1970), as a migration system interacts with its physical context, they experience three kinds of growth and transformation.

The structural growth of a migration system highlight actor agency at work in the migration process (Mabogunje, 1970, p. 15). The other two kinds of growth are simple growth and population growth. Activities that take place in the migration system encourage the development of a 'social structure'. This social structure asserts a form of agency when it perpetuates further migration despite macro structural limitations. Mabogunje explains that structural growth includes changes in the system of interrelation between all the components of the system. Therefore, the significant structural growth is growth in complexity, not growth in size (Mabogunje, 1970, p. 15). On actor agency, Mabogunje notes that structural growth affects context/form. On the other hand, the context/form limits growth. Therefore, it is argued that the structure develops the capacity to dominate agency over a period of time (Mabogunje, 1970, p. 16-17). In fact, it can be posited that agency has the tendency to create structures that limit its' freedom. Is this a plausible postulation? This question is explored in the study as the limits and boundaries of actor agency in the migration process of African international student migrants in Finland is examined.

Myrdal's 1957 cumulative causation theory is applied by Massey to explain the internal feedback mechanisms that develop as a result of emerging migration systems. According to cumulative causation theory, positive evaluation of migration is transmitted by pioneer migrants to their networks eventually resulting in the emergence of a culture of migration in pioneer migrants' origin countries (Massey, 1990, p. 4-5, cited in Hug, 2008, p. 592). This culture of migration alters the social context within which further migration takes place. It influences the emergence of new communal norms and practices with regards to migration. As a result, migration becomes the norm and failing to migrate becomes the anomaly which is sometimes associated with failure in life (de Haas, 2010c; Massey et al., 1993, p. 451-2). This context transformation makes migration cheaper, safer and thus the new norm.

Bakewell, 2010 argues that most migration theories that attempt to address the structure agency impasse depend heavily on Giddens (1984) assumptions of actor agency in the structuration theory. The key assumption of Giddens (1984) is that structure has a duality that enables the structure to act as a medium for action and an outcome of the actions and interactions of agents. Structure not only shapes social practices, but is reproduced and is sometimes even transformed by the same practices. (Giddens, 1984, p. 25 cited in Bakewell, 2010, p. 1695). The duality of structure limits

the power component of the structure, thus shifting some power to agents who now use this to manoeuvre the structure (Bakewell, 2010, p. 1695). This argument raises two questions. Does Giddens' theory of structuration practically present actor agency as primary? Does the emergence of the migration system depend on the agency freedom of the actors or is it the requirements of the structure that allow for such systems to exist? This second question has to do with the nature and form of emerging social structures as avenues for exercising agency.

## 2. Migration network theory

Networks theory of migration describes migration as a path-dependent process. According to network theory of international migration, the continued flow of a migration results from the low cost and low risk of migrating to specific locations. This is the result of the development of networks of social interrelations between old migrants, current migrants and non-migrants (Massey et al., 1998; Castles et al., 2014, p. 39-40; Massey et al, 1993, p. 448-9; Heering and Wissen, 2004, p. 324). Migrants create and maintain social ties with friends and family in the country of origin, which cumulate into networks of social relations. These develop later into location specific social capital for migrants. Network members can rely on this unique resource to facilitate other migrations from the country of origin to a host country. The concept of social networks as location specific capital is the central assumption in this approach (Haug, 2008, p.586). Dissemination of information, patronage and assistance cumulatively constitute the social capital that prospective migrants can borrow from to facilitate their own migration (Haug, 2008. P. 588). The expansion of networks supports more migration by reducing the cost of migration. As the network expands, migration rates go up, and as a result, large numbers of migrants accumulate in the same location at the host country.

Other key social structures that develop are national and international migration industries (Castles et al., 2014, p. 41). The emergence of these migrant specific structures imply the existence of an active actor agency in the perpetuation of migration. It is through the collective actions of the migrant network that human agency is exercised in order to manoeuvre the constraining macro structures of the host society. Human agency manifests similarly in the migrant networks context and the migration systems agency. These activities facilitate the immigration of more members through developed networks. The emergence of migrant specific social processes infers the



potential of collective agency to emerge and exert power, norms and the freedom of individual agents in host societies. How does the network theory's conceptualization of agency manifests in real life situations will be observed in the case of international student migrants in Finland?

### 3. Transnational and diaspora theories

Transnational and diaspora theories of migration (Basch et al., 1995) attribute the perpetuation of international migration to the transformative effects of globalization on modern societies. According to this approach, transnational communities and transnationalism have emerged as a result of the technological advancements of modern global societies, particularly communication and transportation (Castles et al., 2014, p. 41). Transnationalism and ethnic subjectivities are fundamental to identity formation for migrants (Rastas, 2013, p. 42-3). The theory of transnationalism addresses human agency by focusing on the value aspect of agentic human beings. The dimensions of an individual's agency are determined by one's values (Alkire, 2005, p. 227-8).

Transnational communities emerge, consisting of migrants who operate across international borders over a long period of time. Migrants maintain an involvement in the country of origin, the host country and possibly other target countries. Diaspora communities unite people in a variety of basis including kinship, physical proximity or professionalism (Castles et al., 2014, p. 41). This means that international student migrants are connected to a larger group of international migrants. As a result, migrants can forge a variety of social economic and political relationships. Theories of transnationalism present actor agency as an aspect that is inherent in the social structures that result from diaspora community interactions. The agency of the group takes a structural form and therefore it has the capacity to manoeuvre the constraints of the national and international structures controlling migrant activities. The form of human agency presented in this approach is collective agency rather than individual actor agency. In the analysis and results chapter that follows, the lived experiences of African international student migrants in Finland are examined for the presence of trans-nationalistic tendencies and the forms of agency that emerge therein.

## **2.2 Human and migrant agency**

It has become evident by now that the structure-agency divide is one of the long-standing debates in not only social sciences in general but also in migration studies. In this sub-chapter, the sociological approaches to agency are discussed in detail. The aim is to outline the nature, dimensions and the manner in which agency is developed by individuals in contexts determined by complex and dynamic circumstances such as migration related scenarios.

There are many approaches to human agency in the social sciences. In this study, an approach to actor agency that emphasizes the relational dimension of agency is followed. Relational approaches to actor agency uphold the key assumption that individual agency and societal structures exist in an intimate and mutually influential relationship. Therefore, it is commonly perceived that structure and agency construct one another in a relational context (Varpio et al., 2017, p. 356). In general terms, human agency refers to a social actors' capacity to reflect on their position, devise strategies and take actions to achieve their desires (Sewell, 1992, cited in Bakewell 2010, p. 1694). However, a more encompassing and practical definition of agency expands its scope beyond decision making power. Instead, agency is located in a relational process since it is evident that actors exert a degree of control over the social relations in which they are engaged. Most of these approaches postulate that actors have an additional capacity to influence the structural component of their relations through a feedback system that uses consequences to change the context of action (Sewell, 1992, p. 20, cited in Bakewell, 2010, p. 1694). Giddens (1984), Bandura (2000), Sen (1985), and the cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) are some of the sociological approaches to human agency that explore the relationship between agency and structure in complex relational contexts similar to the contexts in which migrants operate. These approaches identify the key features of human agency that apply similarly to different contexts of action. The two concepts of direct control and effective power are addressed in these theories, although using different terminology as explicated below.

According to Sen (1985), a comprehensive conceptualization of human agency is one that includes dimensions of well-being, goal orientation, freedom and the good life. According to Sen, agency is the capacity to act on behalf of what one has reason to value (Sen, 1985, p. 205). Therefore, our conception of the good and our values are a central feature of agency according to this approach (Sen, 1985, p.206). This approach puts goals as the motivation for agent's action. Further, Sen

identifies direct control and effective power as the two key principle aspects of human agency. Sen's direct control refers to the individual's act of choosing in the procedure of decision making (Sen 1985, p. 209). Effective power delimits the degree of a person's freedom to achieve the chosen desires and preferred outcomes. This aspect of agency freedom concerns itself with the question of the degree to which either agency or structure prevails in given circumstances. (Sen, 1985, p. 209). Migrants make many fundamental decisions concerning their movement in a context that is characterized by legal, social and economic constraints that are unique. The degree of agency freedom can either be limited or facilitated by the host country's context.

Anthony Giddens argues in the theory of structuration that human agency is possible due to a duality inherent in the social structure. The social structure acts as both the medium through which action is controlled, while it is also the outcome of these actions. Therefore, the structure is not entirely all powerful and restrictive (Bakewell, 2010, p. 1695). As a result, Giddens explains that human agency is exercised whenever individuals decide to act differently, thus changing the social structure (Varpio et al., 2017, p. 356). Structuration's principle premise is that the structure is a mere virtual order without an actual existence. The structure comes into existence only when instantiated by acts like remembering or using memory to guide action. In the context of migration, Giddens 'concept of structural duality is of It is hard to disqualify the existence of the structure as a real phenomenon that imposes certain restraints on actors (Bakewell, 2010, p. 1696). In the field of migration, structure manifests in the regulatory procedures that control people's movements. In structuration theory, Giddens (1984) conceptualizes direct control as the capacity to act (Giddens, 1984). While his equivalent of Sen's effective power is power. In his sociological approach to agency, Giddens explains that this power is responsible for any new event that actors engage in or any innovative intervention in an existing event (Varpio, et al., 2017, p. 360). Due to the constraining nature of the migration context, migrant actions that are aimed at circumventing the host society's social structure can be viewed in Giddens' terms as an act of agency.

In social cognitive theory, Albert Bandura identify forethought and self-reactiveness as key dimensions of human agency. Forethought refers to a configuration of individually visualised goals and anticipated outcomes and this is used to guide human action (Badura, 2000). On the other hand, Sen's effective power is theorized in social cognitive theory as self-reactiveness. Self-

reactiveness is a cognitive state in which an agent acts on their intentionality and forethought in order to ensure that set goals and desires are met (Varpio et al., 2017, p. 361). The CHAT perspective theorizes direct control in terms of the individual goals that agents hold as the objects of their actions (Varpio et al., 2017, p. 359-362).

In all these approaches, direct control is limited to choice and does not consider success or failure in term of achieving the desired choices. Many approaches to agency focus mainly on this dimension of direct control. By over-emphasizing decision acts as agentic, these approaches mislead the conceptualization of agency freedom. Sen explains that the exercise of control alone is inferior and focus must include the actors' ability to achieve their desired goals (Sen, 1985, p. 210). Therefore, migrant agency must be sought in the quality of life that migrants lead in the host country. Focus must move away from the initial decision making stage at the beginning of the migration process. Additionally, a focus on migrants' effective power should reveal actors' actual prospects for realizing their agency goals (Narayan and Petesch, 2007, p. 15, cited in Sen, 1985). Bandura explains that agency is the result of mutual interactions between the autonomous individual and the environment in which one operates.

This is expanded in CHAT which uses the concept of an activity system to elaborate the workings of human agency in complex contexts. An activity system produces agency as a result of the complex interactions between an individual, their goals, context and their specialties. Agents act in an activity system consisting of the individual, goals, community environment, and division of labour, rules and instruments available for use (Varpio et al., 2017, p. 361). The host country, migrant, immigration rules and regulations and migration goals constitute an activity system in which the migrant operates. Complex interactions in the activity system determine the form of agency developed by migrants during their migration pursuit. These approaches emphasize that agency does not reside solely within an individual, rather, it is negotiated with others and the social material reality/environment (Varpio et al., 2017, p. 361). Although they expand the discussion of agency and structure, these approaches fail to clearly determine the divide between agency and structure. The French social scientist Pierre Bourdieu introduces the concept of habitus into the agency structure debate and he clarifies the interlink between the two concepts. Below is a discussion of Bourdieu's structure inspired and structure influencing agency.

Bourdieu (1977), examines how practices that encompass both agency and structure are generated. He introduces the concept of habitus in the structure agency discourse. According to him, theories that treat practice as mechanical reactions that are directly determined by their antecedent condition must be rejected. He develops a theory of the mode of generation of practices in which the relationship of agency and structure is mediated by habitus. According to Bourdieu, habitus is a system of durable transposable dispositions which become the principles of generation and structuring of practice. The habitus encompasses a person's historical socio-cultural context. Therefore, the habitus is developed by the social structure, and in turn, it modifies the structure, determining the path that future action must follow. Habitus is history turned into nature. Bourdieu links agency and structure in a complex iterative process using habitus. In Bourdieu's approach, structure and agency are interlinked by a system of predispositions called habitus which embeds people's daily practice in a historical and cultural context. Bourdieu's theorization of structure and agency using habitus is highly abstract. However, Bourdieu also conflates agency and structure into a near single unit. These are formidable advances in the exploration of the two dimensions of structure and agency in the social science arena. His approach offers insights with the capacity to guide the exploration of a variety of social phenomena. In studies of migration, however, the impasse has not been extensively addressed, and there is sufficient need to further explore the relationship between agency and social structure for a better understanding of migrants and the processes that define their migration experiences.

### **2.3 Social constructionism and the construction of migrant reality**

Migrants can be sole individuals or communities of individuals who converge in a host society from various countries of origins. The decision by an individual migrant to move across borders often affects family members, community and the countries involved. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of any dimension of migration ought to look into the inter linkages and the interrelations between those who are involved. Additionally, this study uses thick descriptive data that holistically covers migrants' life in the host country. In the social sciences, the social constructionist approach specializes in examining the development of jointly constructed world views and understandings of reality. Therefore, this study employs the social constructionist approach in examining the lived experiences of African migrants who are settling in Finland.

The social constructionist approach to knowledge is underpinned by the following four key tenets. 1. Social constructionism assumes a critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge about the world and the people in it. 2. Knowledge is historically and culturally specific. 3. Knowledge is sustained by social processes. 4. Knowledge and social processes go together. According to the first tenet, social constructionism is an approach to knowledge that challenges the traditional ways that are adopted as the ultimate truth about society. This principle pushes social research to look into the ordinary phenomena and issues that would easily be taken for granted (Burr, 2003, p. 3). For instance, in a study of migration, it is easy to uphold the assumption that a decision by a migrant from the developing Global South to stay in the highly developed Global North is economically motivated.

However, a social constructionist would question this decision, looking beyond the popular economic rationality assumption. This ensures that meanings are sought. This first principle sets social constructionism apart from the traditional structural perspectives by challenging the authority of the taken for granted notions like that of underlying structures. The second tenet explains that knowledge of society is contextual and time and place specific. This further implies that to social constructionists' meanings change as time and geographical location changes. To this extent, social constructionism gravitates towards a pluralist perspective to knowledge. Additionally, social constructionism attributes specific ways of knowing as artefacts of specific locations (Burr, 2003, p.4). According to this tenet, structure gains salience as a critical aspect of knowledge formation. Ways of knowing are tied to a geographical location and temporal socio-structural aspect.

The third tenet explains that knowledge is sustained by social processes. This principle places the construction of knowledge in the interactive processes that human beings engage in (Burr, 2003, p. 5). Therefore, social constructionists do not assume that there is a given reality inherent in the social structure, rather, reality is constructed every time that individual actors engage in various social practices. Thus, it follows that an accepted way of perceiving the world is negotiated among individuals who are interacting across social contexts that are determined by a system of historical and cultural predispositions. These accepted realities are also subject to changes in the forms of interaction that takes place between individuals or changes in the configuration of culture and

historical predisposition. This principle of social constructionism highlights the importance of relationships and interactions between individual actors. It shifts focus and power from the actions of individual actors to the power that lies in the interactions and outcomes of networks in the study of social phenomena (Burr, 2003, p. 5).

The fourth tenet of social constructionism highlights the link between knowledge and social action in a correlational relationship. Accepted reality, thus knowledge, determines the kind of action that people chose to undertake. Therefore, Knowledge informs practice, and recurrent practice becomes habit. This link incorporates the consideration of power in the study of social construction because there is an element of power in the popularization of specific knowledge (Burr, 2003, p.5). Therefore, it is critical to question the trajectory of mainstream knowledge and action in society. Under this tenet, the social constructionist perspective highlights the process through which society is constructed

Social constructionism perceived in this manner refers to an approach to the study of social phenomena with a central focus on the interactional practices that take place between individual actors in highly specific contextual scenarios. It follows that social constructionism derives knowledge from the acts of individual actors, or the reactions of individual actors to the acts of other actors within the social system or the product of interaction between actors and their social structure. Individuals and society are both involved in knowledge creation. Therefore, this perspective incorporates both human agency and social structure in the construction of reality. Therefore, Social constructionism is a theoretical perspective that addresses the social processes and interactions that determine the actions taken up in society. In turn, these actions shape the context in which they develop. Therefore, social constructionism provides an appropriate approach to the study of a social phenomenon that involves human agency and group interrelations in a complex context.

## **Summary**

For the purposes of developing an analytical framework for analysing the empirical data collected for this thesis, this theoretical review has examined a collection of theoretical approaches in the

social sciences. I began by introducing the structure agency divide in the social sciences. This was followed by a discussion of the continuation of this divide in the theories of international migration. I carried out this discussion by focusing on the theories of migration that address structure and agency directly in their subject scope. After this, I discussed actor agency through an examination of key sociological approaches to human agency. In this discussion, it emerged apparently that the structure agency divide persists despite attempts to overcome it. Then I discussed Bourdieu's concept of habitus as he used it to effectively address the structure agency matter in sociology. I concluded this theoretical review with an exploration of the social constructionism approach. This discussion identified the relevance of this approach in the study of migrant lives in a host society.

In general, the theoretical review highlights the complexity, process and the dynamic nature of human agency and social structure. Therefore, it is derived that structure and agency and their specific dimensions are critical in the understanding of migrant behaviour. The behavioural tendencies of individuals acting in a relational, temporal and spatially shifting context like migration is better understood through the lenses of social constructionism. Theories of international migration do not decisively address migrant agency or structure. In fact, migration perpetuation theories address the issue of human agency at a very superficial level. This is because the perpetuation theories of migration focus on the social structures that emerge from migrant interactions, thereby exerting agency on behalf of the individuals. Thus, the focus is not so much on agency, but on social structures with the capacity to circumvent structural constraints.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Sampling strategy**

The research material for this study is a body of qualitative data that was collected over a period of three months in the cities of Helsinki and Jyväskylä in Finland. Total data amounts to eight hundred minutes of recorded conversation, transcribed into 250 pages of conversation transcripts. This material was obtained from twenty participants, who were engaged in in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews of lengths varying between 30 minutes and 60 minutes per tape. Selected participants are from five different countries in Africa. Additionally, all research material



was collected using the English language and all interviews were recorded using a laptop audio recording device. The interview material covers a scope of five categories of questions aiming at capturing the lived experiences of immigrants in Finland. The questions guided participants as they discussed their decisions regarding migration to Finland and the choice to stay in Finland and the holistic life experience living in Finland.

Sampling in qualitative research aims at improving efficiency, practicality and ethical practice in the study of whole populations (Marshall, 1996, p. 522). A fundamental aspect of the sampling process is the sample category and size. These two aspects determine the utility limits of the findings of a study. Marshall (1996) and Higginbottom (2004) explain that the study sample of a qualitative study ought to be determined by the specific methodology employed in the study and the topic under investigation.

The research question guiding this study called for the qualitative research methodology (Marshall, 1996). After determining the type of study, the specific methods, that is, the techniques and strategies were identified, followed by data collection, which applied the theoretical sampling strategy (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Therefore, the sample of the study grew as the study unfolded. Each interview was based on the issues that emerged from the previous interview (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Theoretical sampling is a form of directed sampling aimed at building the dimensions of the emerging theory or descriptive framework of a phenomenon (Marshall, 1996, p.523; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Ragin and Amoroso, 2011, p. 131).

The study began with a purposeful/judgmental sample identified within a specific case, African international student migrant who has decided to stay in Finland. The four key criteria used in the selection of interviewees were: 1. Immigrant has made the choice to stay in Finland. 2. The immigrant is from Africa. 3. Purpose of immigration is the pursuit of higher education. 4. The interviewee indicated or exercised intention to stay in Finland for a purpose other than the original reason for immigration. These criteria were used to design a framework that informed the purposeful selection of the first participants for the study (Marshall, 1996; Ragin and Amoroso, 2011, p. 63).

The appropriate sample size was not fully specified at the beginning of the study, instead the sample size was left to be determined as the study progressed (Ragin and Amoroso, 2011, p. 131; Marshall, 1996, p. 523; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Higginbottom, 2004, p. 9). Determination of the appropriate sample size followed the strategy of conceptual saturation (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Marshall, 1996, p. 523 and Higginbottom, (2004, p. 10). In this study, data saturation was realised by the 16th interview. At 20 interviews, the interpretative framework, a collection of key conceptual categories and their dimensions was comprehensive and could sufficiently answer the research question of the study. The complete sample size for this study was 20 individuals from five countries in Africa. The five African countries were chosen based on general migration patterns and trends to Finland from Africa for the purposes of education. Finnish immigration statistics, indicate that Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana are the leading student senders to Finland.

The essence of qualitative research is its flexibility, iteration and a cyclic comparative practice aimed at the development of holistic meanings and interpretations (Marshall, 1996). Therefore, an initial small group of 4 participants', was selected purposefully to obtain the most productive body of data. At this stage, purposive and convenience sampling approaches were combined. The first interviewee was approached, consent was obtained and the first in depth interview was carried out. An open coding exercise of the first interview was used to refine the sampling framework (Corbin and Strauss, 2008)

The criteria of the sampling framework were accordingly revised to include the following additional variables: 5. Country of origin was expanded from one country to five countries in Africa. 6. The gender of participants was to be considered 7. Diversity in local labour market participation. After this, the next three participants were approached and consent was obtained. After a total of four interviews were completed, open coding of data was done and the emerging body of knowledge was used to develop an interpretative/analytic framework (Marshall, 1996, p. 524; Ragin and Amoroso, 2011, p. 121). At this time, I sought a meeting with the thesis supervisor to ascertain the relevance of emerging data and interpretative framework. Consequently, the rest of the sample was picked on the basis of theoretical sampling.

The sample consists of 17 men and three women (See APPENDIX 1), for detailed information regarding the sample. The 20 participants are described according to the period of stay, family

status, labour market participation, residential status and country of origin. Through an attempt to reach immigrant women, I realized that women immigrants of African descent are significantly fewer in number compared to males and this was corroborated by statistical figures. Statistics Finland 2018 records indicate that the number of male immigrants in Finland (62.96%) is nearly double to that of females (37.04%), official Statistics of Finland (OSF): Six out of my twenty participants are Finnish citizens. The total number of persons with foreign background living in Finland in 2016 was 364,787. Out of this number, 113,804 have been awarded the Finnish citizenship, this translates to a percentage of 31, 19%, (Statistics Finland, n.d.). Thus, in a population of 20 individuals of foreign background living in Finland, six translates to 30%, falling right within the representative threshold in comparison to the general population of immigrants and their residential status (Statistics Finland, 2018).

## **3.2 Data collection**

### **Data collection procedure**

This study followed a constructionist epistemological perspective, which informs the theoretical perspective of the entire study. The topic of study deals with individual agents and their lived experiences. Thus, knowledge generation targeted intimate and personal social processes within which livelihood and life experiences are negotiated by the potential study participants.

The first research planning activity was the determination of the study methodology and it was determined that the study would follow a qualitative paradigm. The qualitative interview technique was the main of data collection technique. This was supported by contextual observation notes taken by the interviewer during interviews. Observation notes were recorded as field notes during interviews. Corbin and Strauss (2008) advice that note taking, especially of the contextual factors prove useful after the interview when the interviewer is attempting to extract meaning from the data. They argue that while some bits of data may seem devoid of meaning left on their own, placing them within a context illuminates hidden meaning, furthermore, this captures the social constructionist essence of interviews. During this study, the research question was modified after the first four interviews, changes were made according to emerging themes and data trends. At the

same time, the sample changed according to the developing interpretative framework during the first stage of data analysis, open coding.

In order to sustain epistemological integrity, this study maintained consistency between the overall study strategy, research design, methods and research questions (Rossman, 2006). Consequently, the study methodology was based on the nature of knowing, that is, the epistemological and ontological affiliations of the researcher (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Approaches to data collection in qualitative research are flexible, cyclical and iterative. This means that qualitative research procedures move in a cyclic manner to ensure that emerging themes inform the research trajectory as the study develops (Higginbottom, 2004, p. 13). Iteration ensures that qualitative studies sustain the natural essence of qualitative research (Higginbottom, 2004, p. 13). This further ensures that qualitative researchers collect rich data with the potential to practically represent interviewee sentiments (Marshall, 1996, p. 523).

The semi structured interview approach was used for data collection in order to ensure that interviews flow effortlessly and participants comfortably share in-depth accounts of their life experiences (King, N. 2004a cited in King and Horrocks, 2010, p. 238). According to the chosen methodology, an interview guide was developed according to the variable framework used during sampling (APPENDIX 4). The consent requests were sent to the first group of four participants. Upon confirmation of willingness to participate in the study, interview meetings were arranged and then interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted over a period of three months with a maximum of three interviews done in a single week. In every interview, the conversation was recorded all through the interview and notes were taken as appropriate.

### **Data collection method**

Qualitative research methods trace their intellectual origin in the inductive holistic approaches to knowledge (Ragin and Amoroso, 2011, p. 134; Marshall, 1996 p. 524; Burr, 2003, Chapter 1, p1-29). Therefore, this approach to scientific inquiry is most appropriate in studies that seek meaning, understanding and illumination of complex phenomena (Marshall, 1996, p. 524). Consequently, qualitative research does not aim towards discovering any particular objective truth. Some qualitative studies subscribe to the social constructionist approach which is critical

of the taken for granted knowledge and assumptions about the world. Therefore, in most qualitative research, social action and processes are elevated as the main places and sites where knowledge is created (Burr, 2003, p. 5).

Methods of a study refer to the techniques and procedures implemented in order to obtain the desired goals of the study (King & Horrocks, 2010). The data collection technique employed in this study was the qualitative interview. Holsten and Gubrium posit that qualitative interviews are constructionist, such that participant is viewed as a meaning maker rather than a passive conduit for retrieving information from an existing vessel of answers (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p. 144). The purpose of the qualitative interview is thus to derive interpretations and not facts. This sustains the goal to maintain consistent epistemological integrity by ensuring that data collection procedures retain the philosophical perspective of the methodology and the methods. The choice of a specific technique is determined by the specific purpose for which data is being collected. The specific qualitative interviewing approach used was the semi structured in-depth qualitative interview.

Data was collected using the in-depth semi structured interview with individuals. When an interview is semi structured, the interview is organized around a set of open ended questions that are meant to encourage sharing of information on the interviewee's terms. Here, the researcher is an integral part of the research process. The interview was organized in five categories of preliminary open-ended statements and questions. The categories were based on the variables that were determined at the sampling stage. The first category of questions concerned biographical issues. The in-depth interview is meant to be a personal and intimate encounter in which open, direct verbal questions are to be used to elicit detailed narratives and stories. As such, rapport is critical in a semi structured interview (Bloom and Crabtree, 2006, . .316). In this study, participants' holistic experience in the host country was being elicited. To obtain this, two strategies were used. First, the interview guide was developed more as a social conversational guide rather than an interview. This was meant to improve the natural flow of the conversation in order to improve the extent of information sharing. Second, roles between the interviewer and the interviewees were tailored in order to reduce any barriers that may be created by subtle power relational effects.

The interviewer periodically assessed the effects of her subjectivities, (individual perceptions concerning migrant life in Finland, ways of interpreting information shared by participants) on the interview process and the extent to which the interview data was affected by these. Consequently, where possible, strategies were sought to reduce any unnecessary influences on the interview processes (Bloom and Crabtree, 2006, p. 319). Furthermore, it is argued that when the hierarchy between the interviewee and the interviewer is reduced, trust is easily built and richer information is shared. One way of reducing the gap between the interviewee and the interviewer is through the exercise of reciprocity. The distance between the participants and the researcher in this study was reduced significantly by a shared identity, we were all African migrants in Finland. And this is another way that the gap between researcher and the researched is reduced in qualitative research (Bloom and Crabtree, 2006, p. 317). The shared identity of immigration also meant that both parties were exposed to the same social, cultural and economic circumstances in the host society.

Observational notes were recorded during interviews. Notes were used to record contextual facts which were later used during data analysis (Bloom and Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). Corbin and Strauss (2008) recommend taking notes while doing interviews. They explain that field notes store a record of the contextual dynamics impossible to capture using the recorder. They explain that these notes become useful as they enhance researcher's memory during the later stage of analysis. Thus, ensuring that a researcher extracts maximum meaning from the data.

### **Operationalization of concepts**

The following table presents the key theoretical concepts that guided the exploration of the data that was obtained from the study participants.

**Table 2**

Key- concept definitions

CONCEPT	MEANING
<b>Migration</b>	The crossing of a boundary of a political or administrative unit for a certain minimum period of time. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Migrant</b>	Any person who lives temporarily or permanently in a country where he or she was not born and has acquired some significant social ties to the country. (Refugees are not included in this definition). <sup>2</sup>
<b>Agency</b>	Process freedoms that delimit what a person is able to do with themselves on behalf of goals they value and are motivated to advance. <sup>3</sup>
<b>Agency Freedom</b>	What a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals and values he or she values or perceives as important.
<b>Rationality</b>	A claim that human action is consistent with the hypothesis of goal seeking. Actions are perceived as if having reason and behaviour is seen as if it is goal oriented.
<b>Wellbeing freedom</b>	A person's capability to have various functioning vectors and to enjoy the corresponding well-being achievements
<b>Social network</b>	A combination of interconnected social interactions among groups of actors and a chain of interconnected personal relationships.

### 3.3 Positionality and reflexivity

When choosing a topic for a thesis, value judgement is exercised when a specific topic is chosen over the others. One can be guided by interest, moral, ethical or even religious inclination, all of which are subjective. Complete boxing away of subjectivity becomes difficult when engaging in a study that affects or hold significance for a researcher in one way or another. In qualitative

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<sup>1</sup> Definition of migration according to UNESCO.

<sup>2</sup> Definition according UNESCO website. The definition acknowledges its own weakness in that it delineates a very narrow definition of migrant. For this thesis, however, this definition suffices.

<sup>3</sup> Definition according to the discussion of agency in (Sen, 2002, Chapters 19-21). Perhaps even refer to that sub-chapter in your thesis where you discussed Sen's concepts. It is always to good practice to have cross-references in the text in order to remind the reader.

research today, questions of objectivity, credibility, validity and reliability have proliferated to deeper issues such as the nature of knowledge. As long as epistemological and ontological approaches used by researchers remain different, the meaning of objectivity alone becomes contested and relative.

The researcher's background, experience, interests, and identity can impact the research activity (King and Horrocks 2010, p. 135). Corbin and Strauss (2008) speak of sensitivity, the capacity of the researcher to be immersed in the study for maximum extraction of meaning from the data. One of the ways one acquires such sensitivity is through background and past experiences. King and Horrocks (2010) explain that a researcher's background provides one with the capacity to respect and receive the messages contained in the data (King and Horrocks, 2010, p. 135). They explain that the subjective traits such as personal perspectives, training, biases and knowledge can impact the research being conducted. However, according to them, the worry is not whether these affect the research or not, but rather, how the researcher can make good use of these personal subjectivities in the study.

King and Horrocks (2010) explore two kinds of reflexivity in qualitative research. They posit that researchers have to exercise both epistemological and personal reflexivity. Personal reflexivity concerns the subjective influences emanating from personal traits. The act of evaluating and being aware of one's positionality and the impact of that in a study was practiced during this study. In particular, being aware of the influence of the 'me' part in the study was considered. I am an African international student migrant in Finland, my background and current experiences place me in an exactly similar position as the participants in this study. I identify the following two ways in which my positionality in this study weighs in subjectively. My interest in the plight of former and current African student immigrants in Finland stems from manifold shared characteristics. The second concern was the familiarity between participants and the researcher. Interview participants would most likely identify with me as fellow immigrant. Thus I considered possible ways to bridge the potential biases that could emanate from my familiarity with the respondents. Information collection during interviews was conducted in English, in order to introduce a dimension of distance and professionalism to counter the aspect of familiarity.



In terms of epistemological reflexivity, I am aware and I acknowledge the limitation that my choice of constructionist theoretical perspective has on the way in which the outcomes of this study will be perceived. Social constructionism as a theoretical perspective has been criticized extensively for its “nothing exists outside of text” standpoint. Other critiques stem from the strict anti-essentialism stance in social constructionism, which has rendered the theory nearly void of an acceptable representation of the self (Burr, 2003, p. 119). However, following the data that emerged from the research, the constructionist perspective presented the best theoretical framework for data analysis and the presentation of findings.

### **3.4 Ethical issues**

Qualitative research probes human existence in detail. It paves access to subjective experiences, intimate aspects of people’s life worlds through probing, asking questions and initiating discussion. These interactions normally have an effect on the interviewee while at the same time they the interviewer’s understanding of the human condition (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005, p. 157). It has been argued that qualitative research involving human beings as research subjects, begins from a position of ethical tension. This tension is located in the moral philosophies that abound in society. For instance, Kant’s maxim that people should never be used as a means to someone else’s ends implies that human autonomy ought not to be violated at any time. A violation of this maxim occurs to a limited extent every time a research endeavour is initiated from the interviewer’s end and not the interviewee’s, and this is the most common scenario (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). In this study, the research question sought the private accounts of the participants, but these accounts would be placed later on in the public arena. This is a common source of ethical dilemma in qualitative research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005, p. 158).

In order to respect the autonomy of the participants and to share the research endeavour maximally with the participants, consent was obtained in advance and confirmation of willingness to participate was repeated once before the interview (Ragin and Amoroso, 2011, p. 89; Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 319). Necessary and relevant background information on the thesis topic was also given to participants before the start of the interview. This was meant to ensure that informed

consent rather than technical consent was obtained for this study. In this way, the outcomes of the study are owned and shared by both the researcher and the researched.

Research ethics in practice dictate that the research participants must be treated in a manner that limits any kind of harm that might befall them on the basis of participating in the research. In this study, confidentiality and the anonymity of research participants in relation to the information shared was maintained (Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 319; Ragin and Amoroso, 2011, p. 89-94). Where information that could jeopardize participant's existence in the host society was shared, steps were taken to remove the individual participant from such the written description. Additionally, when handling such information, participants were kept anonymous from those whose interests conflict with those of the participant. Procedures were followed to ensure that any personal identifying information is removed or altered in the document written for public consumption. Additionally, research participants were assured that audio recordings were destroyed as soon as their use was completed.

Potential power relations between the researcher and the researched were a source of ethical dilemma and reflection in this study were This dilemma was riddled further with a conflict in the sense that the interviewer, in being a migrant, shared a lot in common with the interviewee. This had the potential of complicating the researcher-researched relationship even further. Brinkmann and Kvale (2005) argue that the power relations in an interview setting are asymmetric and that this influences the data that emerges from interviews. Steps were taken in order to reduce the distance between the researcher and the researched. Rapport was built in such a manner to enable interviewees to participate more freely in the interviews thereby reducing the monopolistic tendency in interviews that would violate the autonomy and freedom of the interviewee (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005, p. 163).

Furthermore, context has been addressed considerably in this study by emphasizing the context within which the study took place. Presenting interview data in contexts thickens the description; within this description, it becomes easier to identify the specific issues that would present ethical dilemmas (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005, p. 165). For instance, information that would jeopardize the immigrant within the Finnish immigration system were addressed in a manner that ensured no negative repercussions would be meted upon participants. This was done through ensuring

anonymity and where necessary, the wellbeing of participants took precedence over anything else according to the beneficence maxim.

### **3.5 Data analysis procedure**

Epistemological integrity in qualitative research requires that researchers ensure the consistency in the strategies, techniques, and methods used in a study while making sure that the choices of these are appropriate for the research question (Rossman, 2006). Expressed differently, Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 2-3) emphasize that it is the epistemological and ontological way of knowing that should determine the methods used in a study. This ensures in turn, that epistemological consistency is maintained through the entire study. In this thesis, the nature and demands of the research question determined that qualitative research methods were most appropriate for data collection. Data obtained from qualitative interviews identified social constructionism as the suitable epistemological orientation. The ontological orientation was influenced by the methods, the data and researcher's ontological affiliation. The study took a relativist ontological standpoint.

The in-depth qualitative individual interview was the main tool for data collection, therefore, apart from field notes, all data was collected in audio format. Data was transcribed into text. The text document then became the object of analysis. Data was analysed using a data driven content analysis method which applied a four step procedure extracted from the 5-step process to qualitative data analysis explicated in Corbin and Strauss (2008, Chapter 8-12).

Step 1: Concept identification /open coding: - Coding is the process of deriving and developing concepts from the data (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 160). Therefore, data coding is the process through which groups of data are labelled with suitable codes. Data analysis began with concept identification. For instance, the concept of 'locating the self before migration' emerged out of a pattern in which participants elaborately and positively spoke about their life before migration. At this stage, the interview transcripts were read one by one in detail and all emerging concepts or representative words were recorded. This is referred to as open coding. (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p.IX, 160).

Accompanying notes were written for each emerging concept. Notes extended researcher's understanding on a reflective basis later on. Corbin and Strauss underscore the importance of memos in the analytic process. They define memos as specialized types of written records that contain the products of our analyses (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 117). During the analysis process, memos were used to break through moments of blockage, when analysis stalled and the author was unable to continue with analysis in a consistent and meaningful manner. Memos also ensured that the complex train of thought necessary to produce a coherent interpretation of the accounts of 20 variant individuals was sustained (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 119). While memo topics were instigated by terms and concepts from the data, expansion of thought incorporated information that was obtained from other literature relevant to the concept under examination. This manner of elaboration facilitated linking between memos, thereby providing a trail for category integration, the last step of the analysis (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 118). This procedure was repeated on a step by step basis for each interview until conceptual saturation was realized. The concept identification stage yielded 47 codes. See Figure 1, APPENDIX 3, in the appendices for a detailed presentation of the process of open coding.

Step 2: Concept elaboration /Axial Coding. In this second stage of data analysis, the 47 codes identified in step 1 were elaborated to facilitate the development of categories. Categories are more abstract than concepts and more than one concept can be categorized under a category. For example, the concepts of better education, better wages, clean environment and security all fall under the category of better future. Which is elaborated under the migration development discourse. For each concept, written notes were probed to further the development of the concept into representative categories. Category development used the following tools: Questions, comparison, language investigation, word meaning and reference to personal experience. These were used to probe each concept's dimensions. Using these probing tools on the concepts/codes facilitated the identification of the dimension and properties of each concept. This expanded the scope of discussion by facilitating comparison between concepts that compare in terms of dimensions and properties. These would be grouped under the same conceptual category. Using Strauss's concept of axial coding, codes obtained from step 1 were organized into groups on the basis of similarity (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 63). Categories moved the discussion of immigration experiences from the concrete level of discussion to more abstract concepts. This

elevates the level where discuss takes place and thus directly uncovering meanings and interpretations (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). At the end of this step, a thematic, conceptual model was developed to aid the subsequent analysis steps.

Step 3: Analysing for context and delineating processes. Corbin and Strauss (2008, Chapter 5) indicate the importance of the context in determining the underlying meaning of interactions and actions. Defined as the structural conditions shaping the nature of situations, circumstances or problems, the context emerges as an integral component in determining the meanings lying beneath the superficial surface of bare data. In this particular study, contexts emerged to be a critical factor, emerging as a specific domain where immigrants performed specific acts like establishing their identity. Process here refers to the resulting connectedness of the actions and interactions of actors in a group who tend to align their actions with one another in a social context. Process was incorporated in this analysis as a strategy to improve cohesion between action, interaction and consequences in a single flowing narrative/account.

Step 4: Integrating Categories / selective coding, developing a descriptive analytic scheme: - In this final step of data analysis, all the concepts, analytic trails and development are pulled together, to give the analysis a unifying frame. A single overarching conceptual category was developed based on the clues given by the entire analytic process (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 104, 265). To determine this overarching category, the tools of questioning and theoretical comparison were used as explained in Corbin and Strauss (2008). The author engaged in an interaction with the available categories, linking the emerging trends to the participants' migration context. This led to the identification of the struggle by immigrants to sustain a sense of rationality through the exercise of their human agency as the core category. Once this core category was identified, all the other categories were tied around it, giving the entire analysis a coherent and meaningful flow that elaborated the migrant accounts. The emerging descriptive presentation detailed that the presented accounts presented the immigrants perception of what their ideal migration process was to be. This ideal concept is sustained in the framework of rationality in the decision to migrate and the choice to stay in the host country in the pursuit of certain life goals. Other factors that support the rationality framework are closely linked the concept of validity whereby immigrants engage in justifications that lend validity to their decisions and choices. For instance, those who got the

Finnish citizenship explained their decision to take the citizenship test as something that was done out of pure necessity like providing a more conventional experience of parenting where a child with Finnish citizenship. See APPENDIX 2, for a comprehensive presentation of the analytical categories and conceptual framework derived from the four-step analysis of the empirical data from the 20 participants.

The analytic process explicated above incorporates a slight modification of the version of the process outlined in Corbin and Strauss (2008). Step 3 and 4 merge into one so that an exploration of the context and process is done once at the third step and a fourth step of category integration is included. The category integration technique is used in this thesis to build a cohesive descriptive analysis of the African student immigrant experience in Finland and not for the development of a theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, Chapter 12).

### **Validity and credibility of findings**

The canons of validity and objectivity in evaluating the quality of a research endeavour are largely based on the positivist perspective and therefore, they must be redefined if they are to be applied to sciences that perform research in naturalistic settings (Golafshani, 2003, 601). Dewey, (1929) posits that to ensure the validity of research findings, a researcher must sustain connectivity with the concrete experiences of participants (Dewey, 1929, p.138, cited in Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p.3). In implementing a data driven approach to data analysis, this study maintained a close interaction with the concrete experiences of the study participants. This was aimed at developing a representation of the experiences of research participants in a credible and plausible manner (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 305). Theory was incorporated limitedly only to guide analysis through the development of an analytic frame in theoretical conceptual terms. Theories that were inspected during the literature review and data analysis did not take precedence, rather, they were consulted only to explicate the dimensions and boundaries of merging concepts and ideas. Therefore, concrete data remain the primus of data analysis (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011, p. 122, 134). The notion of an existing single objective reality or truth has been discredited by anti-realist assumptions in theoretical perspectives such as social constructionism. Social constructionists argue that a claim to an objectively defined truth is political and therefore, such a claim only aims to validate a certain representation of the world while invalidating the others (Burr, 2003, p. 44).

A researcher should claim truth temporarily, with the acknowledgement that that which is held true at the moment could in the next instance be proven partly or wholesomely wrong. In this same vein, the validity of this study rests on the extent to which the limitations of this study are acknowledged, and the extent to which the procedures, techniques and theoretical orientation of this study are made clear. Interpretation and application of the outcomes of this study should thus be taken with complete understanding. To this extent, this study can claim validity. In defining credibility, Glaser and Strauss (1966) exclude the positivist perspective of objective truth that is inherent in the quantitative practice of validity Glaser and Strauss, 1969, cited in Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 300). Instead, they redefine the canons for measuring the credibility of qualitative research studies stating that the credibility of a study ought to be measured by the extent to which the findings of a study are reliable and useful. This study aimed at describing the lived experiences of African immigrants in Finland. Aiming to uncover practical information concerning the immigrant life, the outcomes of the study are useful both at the individual migration level and at the state level where policy interventions can potentially be guided by the migrants' needs. Meeting the demands of reliability in qualitative methods is dependent on the level of transparency in the study procedure and the conditions shared by the researcher. This thesis endeavoured as far as possible to outline the procedures of the study as clearly as possible.

#### **4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

According to the pragmatist approach to knowledge which forms the epistemological background for this study, knowledge is contextual and processual. Therefore, to gain an accurate understanding of migrant experiences, research questions were context sensitive. They aimed at an understanding of the socio-physical and temporal spaces in which participants interact. To this end, participants were asked about their migration history. The question sought a description of all migratory moves that participants ever engaged in and the motivation behind each. Analysis of the answers to these questions revealed that participants partitioned these experiences into three specific temporal and physical locations, referred to here as domains. Lived experience was discussed with reference to a time that is before migration, during the initial stages of living in the host society and lastly and a period when individuals felt sufficiently adapted and acquainted with the host society. Additionally, experiences were located either in the country of origin or in the

host country. As a result, these three temporal and physical locations are presented in the analytical framework as domains of rationalization. The three domains are 1. The domain of self-rationalization, 2. The domain of contextual rationalization and 3. The domain of relation. The entire analytical discussion is presented under three categories following these three locations/domains.

## **4.1 The domain of self rationalization**

### **4.1.1 Locating the self before migration - A historical context**

Eighteen participants out of 20 explained that their decision to migrate to Finland was a personal decision, not influenced by other people like immediate family members, parents, siblings and spouses. The other two participants who did not fall in this category migrated on the basis of an agreement between their parents and a family network in Finland. When asked how they felt about the decision to come to Finland, they explained that the decision was only taken by the adults because the adults knew the best way to get them in Finland and not because they were opposed to the decision.

I had been working for about 4 years, so I had been responsible for myself for a while, living alone and typically not receiving any help from my parents. So when I made the decision to migrate to Finland, no body influenced me. It was a personal decision and in fact I only informed my family when all the travelling plans were complete and I was about to travel. (Participant 1).

Free high quality education in Finland was the leading factor that attracted migrants to Finland. Participants explained that they individually prepared their school application without any assistance from family, friends or other social networks. Participant 1 explains that he did not inform anybody about his application to a school or for a residence permit. He only shared the news after all travel plans had materialized successfully. However, with the exception of four participants, family support was received for the decision to pursue further education. Support or lack of support for the decision to migrate would not have influenced any of the participants' decision to migrate anyway. As participants two, five, seven, and 15 explain, they migrated despite



the disapproval of some family members. Family member objections were based on the uncertainty characteristic of migration outcomes as compared to the socioeconomic circumstances of the individual migrants at that time.

My parents were not very supportive of my decision to come to Finland in particular. So it's not that somebody didn't try to stop me, but rather that they did not succeed because I was 100% decided on coming to Finland. (Participant 2).

Although all 20 participants explained that their migration to Finland was their first migratory move, it was derived that social networks in Finland influenced participants' migration choices although only to a limited degree. Haug (2008) explores the role of networks in migration, indicating that social networks play a significant role in facilitating chain and continued migration through specific paths based on existing social interrelations. Data from this study indicates that the role of networks was limited to acts of sharing practical information about the host country. The elements of patronage and other assistance as explicated in the migration networks theory were not evident in the explanations of participants who mentioned a reliance on networks (Haug, 2008, p. 588).

On my own, I never would have thought of migrating to Finland. I had wanted to go to the U.K. for my masters' but had failed to get a scholarship to the universities there. That's when my cousins in Finland told me about Finland and the fact that higher education was being offered free in there. So in terms of telling me about the country, they did play a part, but the application and all the other processes I had to do all by myself. (Participant 7).

The social networks presented in participant accounts included siblings, a pen pal, a football club manager and Finnish family friends. According to Haug (2008, p. 588), a migration network is a composite of interpersonal relations in which migrants interact with their family and friends. Out of 20 participants, 11 participants mentioned having known someone in Finland or in the Nordic region. However, the support of the networks was limited to general information exchange about the host country. In fact, networks failed to equip migrants with critical information that would have been deemed useful in the decision making process.

For instance, despite having a brother and a sister in Finland, participant 8 did not know and thus, did not expect the limitations that he ended up facing as a migrant when seeking employment in Finland. He expected that it would be easy to get any kind of job in the primary labour market just as he would in Kenya. Participant 18 explains that although he had a sister in Finland, his sister did not influence his decision to migrate at all, instead, his social network was a friend. His experience upon arrival does not imply any reprieve characteristic of the reduced costs and risks of migration expected in a network influenced migration (Haug 2008, p. 588). Instead, he explains that he had to learn survival strategies from experience while already living in Finland. This could be a case where pioneer migrants do not act as bridgeheads but as gatekeepers, attempting to block other people from getting into the country (Collyer, 2008).

Participants were asked why they decided to migrate to Finland to pursue further studies. Although Finland was chosen commonly over the United Kingdom due to its free high quality education, there was a stronger underlying motivation. All 18 participants explained that they migrated in order to improve their life circumstances in a variety of ways. Education was a means to an end and thus, the aspiration for a better future facilitated the migration. Structural circumstances in the country of origin were perceived as limiting participant's capabilities. For instance, participant 6 explained that he had reached a point in his career where he was stagnant and there was no way to break the limit he had reached. Participant 5 explains that he had to pursue a master's degree in a different field to escape the limitations of a monotonous career. Participant 1 explained that the structural conditions characteristic of his home country would confine him to an unequal playing field for the rest of his life if he stayed in.

The only external influence was the economic status of Nigeria. If I stayed back, I would never get to where I want to get to. So I decided to move. (Participant 1).

Thus, he migrated with the hope of gaining a head start to take back home or to continue migrating. In explaining why, he chose to come to Finland for further studies rather than stay in Ghana, participant 17 attributed his migration to Finland as fuelled solely by the desire to pursue higher education. However, he explains that his attempts to gain admission into universities in his country had been frustrated by a corrupt system. Knowing that he was qualified, but could not get access to what he valued in his country, migration to Finland allowed him the same freedoms curtailed

by corrupt systems at home. These findings support a conception of migration as a function of capabilities and aspirations in line with Sen's capabilities approach (Sen, 1999).

It was concluded that the migration motivation was a combination of capabilities and aspirations. Participants' socio economic characteristics imply that participants are not the poorest of the poor in their countries of origin. Castles et al. (2014) argue that migration motivations are becoming more complex and that it is no longer acceptable to invoke the push -pull model of the neoclassical theories. The push pull model explains migration as an outcome of push pull mechanics which further implies that migration flows from poor to rich paths. Capabilities and aspirations motivated movement elevates migration into the sphere of economic development. Thus, more development translates into enhanced capabilities and consequently more freedoms and capacities to pursue a wider array of life goals and values (Castles et al., 2014, p. 50-1). The participant accounts in this section corroborate this argument further, building the theory of migration based on aspirations and capabilities.

Describing their socio-economic circumstances before migration, it emerged that 14 participants were active members of the labour markets in the country of origin. Of the 14, 12 explained that they were happy with their formerly held jobs in the country of origin.

Before coming to Finland I was working with a good international non-governmental organization in Ghana as a project manager. It was a really good job. I had also started teaching in some institutions as a part time job, then I developed an interest in this and thought that I could pursue a career in academia. So that is how I ended up coming for my masters here in Finland. (Participant 5).

Socio-economically, these 12 participants described their labour market activities in the country of origin as satisfactory. In terms of remuneration, earnings in the host country are higher than those of the country of origin. However, participants explain that this balances out because of higher expenditure in the host country. Participant 7 and 8 explain that they end up with the same or less amount of money in literal terms in the Finnish context. In some instances, in fact, as in the case of participant five, seven, eight and 19, their current living standard in Finland is below their living standards in the country of origin before migration.

Findings on the first category of questions indicate that the dominant characteristic that participants used to describe themselves is independence. Independence in decision making, independence from family ties and social networks in the country of origin as well as economic independence. Analysis also derived the theme of goal orientation. In choosing to pursue further studies, migrants committed to a goal to which becomes the end to be achieved. For Eight participants, the end goal of their educational pursuit in Finland was to increase the value of their human capital. This was aimed at enhancing their chances of getting better jobs like work with governmental institutions, higher learning institutions. Additionally, migrants expected to diversify their professional portfolio with the qualifications and credentials obtained in the host country. This notion was further supported by the fact that educational qualifications from the developed Western countries were deemed highly valuable in the home countries in the developing world.

While explaining their migration decision making process, participants gave prominence to specific key self-attributes and individual socioeconomic circumstances before migration. It was determined that this formulation was geared towards building migrant identities in a favourable manner. Data analysis explores the essence of the presented participant pre-migration identity. Data analysis derived that participants aimed to locate themselves before migration in a particular position, image and identity. They aimed to locate themselves as independent, goal driven individuals who made the choice to migrate to Finland regardless of challenges. Finland as a destination is presented as a costly choice since migrants had incurred great losses and make significant sacrifices to go there. For instance, Participants had to let go of their comfortable and sometimes executive jobs and the socioeconomic security assured by those in the country of origin. A comfortable life with a satisfactory standard of living was left behind in addition to a sacrifice of self-esteem and social status that is dependent on one's potentials and capabilities in a white collar job. Participants incorporated these factors to draw attention to participants' socioeconomic position before migration. Individual choice to migrate despite surmounting challenges leads analysis to consider actor agency and individual agency freedom as key dimensions in this decision scenario. According to Sen, agency freedom refers to what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals and values he or she values or perceives as important (Sen, 2002).

By emphasizing the self as defiant in the face of manifold obstacles challenging the choice to migrate, participants are highlighting their agency freedom as their main identity definer. They are taking the position of persons who are in control of the conditions and the circumstances within which they operate. The concept of individual agency gains further support from the fact that individuals located themselves in a constraining structural context in the country of origin. The constraints mentioned like unequal distribution of opportunities, rigged procedural processes for the acquisition of social amenities, deter human beings from enjoying the instrumental freedoms without which individuals cannot live the lives they have reason to value (Sen 1999, p. 10). Thus, analysis perceives participants as persons who are exercising their individual agency in resisting the societal challenges abound in their home countries and by the social networks within which they operate to make the decision to migrate.

The concept of rationality was further derived as the overarching attribute of participants at the time of migration decision making. Migration decision accounts take a holistic presentation where migrants present their goal versus the expected challenge<sup>4</sup>, a kind of cost-benefit weighing with the aim of maximizing extractable benefits from a particular setting. This is the definition of rationality and rational behaviour. The personal attributes of independence, goal orientation and the exercise of individual agency all culminate into the rational individual migrant. It is concluded that the presented migration decision making process was aimed at locating individual participants as rational individuals exercising individual agency by migrating to Finland for further education.

#### **4.1.2 Development of the migration trajectory**

Participants' migratory paths were all located in a socioeconomic context. Analysis determined that this manner of presentation enabled participants to rationalize any claims that they later level against their migratory pursuit. Further, any case of failure to realize these claims became the background rationale for the decision by participants to extend their stay in the host country. Participants rationalized and validated their extended stay in the host country by explaining that they were only trying to achieve the goals they initially set for their migratory pursuit to Finland.

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<sup>4</sup> The assumption that human action is consistent with the hypothesis of goal seeking. Actions are perceived as if having reason and behaviour is seen as if it is goal oriented.

For instance, participant seven expected economic liberations out of his migration to Finland, while in general, all participants expressed holding abstract expectations of positive life transformations, which were expressed in general terms like the opportunity for a better life. The extent to which these expectations are realized or not, had a direct influence on the migration trajectories that the migration experiences of the 20 participants interviewed took. For instance, one general change to their migration trajectory was the decision to stay in Finland after completing the educational programmes.

It was determined that certain freedoms like that of free education have been enjoyed by immigrants in Finland, and that feelings of equality were sometimes felt, for instance, with the standardized wage system where all individuals doing the same job get the same wage. However, the major migration expectations largely remained unmet. For example, the unmet expectations of integration and acceptance set off an experience of dissonance among participants. This dissonance was enhanced as immigrants began to discover their migration reality. The felt dissonance increased participants' need to belong even more. As a result, participants began to search for ways to develop a feeling of belonging, at least a perceived feeling of belonging. Key aspects tied to the notion of belonging are acceptance and validation of individual migrants' existence in the host society. Validity would secure these migrants' rationality. The validity and logic behind the decisions to migrate as laid out at the onset of migration. The following discussion of participants' lived experiences captures the essence of participants' presentations of their lived experiences in Finland. Participants' presentations describe a struggle by immigrants to maintain their perceived rationality. This is attained through the exercise of agency and agentic power when possible.

Conflict between structure and agency emerges in the presented accounts of migrants that locate them in the country of origin. A configuration of the migration motivations of these participants highlight the social structure. For instance, the provision of free high quality education in Finland versus the lack of high quality education in the country of origin and other social amenities highlight structural constraints on actors. However, participants attempt to award primacy to their agency when they present their case as that in which agency triumphs over structure. In their presentations, they manage to manoeuvre the structure in successfully choosing to migrate to Finland, thereby exercising their direct power and thus, their agency freedom.

## 4.2 The domain of contextual rationalization

### Locating the self in Finland

The contextual domain in which migrants make decisions refers to the structural and the environmental setting that impacts upon the immigrant and within which the immigrant operates. The context consists of social, economic and legal dimensions, that all impact the migrant. They take the form of endowments that can positively or negatively restrict a migrant's actions in the host country. The social structure in which a person lives has potential influence over the individual. For instance, culture, values and norms are structurally specific, in fact, they are modelled by the structure and they reflect the same structure in the actions that they inspire in actors. Therefore, the social structure fundamentally influences existence. The values that one holds influence the dreams, expectation and the life trajectories that are chosen by that individual. Therefore, the values that an immigrant holds are influenced by the host country during the process of social integration. Environmental and social structural influences on human beings like these, coupled with past experiences, education, and class status form what Bourdieu refers to as habitus. As described in the theoretical framework chapter, Bourdieu uses the concept of habitus to overcome the structure agency impasse in sociology. "Habitus describes those internalised structures, dispositions, tendencies, habits, ways of acting that are both individualistic and yet typical of one's social groups, community, family and historical position." (Bourdieu, 1997). Habitus is a conclusive description of an individual as the product of one's biological, environmental and class history. It can be concluded that the migrant who is located in Finland is one that exhibits a migrant habitus.

Participants' lived experiences indicate that migration is a process during which the migrant develops in migration-specific ways. This development is a time and location specific process that follows the migrant through the different temporal points of their migrant life, pre migration and during migration. The contextual domain is an operational location where the immigrant develops an identity with the capacity to support their continued stay in Finland. Corbin and Strauss (2008), emphasize the role of context in facilitating a complete understanding of data. However, in this study, the context emerged as a domain, a 'space' where participants constructed specific

knowledge about their migration. While the context in this thesis is a literal place, that is a country, the concept of 'context' emerging from data analysis is a cognitive location where the process of social construction took place. While locating themselves before migration, the geographical context and the social relational context was highly underrepresented in migrant accounts. This suggests that participants did not consider these aspects as key definers of their identities. As determined earlier in the analysis of the domain of self rationalization, at the pre-migration period, individuals were highly self-contained and independent. Attributes used to define the self-revolved around the individual. After migration, participant presented accounts of attachment to the host society. The self was presented as attached to the host country in accounts of: 1. Embedding the self to Finland, 2. Attachment to the Finnish economy and 3. Attachment through the legal systems in the Finnish society. Attachment as explicated by participants is an initiative that is actively pursued by participants, hence the use of the term attachment rather than belonging.

#### **4.2.1 Embedding the self to Finland**

Due to their unique status as migrants, participants attached themselves to the host society through context specific ways. For instance, they used their social relations as a means to legitimately attach to the host country. Below is an explication of such attempts by African migrants to locate themselves in Finland.

Answering questions about the probability of them returning to their countries of origin, the key support given for staying in Finland rather than returning was attachment to the host society, environment and way of life. For instance, participant 20 explains that even his temporary trips to Kenya are very discomforting experiences for him now. This is because everything there is so different from Finland. He feels that he has become more of a Finn than a Kenyan. Moving back to Kenya would not work well for him, therefore, it has become natural to him that Finland is the place where he should be. He explains that simple comforts such as security are impossible in his home country even though he has already gotten accustomed to a lifestyle that supports these in Finland.



Every time I go to Kenya I get so frustrated. You know, for example, you cannot even leave your phone on a table and come back and find it in a public place. It's just too much. So I prefer living here. This place suits me. (Participant 20).

Attachment to the host country affects individual's identity. Identity changes in response to the physical context one operates in. In turn, the newly developed identity supports an adaptation only to specific kinds of environments. Therefore, the physical context and identity impact one another mutually. Participants were asked to discuss their identity with the aim of identifying the extent to which their identity had changed and the manner in which it changed since they started living in the host country. Responding to the question concerning his identity Participant 19 expresses the following sentiment. He explains that he feels conflicted concerning his identity.

I can no longer tell who I am or what I am like anymore. When I am in Zambia, people don't recognize me, they say that I have changed so much, that I have become Finnish. When I am in Finland, again, I am not really Finnish. However, I do like the Finnish traits that I have acquired like time consciousness. (Participant 19).

Belonging in Finland is equated to attachment to Finland. Moreover, this was defined in very specific ways, varying from one participant to another. However, a total of 12 participants explicitly expressed favouring an orientation towards Finland as a preferred geographical location for settlement than the country of origin. The other eight participants explained the specific attributes which attract them to Finland rather than their countries of origin, adding that such attributes were those that could not easily be found in the country of origin. An example of an attribute of Finland that attracted all participants in this study was security. All participants strongly appreciated the security they enjoyed in Finland. Additionally, attachment to Finland was strongly linked to a temporal caveat. This sense of 'belonging' in Finland was a time contingent experience. Analysis of the data suggests that the feeling of belonging was a source of security for the migrant who wishes to stay in Finland for a long period of time. For instance, participants 2, 10, 12, 17, 19 explicitly explained that they felt they belonged in Finland. Participant 10 explained that she is convinced she belongs in Finland so much that not even rejection by the society she lives in would change that. She explains that she felt she belonged and that is final.

Personally, I just developed this attitude; that since I am here, I am a Finn and so I belong. I don't really wait for acceptance from anyone, I just do what I need to do and I don't about what other people think. (Participant 10).

Attachment to the host society is enhanced when participants develop a social network consisting of Finnish persons. Friendship was forged whenever possible with Finnish people. Immigrants married a Finn when possible and those who could forge other kinds of friendship with Finnish workmates nurtured such relationships carefully. Participant 12 explained that a social network consisting of Finns was much more valuable than any network of fellow migrants. In fact, she claimed that she had an easier time adapting in Finland due to her Finnish connections.

I think I had an easier time because I came straight into a Finnish family when I got to Finland. It has been easier penetrating the Finish system. I've mostly kept Finish friends and my social network is Finnish too. It has been a bit easier for me than it would have been if I hang around Kenyans only. I think that how you start off in Finland is very important for the long term. (Participant 12).

Attachment to the host country through a Finnish' network suggests that participants sought ways to attach to the host country in a manner that would render their presence legitimate. For instance, while eight participants were cohabiting with a Finnish partner, they had not used that relationship to claim belonging or legitimation for their existence in Finland explicitly. Instead, a common account among immigrants with children explicitly indicated that the Finnish child-migrant parent network was comfortably used to locate the self in Finland. This manner of embedding the self in Finland also had the tendency of extending to immigrants the opportunity to plan a very long stay in the host country. Parenting a Finnish child was also the most homogeneously invoked explanation for extended stay in Finland with answers from different participants expressing the same concepts. The social issues highlighted as encouraging stay in Finland for the sake of the children were; the Finnish family care program, the Finnish education system, social amenities in Finland and overall security. All participants with children indicated a desire to stay on in the host country until the children were of legal age and capable of deciding which country they preferred to live in. Nine participants out of the ten who had children with Finnish citizenship by virtue of one parent being Finnish attributed their extended stay in Finland to the children.

I would very much like it if my child went to school here in Finland. I may not be here to see him grow here because of, because I have plans to move to an English speaking country so I could progress professionally, but yes, I would love my child to grow up in Finland. (Participant 17).

Participants 15 and 18 explain that they in fact stayed in Finland strictly because they became parents to a Finnish child. Since laws exist that would prohibit one from leaving a country with a child without the consent of the partner and other such aspects, they could not leave the country with the child for one of the parents was Finnish. Thus, the only option that supported them being a part of their Childs' life was to extend their stay in Finland.

I think that the arrival of a baby played a big role, in fact a bigger role in my decision to stay in Finland. Since I couldn't just excuse myself from parenting duty by saying that I came to study and so that's all that I was going to do and so that is how I stayed in Finland. (Participant 18).

Participant 15 claims that he would not take his child from Finland to Gambia as that would be gravely unfair given the disparity in structural endowment between these countries.

Well, at the moment, I have a son with a Finnish partner and so that child has Finish citizenship. I know that this child needs me and I can't take him with me to Africa, it will not be good for him, the condition there is just bad, so I do what is best for him by staying here and being a father. So for the future, I am just here. (Participant 15).

Participant 20 explains that he pursued the Finnish citizenship only for the sake of his 3 children. Explaining that children could not understand the structural barriers that manifested strangely like the fact that he had to queue in a different line at the airport. Explaining these incidents was becoming difficult, so he took up the citizenship to be similar to them. Participants explained that location specific capital in the host country in the form of a nuclear family in Finland was a key influence in favour of the host country. Participants who were engaged in a romantic relationship with Finns and those who had children in Finland all chose to extend their stay in the host country. The nuclear family built in Finland had a stronger value than the extended family in the country

of origin. An additional location specific capital in the host country was explicated as time. Participants felt that the amount of time they spent in the host country was significant and this implied that the most rational decision was an extended stay in Finland.

Participants 3, 10, 11, 12, came to Finland at a very young age. They also expressed feeling that they are more attached, familiar and comfortable with Finland. As such, it is logical that they build their lives in Finland. For participants 8, 18, 19 and 20, the amount of time that has been spent in the host country exceeds eight years and this is perceived as an investment capable of delivering certain returns. Since these expectations have not been met yet, these participants stay on in the hope that such expectations will be met. Participants locate themselves in a host society that they are incapable of freeing themselves from. Once one is in Finland, a combination of circumstances that include lapsed time, accumulated social networks, experience and enculturation support attachment to the host society.

#### **4.2.2 Attachment to the Finnish economy**

All the 20 participants are active participants in the Finnish labour market. Participants used their status as workers in Finland to validate their 'being' in the host society. The job becomes the reason for staying in Finland rather than anything else. This supports CHATS' conception of the activity system in the discussion of actor agency. Migrants' attachment to the Finnish labour market takes a form that is self-reinforcing. Since 17 out of 20 participants are manual workers, all of these 17 workers expressed dissatisfaction with these jobs. Ultimately, there is an ambition to work one's way out of the manual labour sector into the primary labour market or into business entrepreneurship. According to Valtonen (2001), this is highly unlikely for migrants. Therefore, immigrants are likely to stay in Finland doing these jobs for a very long time, as they strategize a way to career elevation. As evidenced by participants 2, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 18 who are all working as manual labour workers for years exceeding five years each. Furthermore, participants perceived their role as taxpayers in Finland as a source of validation as explicated by participant 15.

I pay tax so I'm proud of that and in this country when you are paying tax, you are working and paying tax, they respect you and they honour you. (Participant 15).

Immigrants derive a sense of equality to their Finnish counterparts from the manner in which work roles are distributed in Finland. For instance, an immigrant receiving the same wage as a Finn with whom one does the same level of work feels that they are equal with the Finn. The standardized labour laws and the collective bargain provisions of the European Union convention on free movement of labour determine this (Caro et al. 1974). This effect builds into a general feeling of equality, including living standards and the quality of immigrant's life versus Finns' as illustrated by participant 2.

In terms of Finnish standards, way of living, having an apartment, you have whatever you need inside, you go to work you are not hungry, you are not sleeping outside, I think I'm at a good level, just like the majority of Finns. (Participant 2).

Employment conditions in Finland provide that individuals doing the same job are treated fairly equally. Further, participants explained that the working conditions are very good, and their basic needs are taken care of even in the menial labour jobs. When speaking of their participation in the Finnish labour market, participants prioritize the working conditions over the actual activities that they engage in. Therefore, the socioeconomic context in which they locate themselves is a favourable one. The way that workers are treated, separate from the kind of work they do, positively reinforces the decision to stay in Finland. Participants use the positive working conditions to rationalize over the negative experience of working as manual labourers in the service industry. Remuneration in the Finnish labour market is also better with better wages compared to the remuneration status in the country of origin regardless of the nature of the work. Data analysis derives that this combination of factors facilitates the attachment of the individual to the host society in a manner deemed legitimate thus lending support to the struggle to maintain rationality through the migration process.

#### **4.2.3 Legal attachment to Finland**

The host country context is characterized by legal requirements which affect participants' lives in Finland. For example, the possible length of stay in the host country and the freedoms participant enjoyed participating in social, economic and political activities in Finland depend on the legal rules. The Finnish legal regulations control migrants' access to the Finnish welfare benefits

through the awarded citizenship and residential status. The most fundamental legal aspect of a migrant's life is their residential status and citizenship. These two factors determine the rights and freedoms of an immigrant in the host country. Having a legal status and the degree of freedom that legality affords or a migrant is a *primus* calculation by participants of this study. All participants located themselves in the host country legally, immigrating into Finland as students with a valid permit. Succeeding permit changes are calculated according to individual participant's goals. Moreover, participants described their belonging in Finland in terms of the residential status. Although only a few participants with the Finnish passport expressed attachment to Finland based on their possession of the Finnish passport. Participants 10, 15, 20 based their perceptions of belonging on their possession of the Finnish passport and being Finnish citizens. Since nearly all participants explained that they felt detached and unaccepted by the Finnish society and its people to a significant extent, the participants themselves manufactured the feeling of belonging. They achieved this through two ways. Through embedding the self in a network of Finnish persons such as an intimate partner, workmate or friend, and the second way was the legal way, obtaining Finnish citizenship. Participants 10 and 15 explicitly explained that they belonged in Finland by virtue of being Finnish citizens.

In this subsection I have presented the various ways in which participants located themselves in Finland. Following the discussion of actor agency in chapter two, subsection 2.6, the analysis in this subsection suggests that participants engage in an intentional act of attaching themselves to the host society in order to ensure their validity and legitimacy in the society they live in. Such validation ensures that participants sustain an image of rationality which further enables them to exercise their agency freedom. Additionally, embedding the self to the physical and the socioeconomic structure of the host society is fundamental to the development of a migrant habitus. Participants are embracing the environment in which they live, adopting the features of that structure so as to sufficiently facilitate future exercise of migrant agency. Similar to the activity system explicated in the CHAT approach, this subsection presents a combination of various dimensions of the social structure, demonstrating how an activity system operates to produce agency.

### **4.3 The domain of relation**

Many social constructionist approaches view the individual as a function of his or her social relationships. The socially constructed being is the central tenet of the social constructionist approach. Social constructionists redefine the subject of study in the social sciences by focusing on the relational exchanges in society. (Burr, 2003, p. 193). Therefore, according to this approach, human beings become persons only when they engage in social interaction. The relational domain that is represented in the accounts of participants of this study is characterised by three key features. A host society which is the social structural context where all interactions are based. Other African immigrants in Finland who form the social networks. A shared culture since the prevailing social structure develops from the activities of a collective agency of the network of immigrants in Finland. In this third domain, I present an analytic discussion of the relational aspects of the presented migrant accounts in accordance with the social concepts and frameworks of agency, rationality and habitus as presented in the theory section.

#### **4.3.1 Dissonance of migration expectations and migration reality**

In this subsection, I present a discussion of three contexts, that highlight a conflict between participants' migration expectations and their migration reality. These conflicts prompt participants to experience a dissonance characterised by a mental and social discomfort. This discomfort significantly influences participants' succeeding migration experiences and decisions concerning the migration trajectory of participants. First, I discuss the conflict arising from an incongruence between the theoretically perceived notions about migration and the experienced reality. Second, I look at the practical inconsistencies in the Finnish migration system and the manner in which this affects migrants. Third, I look at the notion of return migration as an anomaly as it is developed by African migrants in Finland.

#### **Incongruence between migration expectations and migration reality**

The first key source of dissonance in migrants is incongruence between migration expectations held by migrants and the migration reality experienced in Finland. The actual migrant-life in Finland challenged the idealistic expectations and perceptions that participants held concerning migration. The conflict between participants' romantic perceptions of migration as a liberating tool, and the reality of migration as experienced in Finland, took participants through the process

of discovering what the true meaning of migration is. They described this period as a moment of learning and adjusting. Participant 6 said that those experiences of dissonance helped him realize that he was not at home, but rather in a foreign land, a migrant. This subsection discusses this aspect of participants' experiences with the aim of highlighting the role that this incongruence plays in shaping the migration trajectory of African international student migrants in Finland.

As explicated in the discussion in chapter two, subsection 2.1, studies on the causes of migration have yielded varied explanations. The explanatory causes attached to a migratory move are used in migration theories to predict the nature and form that such migrations are expected to take with a focus on migration goal realization and subsequent moves. However, Amartya Sen's capability approach provides an approach that supports a definition of migration as a function of capabilities and aspirations. Therefore, this approach offers a plausible explanation for the continuity of migration by drawing a link between the migration experience, goal achievement and migrant wellbeing. According to the capabilities approach, the cause of migration lies on a continuum of constraints that people experience in life. Therefore, the cause of migration varies according to the degree of ones' constraint at different points along the continuum (Castles et al., 2014, p. 51). Data analysis derived that international student migrants from Africa migrated because their education and vocational training ambitions could not be met in their home countries. Thus, the key motivation was high quality, valuable Western education. However, similar to arguments explained in migration theories, data analysis determined that the factors that motivated participants to migrate are immensely complex and varied (Castles et al., 2014, p. 25). Moreover, the initial reasons for migration tended to change after emigration. This is supported by the data collected during this study as explained below

Out of 20 participants, 14 ranked Finnish education as the prime reason for immigration. However, it was also established that education was not sought as an end, but a means to an end. In other cases, participants explained that it was not the only reason for coming to Finland. Participant six explained that he decided to pursue higher education in a western country to improve his employability. He explained that academic credentials from the West are highly valued in Ghana and that a master's degree from Finland would improve his employability in Ghana. Analysis of migrants' stated motivations highlighted the concept of migration in search of opportunities. Out



of 20 participants, 16 stated that they felt Finland presented them with the opportunity for a better life. It is worth noting that “opportunity” as a motivation for migration is a vague concept in need of strict delineation. In Castles et al. (2014, p. 5), the aspect of better opportunity emerges as a significant motivation for migration. Migration motivation is theorized a bit differently in development theories. For instance, Sen’s capabilities approach reformulates the “opportunity” motive for migration, replacing it with capabilities and aspirations to move (Castles et al., 2014, p. 51). According to this conceptualization, the desire to migrate stems from an individual’s capabilities and aspirations. Sen defines human capability as the ability of human beings to live lives they have reason to value and to enhance the substantive choices “freedoms” that they have (Sen, 1999, p. 38; Sen 1985, p. 201).

Exploring their migration motivations further, participants indicated that they engaged in the migration process with the aim of developing themselves. Therefore, general development was the expected outcome of migration. Participants’ expectations of the migration pursuit constantly implied that they expected a positive transformation of their lives. None out of the twenty participants shared an account indicating that they anticipated any negative outcomes or even a challenging eventuality at the migration conception stage. Hein de Haas explores this relationship between migration and development. He explains that the assumption of a positive correlation between migration and development is extremely popular despite many inconsistencies in its formulation (De Haas, 2012). He explains that this ideology serves the purpose of shifting the development responsibility from the political system. However, de Haas further explains that this mistaken causality correlation obtains the literal opposite result by deterring development even further. The Development responsibility is shifted to individual migrants, economic remittance and direct foreign investments while governments are free to ignore their duty of facilitating the structural reforms necessary for development (De Haas, 2012, p. 8).

Abstract, goals and migration expectations like development result from the popular discourses in the field of migration like the migration development debate. More important, however, are the consequences of such discourses. The discourse on migration and development proliferates the international, national and individual strata of the social structure. Internationally, they influence policy debates on official development assistance and other development assistance from the

Global North to the Global South. At the individual level, these discourses are translated into the popular assumption that migration is a key path to personal development. Participant accounts indicate that participants held specific assumptions and expectations of their migration pursuit. Participants perceived migration as having the capacity to deliver economic liberation. As illustrated by participant 7, greener pastures for participant 17, and abundant opportunities for participant 10.

So I thought that maybe I would have a better opportunity here than going to any other place, because I have never seen them going back, I thought that maybe I should try, so I also came to see the goodness that they enjoy here. (Participant 10).

Holding very strong expectations like development from migration had specific consequences for migrants varying proportionately to the extent with which expectations were met or unmet. Out of 20 participants, 8 expressed very explicit accounts of experiencing dissonance. These results are attributed solely to the dissonance between migration expectations and migration reality.

I consider the job that I do here in Finland to be shoddy! This is because when I was coming to Finland, I had different expectations, I never thought that this would be the kind of job I would wind up doing. It never ever crossed my mind at all that such jobs exist. (Participant 8).

Furthermore, an evaluation of the migration goals for all participants compared to their migration achievements indicate an incongruence capable of setting of dissonance. Motivation and goal orientation are aspects of cognition, developed and nourished through mental development. They, in turn, influence further cognitive processes like the exercise of rationality, building self-perception and identity formation (Deneulin & Shahani, 2009). Answering questions about identity and self-perception, participants indicate a loss of individual identity, choosing very fluid identities emphasizing the tendency to please the people with whom the immigrant is interacting.

My identity changes with the context, it depends on who I am interacting with, I become whoever the person I'm talking with would like me to be. (Participant 8).

## **Practical inconsistencies in the Finnish migration system**

The second significant conflict between migration expectations and migration reality is the apparent practical inconsistencies inherent in the Finnish migration system. Immigrants felt cheated by the way the immigration system in Finland works. Participants explained having difficulties reconciling the negative and the positive aspects of their immigration experience in Finland. When asked to describe the experience of living in Finland, ten participants expressed confusion about judging the nature of their experience. They explained that their experience was so mixed that the positive and the negative aspects seemed to cancel each other out. According to participant two, it appeared as though the immigration system in Finland granted, immigrants an opportunity, but closed all the doors for utilizing that opportunity so that in the end the migrant could not draw any benefits from it.

Being an immigrant is very limiting. Finland limits immigrants while at the same time opening some doors for them. Education is the opportunity, but the limit comes in when the situation is such that an immigrant will never get the opportunity to utilize the skills they acquire through education in Finland. (Participant 2).

Dissonance is experienced as a result of the combined loss of capabilities and aspirations. Immigrants lose their individual identity embodied at the pre-migration period, an identity characterised by a strong sense of individual agency. This loss of the individuality, capability and independence suggest a loss of the individual agency freedom and capability. Consequently, the attributes of independence, goal orientation, capabilities and aspirations that define the migrant before and during emigration are lost since they can no longer be exercised without some necessary revisions. The practical inconsistencies characteristic of the Finnish economy and the Finnish immigration system are learnt by immigrants only after arrival in the country. Past migration studies have determined that labour market integration influences migrants positively towards the choice of staying on in the host country. Jensen and Pedersen (2007, p. 106) explain that the success or lack thereof of integration into the labour market is one of the main determinants in the decision to stay, return or migrate on. Although the apparent failure to integrate into the Finnish labour market does not influence immigrants to return or migrate on, the decision to stay in Finland is accompanied by a diminished sense of value and individual esteem. Data analysis identified that

participants relied on a variety of coping mechanisms for the time that they live in the host country. Based on data analysis, it is argued that participants employ a variety of techniques to ease the felt dissonance. Further analysis derived that migrants employed certain coping mechanisms to sustain their rationality. This had a further effect of supporting migrants' integration into the Finnish society. This integration took the form of seeking acceptance and legitimization in Finland.

### **The anomaly of return migration**

The third cause of conflict between migration expectations and reality is the anomaly of return migration among African immigrants in Finland. Immigrants stay on for long periods of time. The popular rhetoric among African immigrants in Finland entrenched the concept of no return to the country of origin. Despite realizing that their expected migration outcomes cannot be realized in Finland, immigrants learn that return migration is strictly outside the norm. Instead, the notion of staying on and letting the migration process unravel is adopted. When asked why they chose to stay in Finland, participant responses indicated that the decision to stay was a new phenomenon arising after immigration and particularly after the migrants begin interacting with others in the network of immigrants in Finland. Participants' representations suggested that they were surprised by the prolonged stay in the host country, implying that this decision was not premeditated. It indicated that at the migration onset, participants' plan was to either return to the country of origin or to migrate on to other destinations.

Data analysis indicated that the experienced dissonance prompted participants to acquire a new perspective to their migration process. Participants began shifting responsibility and ownership for migration decisions. At the beginning of the interviews, initial migration decision is located within the self and it is used to highlight the character of independence and agency in migrants. Responsibility and ownership of that decision are solely rested on the individual alone. At this stage, migration is evaluated positively and is embedded in the individual, in order to construct a positive self-image. Later on in the interviews, migration decisions made after arrival in Finland are attributed to the socio-cultural structure of relations to which one attaches themselves rather than the individual migrant.

Decisions are also attributed to contingencies and other factors believed to influence the immigrant which are outside of the migrants' control. At this point, what becomes apparent is the fact that the immigrant is already displaying significantly diminished individual agency. The immigration experience establishes a culture of its own, which in turn enhances the salience of the social networks and relationships within it. The social relationships within the social network constitute a socio-cultural structure with the capacity of establishing an agency for immigrants. However, this is not individual agency (Castles et al., 2014, p. 37). It results from processes of social interaction, therefore, it is a shared agency exercised by the social structures of the social network on behalf of the members of the group. It is the agency of the network of African international student migrants staying in Finland.

#### **4.3.2 Losing the sense of individual agency**

In subsection 4.3.1, I discussed three scenarios of conflict that prompt migrants into an experience of dissonance and mental and social discomfort. Following participant accounts, dissonance manifested in the experiences of detachment from society, lack of belonging and failure to integrate into the Finnish social life. Additionally, participants experience a significant culture shock, identity loss, stagnating capabilities and diminishing migration aspirations. In this subsection, I discuss migrants' response to this experienced dissonance focussing on the effects of this on migrants' agency freedom.

When participants began to lose their sense of individuality and the direct control of their migration process, they sought survival strategies from older migrants who have experience on such situations. Participants explain that this is the period when they started joining migrant groups and networks. Participants joined existing groups of migrants, mainly to appropriate these groups for their survival in the host society. However, by joining these groups, they automatically participated in building and developing them, including the culture of migration which is specifically developed within these networks. Participants accepted the migrant culture for the key reason of facilitating their survival in Finland. This culture further grew into a critical location-specific social capital, and a cultural structure for these immigrants. Immigrants then built a survival strategy under the guidance of the principles and axioms of this culture (Haug 2008; Castles et al., 2014, p. 37). The developed migrant culture is characterized by close-knit social networks formed and

sustained through shared social engagements. As a result of enculturation, the individual immigrant changes their main domain for migration activities from the self to a relational domain. This relational domain consists of a network of fellow immigrants. In the relational domain, individual agency freedom and direct control represented in migrant accounts in the pre-migration period are threatened.

The diminishing individual agency is a direct result of the dissonance experienced by immigrants upon beginning life as immigrants in Finland. As a result, these migrants pursue alternative identities, perceptions and ways of being that do not emanate from the self. Networks of migrants replace individual migrants, and the migrant culture of these networks impose certain rights and obligations on these immigrants.

Here in Finland we organize ourselves into groups. We come together sometimes and at such times, we feel that we are at home, we share ideas, we make development plans and we help each other in many ways. Left alone in Finland one would just get lost, but when people are around you it helps you to stay on track. (Participant 8).

Data analysis suggests that the actions of the groups of migrants emanate from the exercise of a collective agency of the social network of immigrants and not individual agency. According to the social constructionist approach, a relational individual, embedded in a community or a network develops from the social interactions that individuals engage in. Therefore, it is argued here that a constituted individuality and identity is obtained by individual migrants as a result of their actions and interactions within the network of African international student migrants in Finland. Evidently, participants started locating their experiences in the relational domain, specifically in the social network of fellow immigrants in Finland.

The only time that I have a social life in Finland is when I am with fellow Africans in our get-togethers. In fact, that is the only time that I get to smile, talk and laugh. At the end of the meeting, that's usually the end of it. (Participant 1).

The experience of dissonance begun with the realization of the real nature of immigration in Finland and the implications of this. The experienced dissonance posed a threat to migrants'

individual agency. Since individual agency freedom was determined as the defining feature of migrants' individuality at the pre-migration period, a continuity of this freedom would have upheld immigrants' perception of the self as a rational being. Since the real migration experience in Finland presented specific structural limitations to migrants' agency, migrants begin to lose their individual agency as well as their self-perception. With the aim of restoring their rationality and validity, migrants begin to act and interact in a bid to ensure their survival as rational beings. The immigrant joins and begins to operate within the African immigrant network and its' cultural and social structures in Finland.

Above, I have described the process that participants go through upon arrival in Finland illuminating the effects of these on the migrants and how it shapes their succeeding migration decision making. Migrants experiences significant dissonance which sets off a felt loss of migrants' sense of individual agency. I now turn to discussing the migrant trajectory of these participants as they continue to make succeeding migration decisions and choices. I discuss the cognitive changes and developments that the migrants pursue and accommodate in order to survive in the host society.

### **4.3.3 The social re-construction of the migrant self**

Up to this point, analysis of data has discussed the process and nature of migration as experienced by the 20 African international student migrants who have made the decision to stay in Finland. So far, I have described how migrants represented themselves as highly independent, goal oriented agents at the pre-migration period. Upon commencing life as immigrants in Finland, participants suffered a strong dissonance because of a series of conflicts between their migration expectations and their migration reality. As a result, migrants lost their initial sense of identity, agency freedom, migration expectations and aspirations. This further jeopardized their self-perception of rationality, which is the backbone that held together the entire migration pursuit. Therefore, individual immigrants sought ways to sustain their perceived rationality by operating within the network of fellow immigrants in Finland. This section explicates the nature of the interactions that migrants engage in within the network, and the consequences of this on these migrants' agency. Additionally, this discussion will highlight the dimensions and hierarchies of the migrant network.

## **The three-stratum migrant social network in Finland**

A social network is a combination of interconnected social interactions among groups and a chain of interconnected personal relationships. During the interviews, questions were asked about the social life of migrants. Accounts of migrants' social life revealed that the main feature of a migrants' social life was the social network. Participant accounts indicated an active involvement in a social network. Participant accounts further explicated that individual migrants had to participate in the construction of the networks they participated in.

I've had some bad experiences with my social life in Finland. Generally, I would say that our (African immigrants in Finland) social life in Finland is not that good. In fact, we have to actively look for it' and create it yourself. (Participant 10).

The social network was described as a critical component of migrant life in Finland. As the account below by participant 3 indicates, the social network develops into a space where participants deal with unpleasant experiences in Finland. Participants also discussed the network as a social bank for strategies against migration challenges. While discussing their lived experiences, participants constantly referred to other migrants thus highlighting the intensity of interrelation in these networks. In this sense, the social network becomes a coping mechanism for immigrants. It is a strategy used by immigrants to manoeuvre migrant life in Finland.

The weekend is the place and the time that we deal with all the stresses of the week. I like to spend it hanging out with friends, catching up and just talking. We look at how everything has been for everyone among the friends. (Participant 3).

All participants indicated that their social networks were located in Finland with the exception of family members in the country of origin or in other countries. Unanimous across the 20 accounts, participants indicated that family members were automatically the primary members of each individual's social network regardless of their location. Friends completed the social network circle. The social network is a closed entity and membership was granted only to individuals with shared experiences, background or class. Homogeneity in terms of occupation, marital status, community of origin, and educational qualification was a key determinant of inclusion into a social



network. Therefore, social networks are entities constructed by individuals through interactions based on common experiences. The network becomes stronger with a higher degree of homogeneity. However, one immigrant could have membership in more than one social network. Analysis outlined the following three dimensions as the key definers of the African migrant network k in Finland. The analytic discussion that follows is presented in three subsections as follows: 1. The network of African immigrants in Finland; 2. The nationality network; 3. The romantic partner network. It emerged that the nationality network was the most active and the most utilized network among all the others. Therefore, the discussion of this network includes a discussion of its utility for migrants.

### **The network of African immigrants in Finland**

This is the overarching network in which all African immigrants converge based on the fact that they are migrants from Africa in Finland. This is the least homogeneous group of all the three network groups. However, all other social networks splinter from this general overarching social network. Here all former and current African student immigrants staying in Finland belong. This network is not only the first, but also the top layer in the hierarchy of migrant networks in Finland. Consequently, social networks consisted only of migrants, particularly ones from relatively close and similar countries like those from one region. For example, migrants from Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, and Zambia easily are easily interconnected in a network due to shared similarities. However, the friendship group for an individual immigrant could often include other immigrants from other countries, and participation in different interactional accounts facilitated these extensions. For instance, a Ghanaian showed a higher propensity to having a Nigerian friend whom they met at school or met at church or at work. However, these friendships are kept at a different level and they do not guarantee admission into more homogenous networks like the nationality network. Diversity of friends was restricted to the number of African countries that sent the most number of immigrants to Finland - Kenya, Ghana, and Nigeria. It was on a single occasion that an interviewee spoke of having a friend from a country out of Africa. The friend was from China, and thus, a fellow immigrant. Therefore, the largest network is that of all African immigrants in Finland, at this level, the extent of cohesion is strong and a sense of commonality is exhibited.

Immigrants feel responsible for fellow immigrants and interactions are centred on the experiences of being an immigrant.

### **The nationality network**

The second layer in the social network hierarchy is the network of migrants from the same country. I call this the national social network. This group shared a stronger bond. It was also the most active social network referred to most frequently in migrant accounts. The common nationality network is the most crucial network for the immigrant. Immigrants join this group as a reaction to the felt dissonance and lost sense of individual agency and agency freedom as explained in subsection 4.3.1. It is within this network that the migrant who stays in Finland is constructed. Through interactions with fellow immigrants who have been in Finland for varying periods of time, an immigrant learns different coping strategies for survival in Finland. The learning process that takes place in this network plays a big role in normalizing the initial migration experiences that threatened migrants' individual agency and selfhood. As a result, the extent of felt dissonance reduces. However, the individual that emerges out of these interactions does not retain the initial sense of selfhood characterised by aspirations, capabilities and individual agency. The migrant identity that emerges is a collective identity of the "immigrant in Finland". This is the special outcome of the culture of migration that is shared by members of the social migrant networks. The ensuing migration reality is interpreted through the experiences of older immigrants who have already gone through these challenges and have identified ways of coping.

Specific to this social network is a shared understanding based on a shared history, culture, language and a shared value system. Experiences can be interpreted in a similar way among members of a national social network. This ensures that optimization is exercised when the terms of the African immigrant in Finland culture are determined. A stronger similarity among the members of the social network results in a stronger bond. The consequence of this is the emergence of a single collective identity that is shared by the members of the social group. Migrant accounts indicated a representation of participants with individualistic identities built on individuality and personality based features like independence and goal orientation at the pre-migration stage. Data analysis indicated that the trait of independence was the most invoked characteristic mentioned by ten out of 20 participants. Drewery (2001) explains that individual agency tends to be based on

exclusion, characteristics that set an individual apart from the others. Thus, participants intentionally create representations of a highly individualistic self with high degrees of agency freedom. In the case of immigrants with collective shared characteristics based on the migration experiences, individual agency became impossible to exercise. Due to a shared background of class, origin, language and culture, participants merge through acquiring a specific migrant system of disposition and character to guide their migration process. According to Bourdieu in a theory of practice introduced in chapter 2, the habitus provides a bridge between the structure and agency. In this case, the structure is a spatio-temporal context that constrains the migrant by rendering migrant agency unusable. Thus, all operations shift to the network where a new sense of agency is to be developed. The characteristic of independence is consistent with the expressed sense of individual agency (Drewery, 2001, cited in Burr, 2003, p. 190). While participating in interactions in the national social network, migrants learn new ways of being, acting, dreaming and interpreting. As a result, immigrants develop a shared sense of being, thus, a selfhood develops that is common for immigrants participating in the social network. Burr (2003, p. 193), describes this kind of selfhood, as the constitutive self.

The constitutive self is described by Sampson (1990) as an embedded individual with limited boundaries between the individual and the others. Data analysis derived that the constitutive identity is organized around the national identity and that this national identity was strongest amongst the Ghanaian participants. When answering questions regarding their identity after migration and the changes that have taken place, the group of participants from Ghana specifically identified with their country of origin as explicated by the following quote by participant six.

Wherever I go, I am always a Ghanaian. I don't consider myself Finnish. Even if I stayed permanently I would still see myself just as a Ghanaian. (Participant 6).

Only three participants out of twenty indicated having Finnish work colleagues as friends. This is contrary to the accounts of other participants who explained that from their experience, Finnish workmates could not be one's friends, the relationship that they had with Finns at work was strictly a working relationship. They explained that particularly Finnish co-workers or even classmates refused to engage in any kind of interaction with them outside of the workplace. However, Finnish work colleagues were not admitted into the national social network parse. They nevertheless

formed a separate particular “network”. In this separate network, interaction was starkly different, and activities were also distinctively different compared to the national network. Participants admitted work colleagues into these special networks only when there was a certain degree of pride attached to the nature of work one did. The three participants who spoke of having work colleagues as friends were also the three participants who have secured work outside of the service sector.

Immigrants extract specific benefits from the social networks that they participate in. The extracted benefits depended on the relationships and interactions that individuals engage in inside these social networks. Accounts by participants from Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria indicate extensive similarities in the nature of activities pursued. Thus, benefits that immigrants extracted from their interaction with the social networks were also similar. The utility of the social network derives from the kind of interaction that participants engaged in with other members in the social network. A key aspect of relation characteristic of the social networks described by participants was social support. Participants forged specific personalized relationships within the social network from which they derived practical support for the challenges experienced while living in Finland. Participants explained that a support network is critical for survival in Finland as indicated by the following quote from participant three.

My support network consists of a few friends; a few trusted friends I can rely on. And speaking of this, I have to say that having a support network is the most important thing here since you are in a foreign country and you can never know when you might be faced with a challenge. You might need help along the way and it’s only the support network that can help then. (Participant 3).

As a support network, the immigrants’ social network functioned as a coping mechanism in the host country. The support network was a source of social, economic and even spiritual support. The support network commonly consisted of nuclear family members in either the host country or the country of origin. However, it is the support network in the host country that the immigrants depended on for practical matters like economic support. Immigrants who have already worked in the Finnish service sector assisted the newer members of the social networks to secure employment through offering recommendations to the employer. In Finland, the employment of immigrant workers is limited by statistical discrimination and askepticalc stance towards culturally distant

persons (Heikkilä, 2005, . .487). Statistical discrimination is discrimination of prospective employees based on academic credentials obtained abroad and which are considered to be of less value. Therefore, securing employment becomes challenging for an immigrant who is new to the Finnish labour market. Recommendation coming from someone who has proven to be trustworthy to the Finnish employers delivers a faster rate of absorption of new immigrants. Social support was also derived from the social network in Finland.

Accounts of social life in Finland suggest that participants attached unique meanings to the weekday-weekend time concepts. The weekday was dominated by work. The days were taken entirely by work or part time work and part time school attendance. The weekday was also described as stressful, and immigrants expressed that they felt worn out by the activities of the weekday. Describing his weekday experience, participant 8 explained that he felt powerless and that his experiences were basically out of his control. Everything was so predetermined and predefined that nothing can change, and he cannot do anything about the progression that is in motion. He describes his weekday life like an automated machine with an automatic program.

Generally, the weekdays in Finland are already predetermined. Everything is already predefined for you and there can never be anything new. This is difficult because you become just like an automated machine, automatically programmed, like a vending machine. It is life on autopilot! (Participant 8).

Migrant life outside of the social realm is overwhelming. It is associated with feelings of stress, discomfort and occasional lack of belonging. These negative feelings emanate mainly from the type of work that these participants do. The weather is mentioned as a source of discomfort, though only to a limited degree. Finns and their way of interacting with migrants led participants to feel unwelcome, and depressed. Cumulatively the Finnish social context was described as laden with negative stimuli. As a result, participants were conflicted when describing their experiences of living in Finland. All 20 participants expressed mixed feelings, describing their life experiences as consisting of both negative and positive aspects. The negative aspect of their experiences emanated from the constraining external Finnish societal structure. For instance, the Finnish labour market excludes immigrants through its exclusionary practice of statistical discrimination in recruitment and employment (Heikkilä, 2005, p. 487). Asked to evaluate their immigration experience in

general, all participants presented accounts characterized by both positive and negative aspects of their Finnish immigration experience. Making this presentation even more complex is the fact that the negative and positive experiences were linked to each other. The Finnish social context was presented as having intrinsic features which produced the negative experiences. However, immigrants still managed to extract some positive experiences out of their life in Finland.

However, the positive experiences were the result of the deliberate action of the immigrants to cope. Such actions, employed to convert the negative experiences into positive outcomes take place collectively in the social network. Here the first interaction is socialization into the “culture of African immigration in Finland”. This equips immigrants with skills and techniques of coping. The migrant habitus which is imparted upon the members of the migrants’ network reflects a compromise between migrants’ initial aspirations and goals and the constraining and regulating aspects of the Finnish society. Therefore, acquisition of this migrant habitus equips migrants with a fresh perspective which become the lens through which the migratory pursuit is managed towards success. Characteristics, traits, tendencies and the general predispositions prescribed by the migrant habitus reflect a compromise of culture, values and goals of the group members. It is in this space that an immigrant with the capacity to survive in Finland is co-constructed in collaboration with other migrants. The social life which is a product of the immigrant social networks is shared with fellow immigrants, leading to the emergence of a space where comfort, familiarity and recovery from distress took place. Interactions within the social network were determined to be of high utility for participants.

Weekday interaction occurs between the immigrant and the labour market rather than with fellow immigrants. Weekends are reserved for social interaction. Married migrants spend this time with their nuclear family and the other participants spend this time with fellow immigrant friends or extended relatives. Interactions featured leisure, sports, friendly competitions, and social gatherings. Social gatherings were mainly for entertainment. Social interaction with fellow immigrants over the weekends were described as cathartic. Participant accounts indicate that the catharsis experienced during such interactions was highly valued. Participant 3 explained that it is those interactions that keep away the near insanity that is inflicted by the weekday stresses.

The weekend is the time where we address all the weekday stress. I like spending the weekends hanging out with friends. We catch up and talk about each other's life. We just check on each other. We learn from the good things and we sought out the problems. It is also the time we socialise, because otherwise you will find yourself running mad in this country. (Participant 3).

Participant 1 added that it is only during such gatherings that he becomes alive, smiles and feels normal. Participant 8 explained that pleasant and good experiences are temporary in Finland and that one experiences them when in the company of fellow immigrants and friends. But the moment one goes back to their individual life, the usual negative feelings quickly returned. Participant 17 shared a similar account. Explaining that when he moved away to a different city for work where he did not have his social network, his experience became very difficult.

It can be derived that the social network developed into a social structure representing the family unit in its cultural essence among the immigrants. This is supported further by the manner in which the social network is built in Finland. The migrant network is built through the collaboration of immigrants in response to the need to sustain a sense of the self. Therefore, it becomes an inherent part of its members, constituting their identity and selfhood. The migrant network is embodied by the members through the enculturation of its members. When members adopt the migrant habitus, it is as if they embody the very essence of the network. They start to reflect the network as it creates them and they create it further in return. African immigrants staying in Finland are the outcome of the interactions that take place within this network in the context of Finnish society. At the same time, the individual's existence perpetuates the social network, ensuring the continued existence of the network through continued interaction with other immigrants. There is no boundary between the immigrant and the other members constituting the network (Sampson, 1989, cited in Burr, 2003, p. 187).

Pleasant feelings are very temporary in Finland. You can feel comfortable in the short moments when you are with your friends, your siblings, your girlfriend or your child. But as soon as you take the bus, the metro or the train, you are in another world, where you never know what to expect, and the last thing you expect is what you might just get. (Participant 8).

Interactions within the social network cemented the solidarity between migrants. By virtue of belonging to a singular social class in the host society as migrants, participants developed a common identity based on an emerging solidarity among network participants. Solidarity strengthens collectively which in turn provides a suitable social context for the development of a migrant habitus for African migrants in Finland. Furthermore, participants tended to share their unpleasant experiences. The shared experiences included the working experiences of unsatisfactory and demeaning jobs, the challenging weather and the persistent feeling of exclusion that immigrant felt in Finland. These three experiences were perceived as a common experience among all African immigrants in Finland. Additionally, immigrants share the feeling that they do not deserve the experiences that they get in Finland, in particular, this working experience is considered a contingency that is out of their control which resulted in participants presenting themselves as victims of circumstance. Taking the victim position served to increase the participants' validity concerning any claim they laid on the system of the host country. It is therefore very easy to start a conversation based on this topic, and this conversation easily included every African immigrant in Finland.

A solidarity that is built on the backdrop of a perceived undeserved structurally induced inequality was a strong feature of the migrant network. Therefore, the network further cements the solidarity of this group of immigrants. It also validates the claims that they level on one another when facing challenges emanating from the immigration problem. According to Crossley (2002), the self cannot be constructed and presented in accounts alone, it can only be constructed in relation to other interlocutors. Interactions between African immigrants develops themes of homogeneity. These themes inform the development of the culture of migration that will aim to address the issues highlighted by these themes. This provides the groundwork for the migrant habitus developed in the migrant network. To the extent that we construct our identity through narrative accounts, such accounts must be compatible with the accounts that would be constructed by the individuals we need in order to make this construction possible. To construct their own accounts, immigrants depend on the willingness of others to support them in the construction of their version of events (Crossley, 2002, cited in Burr, 2003, p.145). The following statement by participant 6 demonstrates the migrant habitus at work as it influences the choices and actions of participants. In this particular case, this interpretation seems to be constructed to extend the validity of the participant's claim.



He enhances the scope of his account by including other immigrants in his account, he has included the general population of migrants all over the world.

An immigrant is always an immigrant. Sometimes people think that once they are able to integrate into the system, they cease to be immigrants. But to the natives of that country, you will always be an immigrant and this happens everywhere, be it Africa or Europe. In the US why are immigrants named: Asian-Americans, African-Americans? If they belonged, they would just be named Americans. (Participant 6).

Social support also took the form of socialization into the culture of survival in Finland. A culture of African immigrants in Finland is developed by immigrants through in-network activities and interactions. Coping strategies are a key feature of this culture, and they work to ensure the success of every African immigrant who makes the decision to stay in Finland. Older immigrants can explicitly teach new members the techniques of survival in Finland. But other times and inevitably, teaching occurs implicitly and probably unintended through shared actions. Thus, new members observe the way that the old members carry themselves around in the host society learning through a variety of ways such as imitation. Accordingly, immigrants became socialized into the “culture of African immigration in Finland”.

Immigrants have institutionalized their social networks, thereby elevating the capacity of these networks as social structures that support immigrants in Finland. Discussing the capacity of the internal dynamics of migration in the *Age of Migration*, Castles et al. (2014) argue that when immigrants’ collective agency is exercised, the outcomes include the rise of such entities as a social network. In turn, such an entity can be developed into social structures (Castel et al., 2014, p. 37). In turn the existence of such social structures improves the freedoms that immigrants have to exercise their agency, an agency not typical of an individual, but specifically for an entire group bound by the same social network. According to Castles et al. it is these kinds of structures that facilitate the continuity of migration as it alters the context of migration in such a manner that supported continued migration. In this case, the social network structure is responsible for the sustained existence of students in Finland past education. The network achieves this by socializing the immigrant into the culture of “immigration” thus rendering the experience of staying in the

host country normal. This grants validity to the choice to stay and reduces the utility of any other choice and thus rendering the choice of staying as rational.

In subsection 4.3.3, I have discussed the development, uptake and utilization of the migrant habitus. The development of the migrant habitus begins when participants join the nationality network of fellow African immigrants in Finland. Since immigrants join the network as a result of dissonance and a loss of individual agency, the first activity that they engage in is that of socialization. The network aims to maintain stability, therefore, acting as a coping mechanism for immigrants, the network socializes immigrants into a culture of migration in Finland. This culture reflects and incorporates the historical cultures of its members by facilitating interaction between people within a similar class, that is, a group of fellow national living in Finland. Additionally, this culture facilitates interaction in a similar language and through shared themes emanating from migration experience. The culture also highlights the similarity between migrants thus facilitating solidarity among immigrants. Solidarity is built further by sharing narratives, among migrants, particularly those narratives of bad experiences. Particularly, solidarity is encouraged by the common failure that migrants experience due to an inability to meet their migration goals. This interplay of migrants' history, culture, goals, and the host country's context result in a special context where migrants are rendered in urgent need to develop a survival strategy. All these provide a fertile ground for the development and uptake of a migrant specific system of operation in the host country. This system of operation emerged as a migrant habitus, which outlines the identity, culture, language, narrative, and practices that migrants can partake in while living in Finland. This is the migrant habitus of African staying in Finland.

### **Romantic partner networks**

The third category of the social network layer is that of romantic partners. Twelve out of the 20 participants of this study were engaged in romantic relations and partnering. Data on romantic relationships covered the following categories of partnering: Partnering as marriage, cohabiting or sustained long distance relationships with a girlfriend or wife. These relations were critical components of migrants' social networks. The partners were presented in migrant accounts influential factors in migration decision making, particularly regarding the decision to stay in the host country. Two main categories of romantic relationships emerged. The first category consists

of participants engaging in romantic relationships with fellow migrants, and the second category consists of immigrants engaging in romantic relationships with Finns.

### **The importance of romantic relationships in migration**

Past migration studies have determined that a partner's country of origin directly influences migrants' future migration decision making Jensen and Pedersen (2007, p.100). Partnering practices by African immigrants in Finland highlight outcomes that corroborate this claim. All participants involved in a romantic relationship chose a partner located in the host country. Additionally, all these participants extended their stay in the host country beyond the period that was required by the initial purpose for which they migrated to Finland. Therefore, it can be argued that the decision to partner with an individual already living in the host country supports the decision to stay in the host country. Partnering supports the extension of migratory stay in the host society in two ways. In terms of neoclassical cost calculations, the individual accrues a stronger social capital in the host country, thereby reducing the costs of immigration and raising the cost of return migration tremendously (Constant et al. 2002p. 9-11). On the other hand, it makes the decision to stay rational and valid since migrants can validate the decision to stay by embedding to the partner or the claim of an established existence in the host country. In the data collected for this study, four participants who have not stayed in Finland for very long were not yet engaged in any romantic relationships in Finland. These four participants did not indicate that they had partners in the country of origin. These individuals are trajectoryally positioned to engage in romantic relationships in the host country when the relevant transition stage arrives.

In the case that a participant partnered in a union with a country mate, the participants were married. Civil and church marriage as practiced in the general tradition of African countries. On the other hand, when African immigrants engaged in a relationship with Finns, all the unions took the form of cohabitation. To the extent that this emerging phenomenon presents the degree and nature of migrant integration into the Finnish society. This phenomenon is explored to demonstrate the migrant habitus at work in the practices taken up by network members. I will also discuss how the exercise of the collective self influences the emerging migrant, successful or a failed?

### **Cohabitation versus marriage**

In Finland, cohabitation as a kind of marital union has strikingly grown in popularity and rate since the 1960's. In fact, studies indicate that the Nordic countries of Denmark, Sweden and Finland have been at the forefront in the rise and extensive practice of cohabitation as a form of union (Kiernan, 2009; Mäenpää, 2009). However, the same in the rest of the world did not accompany the rising popularity of cohabitation in Europe, and there has been a variance in the manner in which this practice has been embraced in different countries. In Africa, there are four main identified marital union categories. Civil marriage, religious marriage, customary or traditional marriage and mutual consent marriage (Meekers, 1992, p. 63). The mutual consent marriage category would be the equivalent of Finnish cohabitation in Africa. However, even in Africa, cohabitation is still a limited practice. The practice of cohabitation is particular with certain Eastern and Southern African groups. Consistent with the historical genealogy of cohabitation, its practice has always been attributed to specific groups, for instance, the poor, the working class, and sometimes ideological deviants (Meeker, 1992, p. 67-9).

Similar to traditional Britain, when cohabitation is practiced in Africa, the union takes a persistent and procreative form with the likelihood of obtaining a legal status and thus transitioning into marriage. However, cohabiting unions are considered inferior in African culture. Partners in such unions lack stability and security, and sometimes paternal rights are contestable in such unions (Meeker, 1992; Kiernan, 2009). Nine out of 12 of the participants of this study engaging in a romantic relationship are cohabiting with partners of Finnish origin. Only the remaining three were married in the traditional sense, and these three were married to partners of a similar country of origin and a similar migration status. Mäenpää (2009, p. 72) explains that homogamy influences the transition of cohabitation relationships into marriages. Of the three married participants, one individual has a partner living in the country of origin while the other two are living with their partners in the host country. Lack heterogeneity in African Finnish couples contributed to the failure by these relationships to mature into marriages.

Marital unions were presented as very stable and participants were satisfied with the nature of their relationships. All three married participants had children as well. The romantic relationships of the other nine immigrants were significantly different from the first three romantic relationships. For the purposes of this thesis, cohabitation shall be defined as follows: A romantic relationship

between a man and a woman with no more than a 20-year age difference, who are not siblings, or a parent and a child, and who have been domiciled in the same apartment for over 90 days (Mäenpää, 2009, p. 66). Migrants' cohabitation union accounts indicated that such unions were extremely unstable and exhibited a highly temporary nature. Although it could be derived that in engaging in cohabitation rather than the traditional marriage, migrants are integrated into the system. But, this claim is challenged by the fact that immigrants who have stayed in Finland for much longer periods of time (e.g. Participant 10, 17 years and Participant 17, 13 years) opted against this type of union. Therefore, there is no reason to link cohabitation and the level of integration.

Data analysis identified a significant likelihood that immigrants engaged in cohabitation due to contingencies beyond their control. Due to the structural constraints of legal residency documents, participants sometimes engaged in a relationship with a Finn to ensure the security of their residential status. Therefore, the wisdom of the migrant habitus guides such action enabling migrants to manoeuvre the structural constraints through collective agency freedom. Out nine cohabitation relationships, four ended in "divorce" or rather permanent break up, while three ended in a separation. When presenting their accounts, participants 4, 12, and 13 used the term divorce to describe the ending of their first cohabitation unions. This indicates that migrants perceived cohabitation and marriage as synonymous. The use of the term divorce also paints the immigrants as legitimate persons engaging in legitimate pursuit such as a legal union.

According to Kiernan (2009), cohabitation trends in Europe reveal that more cohabitation unions in Finland transitioned to marriages rather than dissolution. However, participant accounts indicate that cohabitation ended in dissolution in seven out of nine cases, a sharp opposite of the outcome of Mäenpää's (2009) study of cohabitation among Finns. Additionally, Mäenpää adds that children sped up the transition of cohabitation into marriage. Of the initial nine migrant cohabitation unions, seven ended in dissolution. But, in all the seven unions, there were children, sometimes even more than one child. Cohabitation takes different forms depending on the individuals participating in it. Cohabitation between partners of similar origin, for instance, between Finns, resulted in different outcomes as indicated in Mäenpää (2009, p. 67). The outcome of cohabitation is different when one of the partners is of foreign origin, as in this case, immigrants of African descent. Migrant

specific characteristics jeopardise these unions. Mäenpää (2009) explains that the key determinants of success in transitioning a cohabiting union onto a marriage are socioeconomic. Therefore, a high income, high level of education and stable employment are some of the factors determined by a study of cohabitation in Finland (Mäenpää, 2009, p. 68-9).

However, African immigrants in Finland perform and rank rather poorly in terms of socioeconomic wealth. Excluded from the primary Finnish labour market, and barred by statistical discrimination from exercising their academic skills in Finland, African immigrants lack the endowments necessary to facilitate the transition of their cohabitation unions into marriages. Mäenpää also explains that homogamy in partner characteristics are critical for the successful development of a cohabiting union into marriage. However, African immigrants in Finland and their Finnish partners are significantly heterogamous in character. For instance, these partners hold different cultural and traditional beliefs among other disparities. This explains the high dissolution tendency of Finnish-African cohabitation relationships. Thus, data analysis suggests that an incomplete culture of migration among the relatively new members of the immigrant social network explains their decision to engage in romantic relationships with Finns. These immigrants have not yet acquired the migrant habitus of Africans in Finland. They lack the coping mechanism for survival in Finland. Therefore, they are seeking alternative survival strategies. Since the acquisition and use of the migrant habitus determine success for migrants, these immigrants are considered failed migrants.

### **A Finnish nuclear family network**

The nuclear family developed into a separate significant social network for a participant whenever the spouse was Finnish. The nuclear family expanded an immigrants' social network and affected the migrants' succeeding decisions. A Finnish nuclear family had a negative impact on the relationship between the immigrant and the nationality social network. For instance, the immigrant was partly excluded from the national social network, thereby limiting his or her freedom to engage in network interactions. As a result, these immigrants' were impeded in the adoption of the culture of immigration. Further, they were limited in terms of their freedom to appropriate the social structures of the network thus having a limited agency freedom. For example, participant 18, an immigrant who has maintained the longest relationship with a Finnish partner, indicates a weaker

adoption of the culture of immigration in Finland despite having stayed in Finland for a relatively longer period of time, (14 years). This suggests that this immigrant has failed to fully socialize into the culture of immigration as a result of being excluded from it due to his allegiance to the Finnish partner network. The following quote indicates that this participant gravitates more towards the Finnish national society's culture rather than the culture of migration of Africans in Finland. He fails to adopt practices that reflect the migrant habitus of an African immigrant in Finland.

During my free time, I sometimes go to study Finnish in the evenings. I still study Finnish, I just want to study Finnish, I just want to learn the language deeper and deeper because I have time and I just want to learn more. (Participant 18).

Following the discussion in the subsection 4.3.3, one can attribute the romantic relationship choices of African immigrants in Finland to the convergence of circumstances in the host country. However, the context and structural constraints in Finland determine the kind of relationships engaged in and the outcomes of such relationships. For instance, cultural differences affect the trajectory of these relationships as indicated by the fate of African-Finnish cohabitations. However, migrants are influenced, but by the culture of migration, in an agentic attempt to overcome the structure. Migrants who fully acquire the migrant habitus engage in romantic relationships with fellow migrants. They pursue marriage in the traditional African essence. They are also individuals who have stayed in Finland for longer. Fresher migrants who have not completed their enculturation into the migrant culture follow mixed and confused practices in their relationship tendencies. They cohabitate with Finns for a variety of reasons and they fail to convert their relationships to stable marriages due to prevailing structural and cultural limitations. Their Finnish network affects their capacity to succeed as a migrant in Finland in the African sense negatively. Thus, they appear as failed migrants rather than successful migrants according to the practices and the culture of migration developed in migrant networks. Growth of the migrant habitus is strongest when homogeneity is strongest.

#### 4.3.4 Collective agency at work

In this section, I analyse the marital decisions of participant 10 and participant 19 to present my findings on the development, acquisition of collective agency and the migrant habitus. In these two marital unions participants married a spouse from the same country of origin.

My marriage is so enjoyable; I wish everybody could be married. We love each other, we are so open, and actually I've just realized that we've been married for four years. I don't even notice time passing by because it is so good and we have a baby too. I feel happy, my marriage is good, we've not had any bad experiences so far, my marriage is good. I am married to a Kenyan! (Participant 10).

Interaction between these partners is supportive and both participant accounts indicate that spouses are perceived as making the experience of living in Finland easier and more fulfilling. Participant 17 explains that having moved from one city to another for work, he left his nationality social network behind. He presents his life experience in the absence of his nationality social network as nearly unbearable. He adds that the solution to this problem came only when he got married.

Some of the best moments I've had so far in Finland were in university because there I was in the student life and I was surrounded by international students, then living in Helsinki, because the Ghanaian community there is large so when I moved there and started working there I felt okay. All the friends around me were around my age, and so we were having fun together as guys and all that, but when I moved to this smaller city for work, to start my current position, I realized how different it was. My colleagues were on average 10-15 years older than me, married, so I was alone. At first I didn't feel it that much because I was very busy at work trying to settle in. But by the second year I started feeling that it was too lonely, come to work its fine, but at home there was nobody around me. I tried all sought of things, social engagements, but nothing worked until my wife came into the picture, things have gotten so much better. (Participant 17).

Participant 17 is very particular about the individuals that he admits to his network. His account presents an image where it was impossible to build a supportive social network in the absence of



fellow African immigrants. This is consistent with the pattern with which the migrant social network is constructed. These networks are specific to immigrants and fellow country mates. It could be deduced that this participant is acting in a manner that reflects the existence of a constituted selfhood, guided by specific values and tenets of the immigrant culture. Thus, the choice to marry rather than cohabit is consistent with the argument that immigrants build the social network to reflect the traditional and cultural values of the country of origin. It has been indicated that in Africa, marriage rather than cohabitation is deemed as credible and prestigious practice. Additionally, he married a fellow country mate immigrant in Finland, thus a fellow social network member with a shared immigrant selfhood. It was postulated earlier that the rather recent immigrants in Finland had enough incentive to engage in romantic relationships with Finnish citizens, which aids them in attaining legal residence papers. This participant has lived in Finland for slightly over 13 years, and has obtained the Finnish citizenship. Analysis deduced that this participant has no incentive at all to engage in romantic relationships with Finnish individuals. It is this argument that marks the differences in romantic relationship interactions between ‘acculturated’ immigrants and the ones who are not.

Participant 10 presents an account similar to that of participant 17. She has lived in Finland for about 17 years. She is married to a country mate living in Finland, and was already a Finnish citizen by the time they got married. In describing her partner, she stresses the fact that her partner is also from Kenya. She presents their shared life as very fulfilling. They are supportive of each other and their family and friends and very important to her. It can be argued that when choosing a partner, this immigrant was not bounded by the need to secure legal residential status in the host country, and thus, the incentive to engage a Finn in a romantic relationship was extremely low. Additionally, this participant indicates having a string of allegiance to the immigrant social networks in Finland. This could explain her choice to marry a fellow immigrant from within the network. It can be argued that older migrants have completely acquired and adopted the Finnish culture of immigration. Consequently, their constituted self has developed with time through continuous interaction.

According to Sampson (1990), the constituted self exists in tandem with the others belonging to the social network. With a shared selfhood and culture, it is most likely that such an individual

will continue to act within the network rather than step outside of it. As noted in the earlier sections of this chapter, solidarity among immigrants is built on shared experiences, especially the negative experiences. Interclass cooperation among individuals subjected to the same experiences viewed as violating, discriminating or challenging is easily obtained. Thus, individuals whose selfhoods are built against such a backdrop will tend to act within the network where they feel that all their activities contribute to the development of the capacity of the class they belong to. Therefore, interactions will be kept within the social network to the greatest extent possible. Additionally, this participant, like participant 17, expressed an interest in maintaining certain practices consistent with cultural perspectives of the home country. Family members and friendships are valued the most. Religion and family values construct the main valuation system applied in decision-making. In line with values and an African cultural system, the practice adopted by this individual concerning work is worth noting. She (participant 10) has enrolled in the nursing course with the aim of obtaining decent employment. When discussing the value of work, she explained that a good job for her would have to be a job that allows her to grow and learn new things every working day.

Well, when looking for a job, I know exactly what I want, a place for growth! Coming out school now, I'm looking for a place where I will be learning each and every day. And this is the only reason why I cannot go back to my old job, because it was monotonous without any room for growth. (Participant 10).

The degree of enculturation of the migrant culture by participant 10 is evident in the two main choices she made. These are her choice of a partner and the selection of work while living in the host country. This expertise in manoeuvring the host country's structures and systems is demonstrated by interviewee 17. The quote below illustrates perspectives on the meaning of work. Work understood from the traditional African perspective is an activity that enhances one's development and growth, particularly concerning prestige and status growth. This particular definition of work becomes irrelevant for most of the participants of this study, and this is another difference between these two participants and the others. They have managed to manoeuvre the structure by implementing their own social and cultural structure of migration aimed at ensuring their survival in Finland. Participant 17 works in the primary Finnish labour market.

For me a job must offer flexibility and more importantly, my competences must be utilized and respected by the people around me. This is important because it boosts one's self-esteem just knowing that people respect you for your competences. (Participant 10).

The remarkable difference between participant 10 and 17 with regards to their overall outlook towards life as immigrants speaks to the role played by the migrant habitus in guiding practice, action and decisions. Their experiences vary from that of other migrants, indicating that the adoption of the migrant habitus is supported by homogeneity, solidarity, time and commitment.

Well, in my opinion, lately, the meaning and value of work depend on the context. When I was in Ghana, a job meant something that utilized my capabilities, that is, my cognitive capabilities, and those aspects that constitute me. But, in Finland, a job is something that gets the bills paid as long as it is considered legal in the country. (Participant 17).

In subsection 4.3.4, I have presented a short analysis to capture migrant habitus at work through the collective agency of a socially constituted migrant. The analysis of the participant accounts of participant 10 and 17 indicates that the choice of a partner among African immigrants in Finland is dependent on the period of time that an immigrant has spent in the host country. The period of time has implications for the aspects that directly influence the choice of partner. An older established migrant makes the partner choice more freely basing the choice on norms outlined in the culture of migration. Norms of homogeneity, class solidarity, shared experiences and solidarity. The other aspects that the older immigrants consider when choosing a partner are determined by the culture of immigration. It was determined that these are similar to aspects typically spelt out by general African cultural tradition or the specific country traditions of the country of origin. Among older immigrants, the tendency to sustain solidarity with fellow network members is stronger. Almost all of the interactions that these immigrants engage in are based within the social network. For the purposes of this thesis, this argument is based on the concept of class resistance mentality, which produces solidarity among members of a class. Also, the class is formed on the basis of a shared negative experience, which is interpreted as an inequality or exploitation and thus becoming a point of resistance.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the lived experience accounts of 20 African migrants in Finland. The study examined these experiences with the end goal of illuminating the quality of life that participants afford in Finland versus their migration expectations. My ultimate goal was to determine the rationality framework that informs migrant practice, action and decisions in the context of Finland. The analytic description contributes to the body of knowledge on migration, particularly human agency in migration contexts. This is the component of this study that holds relevant and pragmatic potential for informing migration policy. This study examines the structural constraints on human agency and on migrants in general. Consequently, the study highlights the conditions that are conducive for migrant agency in the form of collective agency of migrant social networks to be exercised. This study goes further to indicate the consequences of the various degrees of agency freedom for migrants. More specifically, Finnish migration policy makers interested in the integration of African migrants in Finland can gain useful insights from this study with regards to African migrants' socioeconomic conditions in Finland.

The analysis determined that the 20 accounts presented by the participants highlight the migrant reality of African immigrants in Finland. Accounts presented a struggle between the individual agency of migrants versus the constraining aspects of the host country. It was determined that participants employed social constructionist techniques, thereby constructing accounts that validated their practices and experiences in the host country. Thus, they constantly upheld their sense of rationality. The accounts represented a migration experience that saw individuals starting the migration process at a favourable positionality of highly independent, goal oriented, determined and individualistic agents. Migrants presented accounts of essentialist, goal oriented, and independent individuals embodying a strong sense of individual agency during the pre-migration period. Migrants' perceived rationality emerges as a factor contingent upon the successful exercise of individual agency. Concerning their goals, migrants embark on their migration process with the aim of obtaining provisions capable of supporting a better life. Vaguely and abstractly defined, migrants set off in pursuit of a better life through indirectly through the pursuit of higher education. The accounts present an arduous process that challenges the intrinsic values that defined migrants in the pre migration period. Therefore, from the beginning of the

immigrant life in the host society, migrants are immersed in unexpected and extremely challenging life circumstances that determine the radical changes that these migrants incorporate into the practices and way of being they adopted for the rest of their stay in the host country.

Data analysis suggest that migration is a time and context specific endeavour driven by goals, capabilities and aspirations of a better life. The good life is perceived to be one of career success, abundant opportunities and academic advancement. Thus, it is a developmental process through which the individual develops. This underscores the dynamic nature of the migration process. Migrants transformation and development is affected by the transformation in the migrant's cognitive perceptions of the self. Thus, it follows that migration experience as in the case of student migrants involved in this study, is a highly individualized process. The most ideal unit of analysis is the self, the micro level of analysis. Consequently, human agency emerged as a key aspect and dimension of the migrant experience. Agency became the factor that shaped and determined the entire migratory process, informing decisions, choices and practices pursued by migrants.

Also, migration emerged as a particularly processual phenomenon in which decisions and practices embodied temporal dimensions of history and current times. The main dimensions of the process are the temporal and the spatial aspects of the migration process. It was determined that migrant practices, identity and decisions are influenced significantly by the location of the agent. Practices and identity varied starkly depending on the participant's spatial location, either in the country of origin or the host country. Additionally, participants geographically positioned themselves in their accounts thereby emphasizing the importance of the physical context in a migration situation. At the onset of their accounts, participants located themselves in a past spatio-temporal context in the host country. Succeeding accounts later locates the migrant in the host country as a specific spatio-temporal space. This draws attention to the importance of historical background in the development of the migrant trajectory of participants. The study continues to conclude that migrants' way of knowing, understanding and acting is culturally and historically specific. Shaped by the historical, social, cultural and ethnic context of the migrant. But these predispositions are transformed and altered by the structural conditions of the host society. A compromise between migrants' original system of predispositions and the regulations of Finland produce a migrant habitus for African immigrants in Finland. The past stays in the present in this sense.

Migrant accounts are rationalised representations concerning two sites. Identity (both internal self-perception and the external profile image) and the cultural premise of values, rights and obligations that migrants subscribe to. Although rationalization is performed specifically and individually, the manner of performance, the sites of work and the objects acted upon are similar among participants. This leads to the conclusion that the practice of rationalization is learnt and that immigrants learn how to engage in this work from their social interactions in the migrant networks. It is a practice informed by the system of predispositions that migrants acquire from the networks. The network of African student migrants in Finland is a tight-knit circle of individuals with a shared nationality and continental origin. Thus, the learning process is facilitated by a shared history, language, culture and values. A combination of cognitive attributes, skills and immigrant's cultural predisposition facilitates the learning process. Thus, this learning process is supported by a matrix of perceptions, appreciation and actions inherent in the emerging migrant habitus shared by members of the migrant network. Rationalization implies validity and legitimacy for the immigrant. Validation of the self after the loss of individual agency freedom and its embedded goals, aspirations and values. Rationalized versions of reality are embodied by the participants so much that it is this constructed reality that is presented during social, economic and cultural interaction

Results of the study indicate that African international student migrants migrated to a target host country, Finland, out of the exercise of their individual agency, consistent with their main character trait of independence. Thus, migrants are goal-oriented individuals determined to attain the general goal of a better future. Therefore, migration conceptualised as a feature of capabilities and aspirations emerges as a suitable approach in the explanation of migration motivation and causes. This approach raises plausible explanations for the transformations that occur to the migration trajectory. This is done by maintaining a focus on the initially outlined aspirations and migrant capabilities. Data analysis determined that capabilities either enhanced or diminished, played a key role in influencing migrants' decision to stay on in Finland.

It was also determined that the migration trajectory is influenced by the cumulative feedback systems of migration. Migration trajectory choices are further influenced by migrants' motivation to escape and correct certain perceived historical wrongs in the country of origin. The true meaning

of migration is only determined after moving into the host country and this results in dissonance due to conflict between migration expectations and migration reality. The period after the felt dissonance determines the direction of the migrant trajectory. In this study, the result is a prolonged stay in the host country as migrants attempt to strategize.

Consequently, migrants join together and they develop a culture of migration to facilitate the survival of their sense of the self, agency and thus rationality. What sparks this is the need by immigrants to obtain legitimacy and validation as 'rational beings' in the host society. This culture of migration becomes a key coping mechanism for migrants. The study determined that immigrants attempt to strengthen their sense of rationality by operating in a manner considered legitimate in the host country. As a result, migrants locate themselves in Finland in a manner that reflects and invokes further legitimation all at once. Locating the self is done by embedding the self to the host country through the use of self attributes perceived appropriate for the host country, the parent-child network and economic involvement. Emerging after the social process of interaction in the network of African immigrants in Finland is an individual who embodies a habitus that facilitates the practice of immigration in Finland. Incorporating bits of the migrants' historical background and culture along with appropriated attributes of the host society, the individual agents develops a rationality framework with the capacity to encounter the uncertainty and the contingencies of living in a host society as a migrant.

Given the outcome of data analysis, I postulate that participant's constructs of marriage or cohabitation are aimed at enhancing their rationality as actors and decision makers. Therefore, I argue that the differences observed in migrant romantic relationship choices reflect the stages of development of participants' collective agency at a general level. In social constructionism, the individual that results from social interactions is a constitutive individual, existing in unity with other members of a chosen social structure. I argue that immigrants develop a constitutive self from their interactions in the social networks that they join. In turn, they are impacted by these social networks as they continue to alter the same networks themselves. The process of acquiring a constitutive self takes time. Therefore, the older immigrants exhibit a constitutive selfhood that is complete. Consequently, their actions and practices adhere to the tenets of the culture of immigration, the collective agency and the migrant habitus. On the other hand, the fresher

members of the social networks exhibit an incomplete mastery of the immigrant culture. Thus, their constitutive selfhood is still under construction and this shows in the various choices that are made. Their degree of solidarity with the networks is also relatively weak. This is also attributed to the feelings of dissonance experienced by immigrants at this stage as explicated earlier. Additionally, the relatively new immigrant still struggles with the transition from the exercise of individual agency, to that of collective selfhood.

The migrant social network consists of layers of networks that vary in terms of membership. However, an immigrant can belong to more than one such category within the broader social network of all immigrants in Finland. Interaction within the network varies from one participant to another. The analysis above indicates that a key factor to survival in Finland after making the decision to stay is the successful enculturation into the network culture of migration in Finland. This culture constitutes a collection of strategies, knowledge and coping mechanisms that enhance the capacity of an individual to survive as an immigrant in Finland. Thus a migrant habitus for African immigrants in Finland. This culture is constructed by immigrants through actions and interactions within the social network. Learning takes place during interaction. The degree of success or failure to acquire the migrant habitus depends on the intensity of an immigrant's participation in interactions within the network. The amount of time spent in the host country also influences the degree of learning. Further, it was discovered that an immigrant's romantic partner network can impede the extent to which an immigrant acquires the culture of immigration. This culture of immigration resembled the traditional and cultural tenets of immigrants' countries of origin. It is argued that the social network assumed the structural features of a family. The analysis also derived that solidarity in the social network stems from a shared identity. The shared identity was developed on the basis of a shared experience.

Furthermore, the experience around which immigrants unanimously rallied were specifically negative experiences of immigration, in particular, the negative experiences that immigrants felt were undeserved and unwarranted. These include exclusion of immigrants from the primary Finnish labour market and the exclusion of immigrants from the larger Finnish society resulting in such feelings as the failure to belong. Solidarity was also built around a shared national identity, although this was not particularly explored, there was a sense of recognizing with the country that



one came from. This was evident from the manner in which immigrants located themselves in the country of origin before migration as well as the manner in which immigrants identified themselves with their national identity rather than individual identity after the experience of dissonance. Therefore, I argue that in the development of the constituted self, the two key foundational factors are the national identity, and shared negative experiences of exclusion in the host country. The constituted self is constructed from this backdrop with the outcome being immigrants with the capacity to survive in Finland due to the successful adoption of the migration culture which in turn equips immigrants with the ability to act in tandem with the collective agency of the social networks that one belongs to.

To conclude, I would like to tie this study to the issue of global governance. Global governance of international migration is a central issue in studies of international migration. Migration is managed through migration policies, migration laws, treaties and conventions that bind countries and continents. Although the findings of this study hold strong significance only at the individual migrant level, this significance has the potential of developing into an influential factor in migration debate and discourse, thereby standing the chance of indirectly influencing migration policies. At the individual migrant level, these findings can raise the awareness levels of African student migrants. African student migrants can learn about their migration trajectory, the configuration of constraints and opportunities available to them and an understanding of the temporal and spatial dynamics of international migration. This kind of awareness encourages a continuation of self-reflection among migrants. In turn, this informs migrants' decision making processes. Moreover, this awareness can be leveraged as power by immigrants in discursive arenas, where they can authoritatively contribute to a discussion of their status, their limitations and opportunities. When highly aware immigrants come together and an opportunity emerges for informed dialogue which can contribute to the body of knowledge on international migration.

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# APPENDICES:

## APPENDIX 1.

**TABLE 1:**

Background data of the 20 participants of the study.

Pseudonym	Period of stay	Marital & Nuclear family details	Labour Market Participation	Residential Status <sup>5</sup>	Country of Origin
Participant 1 Participant 6 Participant 7 Participant 9 Participant 14 Participant 16	1-3 Years	The members of this group do not have children. They have not married both in the host and the country of origin.	Active, menial Active, menial Active, menial Active, menial Active, menial Active, menial	B <sup>6</sup> B A <sup>7</sup> A A A	Nigeria Ghana Kenya Kenya Kenya Nigeria
Participant 4 Participant 5 Participant 11 Participant 13 Participant 15	4-8 Years	4- Divorced. Cohabiting. 1 Finnish child. 5- Married to a Ghanaian in Ghana, 2 children in Ghana. 11-Not married, No children. 13- Divorced. Cohabiting. Children 15- Not married. 1 Finnish child	Active, menial Active, menial Active, menial Active, menial Active, menial	A, B A PRP <sup>8</sup> PRP	Kenya Ghana Kenya Kenya Gambia
Participant 2 Participant 3 Participant 8 Participant 10 Participant 17 Participant 18 Participant 19 Participant 20	9-19 Years	2- Not married. No children 3- Not married. No children 8- Finnish girlfriend. 1 Finnish child. 2 children in Kenya. Wife in Kenya. 10- Married to a Kenyan in Finland. 1 dual citizen child 17- Married to a Ghanaian in Finland. 1 dual citizen child. 18- Cohabiting. Has 5 Finnish children 19- Cohabiting. Has 3 Finnish children 20- Divorced. Has 2 Finnish Children.	Active, menial Active, menial Active, menial Active, Primary Active, Primary Active, menial Active, Primary Active, Primary	Citizen PRP PRP Citizen Citizen Citizen Citizen PRP	Ghana Kenya Kenya Kenya Ghana Kenya Kenya Zambia
Participant 12	20+ years	12- Divorced. Has 2 Finnish children	Inactive	Citizen	Kenya

<sup>5</sup> There are three kinds of resident permits given to foreigners living in Finland. Two are fixed term residence permits and the other is a permanent residence permit with unlimited validity.

<sup>6</sup> A fixed term temporary residence permit, denoted by the letter B.

<sup>7</sup> A continuous fixed term residence permit, denoted by the letter A.

<sup>8</sup> A permanent residence permits with unlimited validity.



APPENDIX 2.

TABLE 2:

Migrant' agency development by time and rational domains through the migration process.

<b>Core category:</b> Migrants' life in Finland as a struggle to sustain their sense of rationality through the exercise of agency			
<b>Rationalization domains</b> (dimensions and properties of the main conceptual categories)			
<b>Time</b> (Process)	<b>Self-domain</b> <i>'the individual'</i> (micro level)	<b>Relational domain</b> <i>'the social'</i> (meso level)	<b>Contextual domain</b> <i>'the structure'</i> (macro level)
<b>Past</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual agency</li> <li>• Locating the self before migration</li> <li>• Personal individual features are centralized</li> <li>• Identity is built around self-perceptions of the self and other achievements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meso level relationships and networks are not centralized.</li> <li>• The individual is presented as highly independent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Country of origin</li> <li>• Structural constraints are addressed by emigration</li> </ul>
<b>Present</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 'self' experiences dissonance and conflict</li> <li>• Adjustments are sought through from the social network and the immigrant culture of migration in Finland</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective agency</li> <li>• Social networks are centralized</li> <li>• National identity replaces individual perceptions of the self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host country, Finland</li> <li>• Structural constraints manifest as reasons facilitating 'stay' decision</li> </ul>
<b>Present-Future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual +</li> <li>• A negotiated individual emerges from social interaction and adjustment to the structure</li> <li>• Mediated agency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships +</li> <li>• Nuclear relationships become central definers of the self in Finland</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure</li> <li>• Learning to manoeuvre the structure.</li> <li>• Gaining citizenship.</li> </ul>

APPENDIX 3.

FIGURE 1.

<p>2. # 6</p> <p>Secure a better future through expanding education.</p> <p>-Received negative motivation by a stagnant job, bad pay and no chance for rising as desired.</p> <p>Past migration influence?</p> <p>Rational argument. Has the trajectory been consistent? Goals met? Any changes to the plan?</p>	<p>Job was stagnating. No room for growth.</p> <p>Rationale? Unlock more opportunities with education. Found the school through his own initiative. No SN.</p> <p>Rational.</p> <p>What other avenues were there beyond schools in the UK that were opted against?</p> <p>By which rationality?</p>	<p>No nuclear family.</p> <p>-No responsibility for mum, she is independent, has pension, has all she needs. Dad dead. Other siblings are at home.</p> <p>Which rationality is this?</p> <p>Seems rational.</p>	<p>Most likely extending stay in order to figure out a concrete outcome of the endeavour taken to come to Finland. This is a very fluid indefinite plan.</p> <p>What kind of rationality is this fluid experimental strategy?</p>	<p>-Social life has not picked up.</p> <p>-Not married, no romantic relationship, no children.</p> <p>How does this affect or influence the decision of staying or leaving?</p>	<p>-A way to be busy – rationalizing?</p> <p>-A way to pay bills and not go broke.</p> <p>- The higher wages are considered as appeasing for the bad nature of the jobs.</p> <p>Which rationality is this? Why is it chosen and what makes it plausible?</p>	<p>-No mention.</p> <p>-His thought on Finnish citizenship are very defensive. What does this signify since he talks of staying one way or another, for PhD, proper work or mean time work to make some money. – the dog/horse quote by the British minister, the naming in America- He is clearer about staying than he is about going back to Ghana. In fact, there is no explicit expression of desire to go back to Ghana.</p>	<p>-The present life does not hold much value for him. It has a lot of disappointments and therefore the future is being regarded as most critical. The past is also evaluated with mixed feelings. He feels that he may not have achieved all that he ought to have.</p> <p>Did he migrate to run away from Home? Because of the demands it was laying on him? Or because he felt he wasn't doing as well as she should have been? In this light then he is a failed migrant.</p>
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A screen shot of the open coding of interview 6.

## APPENDIX 4.

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### CATEGORY 1: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION-

1. Pseudonym -----
2. Age -----
3. Gender -----
4. Country of Origin -----

#### CATEGORY 2: MIGRATION HISTORY-

1. Could you share with me your migration history?
2. When did you come to Finland?
3. What was/were your reasons for coming to Finland?
4. Are you still doing the same thing (studying, working, interning)?
5. What are your long time settlement plans?
6. Would you briefly describe what the experience of living in Finland has been like for you up to now?

#### CATEGORY 3: EVERYDAY LIFE-

1. What are some of the feelings you associate with living in Finland?
2. What does a week day and Weekend look like for you in Finland?
3. When not working, what do you typically/commonly do?

#### CATEGORY 4: WORKING LIFE-

1. Tell me more about your work life in Finland, giving a history of all the jobs you have done up to the one you are doing currently
2. Tell me more about your employment contract.
3. When seeking and accepting employment in Finland, what are the key influencing factors for you? What can you compromise and what cannot be compromised?
4. What are your future plans with regards to employment?
5. Describe your economic capacity and stability before your migration to Finland, now and future projections on the same
6. How do you deal with/handle financial uncertainties?
7. Describe your experience working in Finland

#### CATEGORY 5: SOCIAL AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS-

1. Are you married? Describe your marriage/family in Finland
2. Do you have children in Finland? Are they Finnish?
3. Do they attend school in Finland?
4. Describe your social life in Finland?
5. Do you have a support network in Finland? Please describe it in detail.

#### CATEGORY 6: SOCIAL CAPITAL AND REMITTANCE-

1. Describe your (origin) family: Your parents and siblings?
2. Are any other members of your family here in Finland or migrated to another country?
3. Please describe the relationship that you have and maintain with your family?
4. Do you travel to your country of origin often/at all? And why? What means of communication do you use?
5. Do you send remittance to your family? Could you share more with me about the nature, the purpose and the frequency?

#### OTHER QUESTIONS:

1. How do you identify yourself to others, among others and with others?
2. How do people in Finland identify you?
3. Describe your migrant experience in Finland
4. Would you say that you have a sense of belonging in Finland?

