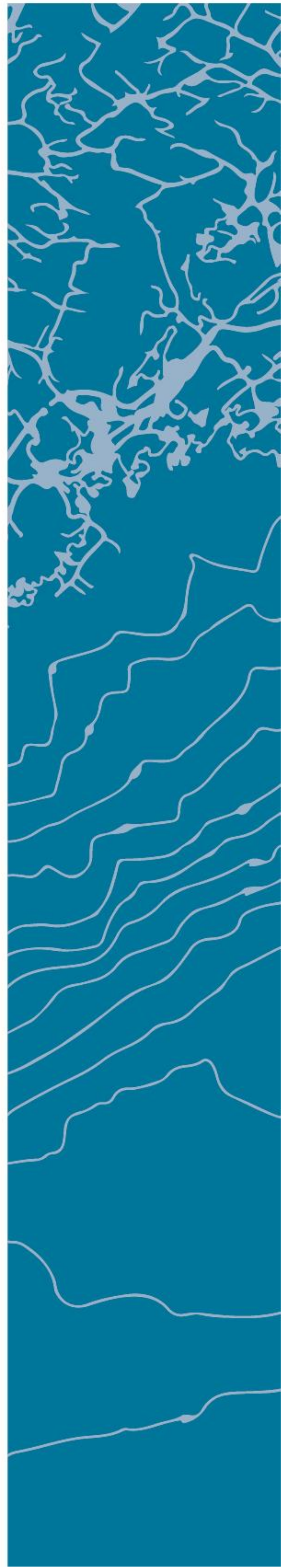

Meanings, mechanisms, and obstacles of integration in Lindesnes, Norway

How refugees, immigrants, and the receiving society encounter one another, each other, and themselves

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Abstract

In the past decade, an unprecedented number of people have come to Europe seeking refuge. This has thrust immigration into the spotlight, especially for generous welfare states such as Norway. As rural areas of the country become more diverse, understanding social interaction among immigrants – including refugees – and the receiving society is critical for improved integration outcomes. Through ethnographic research, this master's thesis sheds light on how immigrant and ethnic Norwegian residents of Lindesnes municipality define and relate to integration. The data reveal factors that contribute to and hinder integration. These findings are then analyzed through the use of Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx's (2016) heuristic model for the study of integration, which puts a focus on the interaction between and among immigrants and the receiving society. The findings reveal the importance of the receiving society to both individual and societal integration outcomes. How individuals, organizations, and institutions in Norway perceive and interact with immigrants is paramount. Based on the findings and subsequent discussion, specific recommendations are made for Lindesnes municipality. While each place comes with its own unique characteristics, the findings and recommendations may be useful to other communities in Norway and beyond.

Keywords: Immigration, multiculturalism, diversity, integration, refugee, immigrant, rural development, Norway

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To the participants of this study for sharing their time, emotions, and experiences with me. Without them, this research would not be possible. I recognize integration may not be the most interesting or easiest topic to discuss, but I truly believe the more we know, the better our society can become.

Finally, I would like to express an enormous amount of gratitude to my family. My father passed away as I started this academic journey. While he was not here to directly advise, his dedication to science and higher education throughout his life guided and motivated my research. In the final countdown to submission, my mother flew across the sea to help care for my son, nourish me, and proofread this document. She is one of a kind. And, last but not least, to my partner. I am in awe of his resilience, patience, and acceptance in light of all he has endured. He gives me perspective and knows how to make me laugh.

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Glossary

Agreement on the European Economic Area: An agreement made to ensure the free movement of goods, services, persons, and capital within the European Economic Area (EFTA, 2021)

Asylum seeker: An individual who has left their home country and come to Norway seeking protection, often from war or other political factors

Ethnic Norwegian: Dominant, white majority population in Norway [1]

European Economic Area (EEA): All European Union Members States and Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway (EFTA, 2021)

Immigrant: A person living in a country other than that of his or her birth, including refugees (Bolter, 2019) [2]

Introduction program: A full-time, obligatory program adult refugees and their families participate in to learn Norwegian language and culture. The program typically lasts two years. Municipalities are required, by law, to offer the program within three months of settling refugees. Refugees are paid a modest salary while enrolled. Also called *Intro. (IMDi, 2019a)*

NAV: The Norwegian Labor and Welfare Administration, the entity responsible for settling refugees in Lindesnes as well as following-up and facilitating the Introduction Program.

NOKUT: The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, the entity responsible for assessing foreign education and assigning Norwegian equivalencies

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[1] While the term may be problematic in nature, it is the most used and understood term to identify this group. I use it for lack of better, more universally understood terminology.

[2] For clarity, when I reference immigrants in this study it does *not* include children born in Norway to immigrant parents. No research participants in this study were born in Norway to immigrant parents and, as such, the data does not reflect their opinions and experiences.

Receiving society: Individuals, organizations, and institutions in Lindesnes, primarily – but not exclusively – made up of ethnic Norwegians [3]

Refugee: An asylum seeker who has been granted residency in Norway by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration

Resettlement refugee: Refugees who are transferred from an asylum country to Norway and granted immediate residency. For example, a Syrian living in a Jordanian refugee camp who is registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and then resettled to Norway. Also called *quota refugee.* [4]

Temporary collective protection: When asylum seekers are granted residency as a member of a group rather than on an individual basis. Norway has issued temporary collective protection only three times, during the conflicts in Bosnia, the war in Kosovo, and the ongoing war in Ukraine (UDI, 2022).

UDI: The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, the entity responsible for processing residency applications for immigrants and managing asylum reception centers

[3] Often referred to as the "host" or "local" community. I choose not to use the word host, as it comes with implications that immigrants are guests, and guests are eventually expected to go home (Pogačar, 2018). This is not the case for most immigrants in Lindesnes. In addition, once an immigrant moves to Lindesnes, I consider them part of the local community, making this word choice also problematic. I include long-established immigrants as members of the receiving society.

[4] In the past few years, this is the principal type of refugee Lindesnes received. This changed when Lindesnes began to receive refugees from Ukraine in March 2022.

Foreword

In 2015, 1.3 million people claimed asylum in countries throughout Europe (Barlai, Fähnrich, Griessler, Rhomberg, & Filzmaier, 2017). As a journalist living in Istanbul, Turkey, from 2015 until 2018, I came to know many who would make the journey across the Balkans to Europe. My work took me from Turkey to Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Austria, Germany, and Norway, tracing the then Western Balkan immigration route. I documented both the journey and what came after for dozens of asylum seekers, from countries such as Syria, Iraq, Sudan, Iran, and Afghanistan. My partner, whom I met in Turkey, traveled this route from Istanbul to Oslo, Norway, in September 2015. After about two months in Norwegian transit camps, he was sent to Mandal, a town in southern Norway, to wait for a decision in his case for asylum.

Soon after, I began to visit Mandal regularly. My partner's eagerness to volunteer and open personality gave me access to a world I may have otherwise not known. While he and others waited for decisions on their asylum cases, they had a lot of idle time. During my visits, we were invited daily for coffee, tea, and dinners. At that time, we would communicate via the person who spoke the best English in the group, body language, exaggerated facial expressions, and sometimes Google Translate. We discussed hopes, dreams, and challenges over bottomless plates of well-spiced food. We also quickly befriended other non-refugee immigrants, with the English language and our shared immigration experience serving as a natural bridge. And ethnic Norwegians were curious about us – *the refugee and his American journalist girlfriend* – too. So, we were invited into their homes. Our identities gave us what I believe was a unique perspective into several different groups within our new society. Exactly one year from the day he arrived in Norway, my partner's request for asylum was approved, and he became a resident of Norway.

I moved to Mandal in the fall of 2018 on a student visa, motivated by both my desire to study global development and live in the same place as my partner. Now, most of our friends who came seeking protection speak Norwegian. Some have gone onto high school, vocational school, and the university; others have found jobs. A few remain in the Introduction Program and are working toward finishing primary school. A handful of

them who were not granted asylum went back to their home countries or quietly disappeared to other countries in Europe. Some of my immigrant friends speak fluent Norwegian and have diverse friend groups; others speak very little Norwegian and mostly hang out with other immigrants. We remain close friends with many of the ethnic Norwegians we befriended during my partner's first months in Mandal, but we now speak Norwegian instead of English.

Over the past six years, I have witnessed a wide range of attitudes and experiences among refugees and immigrants, as well as opinions about them from the receiving society. A community leader once told me, "We use the word integration all the time, despite not having a clear definition of the word or really knowing what we mean. We say it is important. We highlight it all the time." This led me to ask the same question, what does integration actually mean in Lindesnes? Why do some appear to integrate so quickly while others struggle to find their place? And, furthermore, what role does the receiving society play in the integration experience? These questions and my desire to contribute something meaningful to the community where I live inspired this research.

Chapter 1 Introduction

The day after International Holocaust Remembrance Day, I sat across the table from a woman who has lived in Lindesnes municipality for decades. We had spent the past hour discussing integration. As the interview came to a close, I asked her why integration mattered. She answered through tears, saying the Holocaust shows us what can happen if we do not learn to accept differences within society. Others cited the atrocities of July 22, 2011, when a Norwegian right-wing extremist killed 77 people via two terrorist attacks. A year after the tragedy, a report published by the 22 July Committee highlighted the importance of government authorities as well as the attitudes, leadership, and culture of society in preventing such acts, stating "a system is by and large the sum of the individuals who take decisions and perform actions" (NOU, 2012, p. 15). After four years of researching integration in Lindesnes municipality, I have learned the same. When a newcomer arrives in Lindesnes, they must be humbly willing to learn and grow within their new society. However, legal frameworks and the prevailing attitudes, leadership, and culture of the Norwegian receiving society greatly influence their outcomes.

Researchers have been studying acculturation for more than a century, yet it is a relatively recent area of study in Norway. A great deal of what we know about integration in Norway is quantitative and derived from surveys. Thanks in large part to Scandinavian researchers, we have also started to gain important understanding about integration via qualitative studies that consider the role of the receiving society and beyond. Yet there is need for more knowledge, particularly generated by non-European immigrant researchers. Furthermore, immigrants are not just found in Oslo. Due to decentralization and settlement policies, non-European immigrants tend to be more dispersed throughout Norway when compared to several other European countries (Rogne, Andersson, Malmberg, & Lyngstad, 2020). The advantages and challenges to integration in smaller towns are unique, and research findings from urban areas may not always apply.

Through observation, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and my own personal experience as an immigrant to Norway, this study sets out to explore the meanings, mechanisms, and obstacles to integration in Lindesnes municipality. The research highlights the voices of adult refugee, immigrant, and ethnic Norwegian

residents of Lindesnes municipality. Before sharing their experiences, I first introduce readers to the study area and provide background information about the municipality. I then review a variety of literature that pertains to acculturation and integration, with a particular focus on Europe, Scandinavia, and rural Norway. Other social scientists have defined and measured integration in various ways, and I have built upon this foundation of knowledge. This is elaborated upon in the methodology section, which further explains my scientific approach for collecting, processing, and analyzing the data. From there, I shift the focus to the information generated by project participants. Firstly, they define integration and reveal how they relate to the concept. Their understanding of the phenomenon is then compared with past integration research and set into context among Ager and Strang's (2008, p. 170) core domains. These include *employment, housing, education, health, social bonds, social bridges, social links, language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability,* and *rights and citizenship* (ibid). These same domains are then used as a categorical tool to present the findings, revealing both mechanisms and obstacles to integration in Lindesnes. Finally, these factors are analyzed through Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx (2016) heuristic model for the study of integration. This model enables one to better understand how integration is impacted by the interaction of immigrants and the receiving society on multiple levels – individual, organizational, and institutional – across multiple dimensions – *legal-political, socio-economic,* and *cultural-religious* (ibid). I then propose specific recommendations that could help to facilitate integration in Lindesnes, based on the findings and subsequent analysis.

Lindesnes' ability to include and integrate all of its citizens is of both a personal and professional concern for me. I am not an ethnographer that temporarily relocated to Lindesnes for research; I came here to grow roots and start a family. During my studies, my partner and I wed, bought a historic home in Mandal, and welcomed our son to the world. We are proud to call Lindesnes home. Yet, despite our many positive experiences here, I have challenged myself to maintain a critical eye and see inequalities. Individual experiences in Lindesnes vary immensely, and I have therefore sought out a wide variety of participants, including refugees, immigrants, and ethnic Norwegians. Integration struggles in Lindesnes manifest themselves in quiet and less noticeable ways than the worst-case scenarios of the Holocaust and July 22 attacks. They show up via unemployment, exclusion, prejudice, and loneliness. By discussing an array of

experiences and opinions, I hope to generate discussion and ultimately a more peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable future for Lindesnes.

Chapter 2 Study area and local context

This study takes place in Lindesnes municipality along the southernmost Norwegian coast. The current municipal population is 23,214 (SSB, 2021). The Mandal River runs the length of the municipality, carving a valley along its path, hugged by forest covered hills. Mandal, a town of about 11,000 inhabitants, is found where the river meets the sea and serves as the municipality's administrative center (Lindesnes Kommune, 2021). There are also administrative offices in the towns of Marnardal and Vigeland (ibid).

Figure 1 *Map of Lindesnes municipality in southern Norway*

The area is picturesque, characterized by historic white wooden homes with blue, green, and an occasional yellow front door. Most residents own and live in single family homes (SSB, 2021). City dwellers from all over Norway like to visit during holidays. Many have cabins throughout the municipality, drawn by its beautiful coastline and sandy beaches. Its most famous landmark – and inspiration for the municipal logo – is the Lindesnes Lighthouse found on the southwestern edge of the municipality. More than half of the inhabitants live in smaller towns, villages, and rural areas. Buses connect the area – primarily via Mandal – to the city of Kristiansand, where many travel for specialized health care, shopping, education, and work. There is one train station in the municipality, located in Marnardal, that connects the area to Kristiansand – as well as Stavanger in the west and Oslo to the east. The closest international airport is also in Kristiansand.

When this research commenced, the current Lindesnes municipality was made up of three separate municipalities – the former Lindesnes municipality, Mandal, and Marnardal. As of January 1, 2020, these three municipalities combined to form the current Lindesnes municipality. At the same time, the county of Vest Agder combined with the county of East Agder to form one larger county now known as Agder, to which Lindesnes belongs. This

study includes participants who reside in the rural areas as well as the municipality's principal towns, recognizing geography and the former municipalities to which participants belonged may impact their experiences.

Demographics

Immigrants (including refugees) make up 10.7% of the total population in Lindesnes; refugees form about 4 percent of the total population (IMDi, 2021b). Polish, German, and Lithuanians are the largest immigrant groups; refugees primarily come from Syria and Eritrea (ibid). The below chart, based on stats from Statistics Norway, illustrates the country of origin of the immigrant population; the larger the circle, the higher the population. In 2022, the municipality planned to settle an additional 29 refugees (ibid). However, this number increased when war erupted in Ukraine, and the municipality is now prepared to receive at least 200 Ukrainians (Østraat, 2022, March 10).

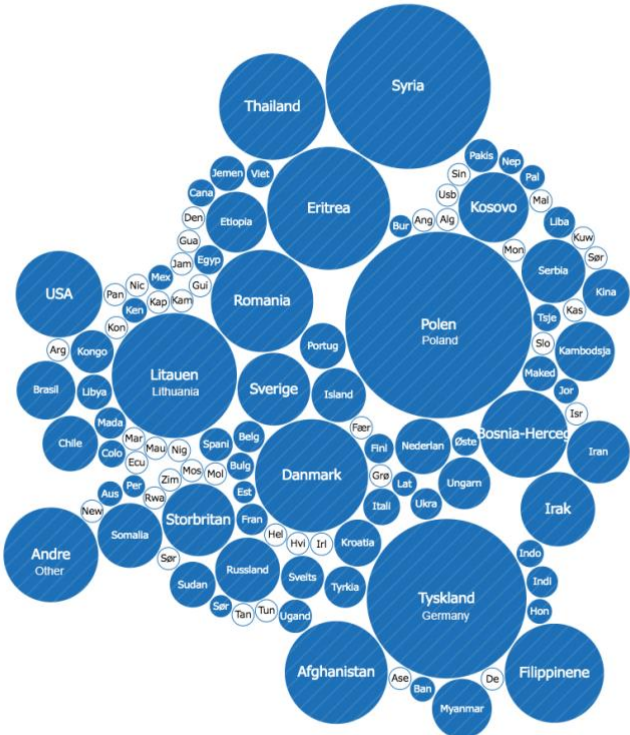

Figure 2 *Immigrant population of Lindesnes by country of origin*

Employment

Mandal began to emerge as the central labor market between Lindesnes and Kristiansand in the early 1700s, when a number of people moved to the area to work as merchants and in the shipping industry (Eliassen, 1995, p. 112). Norwegian farmers from the area as well as Norwegians from other areas of the country began to concentrate in the Mandal area (ibid). Work opportunities attracted foreigners too, hailing mostly from Denmark and England, in the city's early days, and the shipping industry brought with it influences from Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, England, Scotland, and France (Eliassen, 1995, pp. 110, 133). Industrial knowledge was imported from England and Germany, and the man responsible for building most of the city's first buildings came from England (Eliassen, 1995, pp. 367, 515).

The region has exported salmon and lumber, dating back to the 1500s (Eliassen, 1995). Nowadays, however, a small percent of people work with agriculture, lumber, and fishing (SSB, 2020). The sales and service industry has the highest number of employees in the municipality, followed by manufacturing and construction, and health and social services (ibid). There are 3,126 people who work in another municipality, while 1,935 people who reside in other municipalities come to work in Lindesnes (SSB, 2021).

More detailed employment data is available for the three former municipalities of Lindesnes, Mandal, and Marnardal up until the end of 2019, however there is not yet comprehensive statistics on the employment rate in Lindesnes since its formation in 2020. Based on the statistics available in 2019, unemployment was generally about 15% to 20% higher among refugees and also noticeably higher among family immigrants when compared to the non-immigrant population (IMDi, 2019b). This is consistent with national trends that show a disparity between the employment rates of refugees when compared to immigrants who come to Norway to study or work; this disparity is even greater between refugees and ethnic Norwegians (Djuve & Kavli, 2018).

Religion

The municipality is found in Norway's "Bible Belt," an area known for being more religious and politically conservative than the rest of the country. About 72% percent of the population are members of the Church of Norway whereas 12.1% are members of another faith community (SSB, 2020). There are more than a dozen physical churches and meeting spaces for those participating in Christian-hosted gatherings and activities throughout the municipality. There are two mosques, both operating in rented spaces in Mandal. There is also a Buddhist organization that meets in the homes of its members in Mandal.

Politics

The mayor serving Mandal from 2015 until 2019 was a member of the right-wing Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet)*. The party's platform is generally against allowing more refugees into Norway, but the former mayor made the distinction that once refugees are in Norway, there is an onus on everyone to contribute to integration (Martinsen, 2016, March 9). However, as evidenced in the media alone, what integration means varies from party to party, person to person. Marnardal was led by the same mayor from 2007 up until 2019, a well-liked member of the social-democratic Labor Party (*Arbeiderpartiet*) (Rosenvinge, 2015). The former Lindesnes municipality was led by a mayor from the conservative Right Party (*Høyre*) from 2011 until 2019.

At the local level, immigration does not dominate the political discussion but rather laws relating to the owning of property, education, land-based wind energy, and whether businesses should be open on Sundays. In the 2019 municipal elections, the three political parties with the most votes were the Progress Party (26.7%), the Labor Party (21.3%), and the Conservative Party (15.2%) (VALG, 2019). This echoes the leadership of the three former municipalities. Eight parties are represented on the board that governs the municipality. The current mayor of Lindesnes hails from the Labor Party, which tends to support immigrant-friendly legislation (Arbeiderpartiet, 2018).

Relevant organizations and institutions

The main public entities involved with integration efforts in Lindesnes are the Norwegian Labor and Welfare Administration (NAV) and Lindesnes Learning Center. Educational

institutes, including the public high school and vocational school, also contribute. On the private level, there are several churches as well as religious and non-religious volunteer organizations that engage in activities with the goal of contributing to integration. They offer help through language groups, shared mealtimes, and organized tours, among other activities.

The Norwegian Labor and Welfare Administration

NAV Lindesnes is a partnership between the state and the municipality. The office is divided into five departments, one of which is NAV Integration. This department is responsible for refugee settlement. This includes finding refugees in Lindesnes an apartment or home, furnishing it, and orientating them to the municipality, including its health and social services. Upon arrival, refugees are also assigned a program advisor. While refugees will interact with several advisors, depending on their specific needs, this advisor is to be their main contact at NAV for a period of five years. When municipalities settle refugees, they receive funds for this same amount of time. Many refugees do not need or make use of advising for the full period.

NAV's Integration department is also responsible for the follow-up and facilitation of the Introduction Program. The Introduction Program started in Norway in 2004, and refugees are obligated to participate (Tronstad, 2019). Within three months of being settled, refugees begin the full-time program, which consists of Norwegian language courses as well a social studies course (Kompetanse Norge, 2018). Participants of the Introduction Program receive a monthly salary. If they do not attend, their salary is decreased. The duration of the Introduction Program currently varies from about 18 months up to three years, depending on one's pace of learning. Given that NAV Integration has responsibility for helping refugees for a period of five years, once they finish the Introduction Program this involves aiding them to find work, continue their education, or, in some cases, receive welfare.

At present, most refugees coming to Lindesnes are resettlement refugees or Ukrainians under collective protection. Resettlement refuges are refugees who are transferred from an asylum country to Norway and granted immediate residency. Under collective protection Ukrainians are granted residency as a member of a group rather than on an

individual basis, expediting the process. Both resettlement refuges and those coming under collective protection are to start the Introduction Program within three months of their arrival in Lindesnes. From 2015 until 2017, however, the three former municipalities that now make up Lindesnes collectively received hundreds of asylum seekers via municipal reception centers which are no longer open. These asylum seekers were ineligible for the Introduction Program while waiting on a decision in their case, which took anywhere from a few months up to several years. Once an asylum seeker's case was approved, they were able to begin the Introduction Program. While NAV was previously involved with these cases in Mandal, in former Lindesnes and Marnardal municipalities, refugee services were managed by another entity.

Lindesnes Learning Center

Lindesnes Learning Center takes responsibility for the teaching of Norwegian language courses and the social studies course required in the Introduction Program. The social studies course covers topics such as immigrants' rights and obligations, history, geography, health, as well as information about democracy, the welfare state, children and family rights and values, and working life in Norway (Kompetanse Norge, 2021). When an individual comes to Norway as a non-refugee immigrant, they are also eligible to attend these Norwegian and social studies courses. Some must attend; others choose to attend. Some attend for free; others must pay. The immigrant's country of origin and grounds for their residency determine this.

In addition to Norwegian language courses and the social studies course, through Lindesnes Learning Center adults also have the right to complete their basic primary education. Some did not have the opportunity to do this in their homeland. Others may have completed their education but do not have documentation to prove it. To enroll in secondary education in Norway, they must have this documentation. Lindesnes Learning Center also has programs that support minority-language speaking children and teens. I have only highlighted the programs that pertain to adult participants of this study.

Chapter 3 Literature review

A brief history of immigration to Norway

Norway provides a unique laboratory in which to study integration, as immigration is a relatively new phenomenon. The Hungarian Revolution brought the first group of refugees to Norway in 1956 and 1957 (NRC, 2021). A little more than a decade later, labor immigrants from Pakistan, Turkey, Morocco, and India started arriving to take jobs in the industrial and service industries (Midtbøen, 2017). Then, in the 1970s, the first refugees from outside of Europe came, fleeing post-war Vietnam and a coup d'état in Chile (NRC, 2021). In 1975, new laws related to labor immigration attempted to halt the arrival of unskilled workers to Norway (Brochmann & Djuve, 2013). However, in the decades that followed, the number of refugees and immigrants globally – and in Norway – only continued to rise.

In the 1990s, the Agreement on the European Economic Area made it easier for European citizens to live and work in Norway (EFTA, 2021). This decade also marked the first and second time Norway would offer collective protection to groups of refugees – first from Bosnia and then from Kosovo (UDI, 2022). Under collective protection, refugees from a particular country are granted temporary protection and "avoid a time-consuming individual treatment" (ibid). This did not apply to the record number of refugees arriving to Norway in 2015 and 2016, primarily from Syria and Eritrea. In contrast to collective protection, these cases were evaluated on an individual basis, resulting in much longer waiting times and more limited access to services. Today, 819,356 immigrants live in Norway (SSB, 2022). The majority come from Poland, Lithuania, and Sweden to work (ibid). Refugees hail primarily from Syria and Somalia (ibid). While the number of refugees arriving to Norway decreased in recent years, in early 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine. Within a few weeks, collective protection was extended to Ukrainians arriving in Norway for only the third time in the country's history (UDI, 2022). This year 35,000 Ukrainian refugees are expected to arrive (IMDi, 2022). Other immigrants also continue to come to work, study, and pursue relationships, among other motives. Eriksen (2013) sums up the attraction well.

Norway's stability, safety, wealth, and welfare system make it an attractive destination for migrants from many backgrounds.

Defining integration

In the context of immigration, the word integration does not have a universally agreed upon definition. Per earlier thinking, along with segregation, assimilation, and marginalization, it can be considered a form of acculturation – or how an immigrant adapts to a new environment (Berry, 1997). The terms could be described as (Berry, 1980):

- ***Assimilation:*** *a rejection of one's native culture and adoption of their new culture*
- ***Integration:*** *a blending of one's native culture into their new culture*
- ***Segregation:*** *a rejection of one's new culture and a preservation of their native culture*
- ***Marginalization:*** *A rejection of both one's native and new culture*

Norwegian researcher Hagelund (2009, p. 100) refers to integration as an "ideal middle way between segregation and assimilation". In practice, however, she observes that in Norway it becomes a means "to transform newcomers into a condition where they can *function* in society and society into a form where it can *handle* new forms of difference" (ibid). Eriksen (2013) points out that in the Norwegian language the same word – *likhet* – is used for "equality" and "similarity". Which begs the question – can we be equal *and* different? In Norway, Brochmann (2010, p. 440) says "integration has been a compromise between *likhet* and pluralism, between solidarity and freedom."

There is a fine line between integration and assimilation, which some do not recognize. *Classic assimilation theory*, formed in 1920s America by the Chicago School, defines assimilation as a straight-line process and assumes that the longer one stays in a place, the more like the majority population they will become (Brown & Bean, 2006). Later, Alba and Nee (2003) updated such linear thinking, coining a more circular idea called *new assimilation theory.* The updated theory included the importance of change and acceptance among the local community, while also recognizing the role of institutions in

helping to combat social inequalities (ibid). Since then, several other assimilation theories have emerged that recognize ethnicity, race, and socioeconomics as contributing factors.

Overtime, the understanding of integration as reciprocal has become more commonplace, highlighting the concept of integration as a relationship. In a recent examination of obstacles to integration in Central and Eastern Europe, Miholjcic (2019, p. 15) presents a contemporary definition of integration as "a two-way relationship that requires analysis of both immigrant and would-be hosting country perspective." I consider this thinking a nuanced advancement with foundations in Alba and Nee's (2003) *new assimilation theory.* Yet given such a complex sociological concept, characterizing integration as purely a two-way relationship is likely an oversimplification, considering the non-homogenous and dynamic nature of human beings (Strang & Ager, 2010). Strang and Ager (2010, p. 602) help put words to what my data show:

> *Integration is multi-dimensional in the sense that it involves the forming of relationships across people with multiple and overlapping identities.*

The latest integration studies recognize the multi-dimensional nature of individuals as well as groups, organizations, and institutions. Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx (2016, p. 11) broaden the definition of integration to include "the process of settlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows immigration." They define integration as "the process of becoming an accepted part of society" (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016, p. 14). This interplay of actors is what many now refer to as multiculturalism or an "an ideal end goal for society as a whole" (Favell, 2005, cited in Hamberger, 2009, p. 4). Today in Europe, however, the concept or goal of integration tends to focus on individuals rather than society. Norwegian social anthropologist Marianne Rugkåsa (2010, p. 243) describes this well.

> *In societal debates and political discussions, integration is more about how ethnic minorities can be included and participate in the majority society, than about how integrated society is as a whole.*

Policies show varying degrees of concern and contribution toward the integration of different groups of ethnic minorities. European Union integration policies, for example, assume that its citizens are "integrated by default" (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016, p. 82). While Norway is not a member of the European Union (EU), it is a member of the European Economic Area (EEA). This area brings EU member states, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway together into a single market, with the goal of creating the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people (EFTA, 2021). Under this premise, anyone from the European Union, Iceland, or Liechtenstein that moves to Norway to work is assumed to be integrated. Upon arrival, there is no Norwegian language requirement for this group, despite language being considered an important factor to integration. This is a stark contrast to the rights and obligations refugees face when coming to Norway.

Finally, to provide further context to acculturation in Norway, it is important to note the country's history with its own native populations. Up until the mid 1900s, the state enacted forced assimilation – *Norwegianization* – upon the Sami and Kven populations, stripping them of their culture and language (Minde, 2003). This was primarily carried out via education "with school as the battlefield and teachers as frontline soldiers" (Niemi, 1997, p. 268). While an official state apology was given, the future will reveal if the country has learned from its past. Today, state institutions providing education continue to play a major role in acculturation in Norway. For many participants of this study, this begins with the Introduction Program. Refugees are required to attend the two-year program to acquire Norwegian language and cultural knowledge. In exchange, they are paid a modest salary, making it "one of the world's most financially generous integration regimes" (Brochmann & Djuve, 2013, p. 232). However, the program represents a complexity of generosity and force, rights and obligations, and has been cited as both a tool for integration and assimilation (Hagelund, 2005; Rugkåsa, 2012).

Norway's relationship with immigration

Norway is still figuring out its role and reputation when it comes to receiving immigrants. While Norway prides itself on its "democratic, tolerant, egalitarian, and freedom-seeking ideals," Hagelund (2009, p. 80) and other researchers in Norway have found evidence that accommodating diversity and promoting multiculturalism can often conflict with these ideals (Brochmann & Djuve, 2013; Eriksen, 2013; Hagelund, 2002). The generous

Norwegian welfare state is designed to redistribute wealth and lift the vulnerable, but its success relies on individuals to contribute (Brochmann & Djuve, 2013). The fact that non-Western immigrant groups are more likely to depend on welfare than ethnic Norwegians demonstrates a lack of socio-economic equality in society while, at the same time, providing fodder to anti-immigrant perceptions and attitudes. Yet, when the receiving society adopts negative attitudes toward groups of immigrants, this too can affect integration outcomes and set off a self-fulfilling prophecy. As Shibutani and Kwan (1965) argued in *Ethnic Stratification,* how a person is treated is based "not on what he is" but on the "manner in which he is defined."

Back in the 1990s, Marie Louise Seeberg (1996) conducted a year of ethnographic research with Vietnamese refugees in Norway. In her thesis in social anthropology Seeberg (1996, p. 32) wrote:

> *Scholars and journalists, politicians and bureaucrats also routinely speak of "flows" and "waves" of refugees, playing on analogies with "natural phenomena". Skeptical voices in the "host" populations also make use of these refugee metaphors, evoking images of uncontrollable masses of water flooding the boundary "coastlines" of the nation - a tidal wave of people, threatening to drown us all. The alarm is sounded: we must build dams, make our boundaries watertight, before it is too late!*

Nearly 20 years ago, Hagelund (2002, p. 412) also warned of "a cultural anxiety" in response to increased diversity in Norway. This sentiment was echoed in late 2015, when Norway received a record number of asylum seekers (Østby, 2016). From 2015 to 2016 Norway's foreign-born population grew by more than 1 percent (Connor, 2016, December 15). By comparison, the foreign-born population in the United States grew by that same percent in a decade (ibid). That is a notable and rapid demographic change for a country like Norway, and healthy adjustment and acceptance cannot be expected overnight, especially in a place where things take time (*ting tar tid*), a common saying in southern Norway. That opinion is backed by research too. After years of conducting development and migration studies, Strang and Ager (2010, p. 602) wrote:

It seems too that communities struggle if things are changing very quickly and there is a sense of losing an established identity before new meanings are negotiated.

The record number of asylum applications in 2015 spurred more restrictive immigration policies throughout Scandinavia (Hagelund, 2020). When compared to its neighbors, Norway has taken a safe middle ground between "restrictive" Denmark and "liberal" Sweden (ibid). In a review of policy documents and the media, Hagelund (2020) found that Norway "recognizes a moral obligation to take part in a collective effort." Recent surveys also show a moderately positive attitude toward immigration among the Norwegian general public and, at the same time, most believe integration is not working (Brekke, Fladmoe, & Wollebæk, 2020). When asked who is responsible for integration, most cited it was a shared responsibility of immigrants themselves as well as government institutions and the receiving society (ibid). While Norwegian policies set out to guarantee equal opportunities, everyday lived experiences show that does not always happen (Eriksen, 2013).

Hagelund (2002, p. 402) asks a poignant question, "Is it possible to construct a new identity as a multicultural society on the foundations of the Norwegian ideology of equality?". Some say multiculturalism and socialism may be too much at odds with each other to easily co-exist (Fraser, 1995). While it may be easy to promote multicultural ideals among a more homogenous group, as Norway has become more and more diverse, it has become more challenging. In the past few decades, multicultural issues, such as gender equality and family practices, have challenged Norway's egalitarian ideals (Brochmann & Djuve, 2013; Rugkåsa, 2012). Negative social control of certain groups of female immigrants is also a widely discussed topic.

Children born in Norway to two foreign parents are still considered immigrants (Hagelund, 2002, p. 403). Their experiences and insights provide valuable information regarding integration in Norway. While outcomes are generally better among this group when compared to foreign-born immigrants, they report higher rates of discrimination (Barstad & Molstad, 2020). In early 2022, editorial writer Ahmed Fawad Ashraf controversially decided that, despite his Norwegian passport and being born in Norway, he would no longer identify as Norwegian, after experiencing microaggressions

throughout his life ranging from being asked "Where are you *really* from?" to unfair treatment at passport control (Ashraf, 2022, Jan 11). Ashraf's parents immigrated to Norway from Pakistan. While some have come forward agreeing with his stance, others born to foreign parents, including politicians and the former deputy mayor of Oslo, criticized his stance and offered important counterpoints on Norwegian news program *Debatten* (NRK, 2022). Writer Shazia Majid disagreed with Ashraf and stressed that how one defines themselves – rather than how society may define them – is the most important (ibid).

> *It is so important that you can be brown. You can be Muslim. You can have a Pakistani cultural heritage… but I am as Norwegian as you or anyone who has eight generations of white grandfathers.*

Despite Ashraf's negative experiences, surveys show that most Norwegians do not believe being of Norwegian descent is necessary for one to be considered Norwegian (Brekke et al., 2020).

Both the positive public response to receiving Ukrainian refugees and the political will of the Norwegian government to extend collective protection are promising. However, this warm welcome has not been extended to all immigrants and refugees, and resentment is likely to occur in any context in which one group is receiving "special treatment" (Jacobsen, 1996, p. 668). Members of Norwegian society have called this out as racism and discrimination. In the past few years, the Black Lives Matter movement has sparked more frequent and open conversation on both institutional and everyday racism in Norway. Results of the 2020 Integration Barometer show that Norwegians are "upset by racism" and more aware of discrimination than ever before (Brekke et al., 2020). Eriksen (2012, p. 209) has drawn attention to the discrimination of Muslims in Norway in particular:

> *Negative generalisations are always a first step toward dehumanisation, and in this respect, Muslims find themselves in a far more precarious situation in contemporary Norway than other non-White people who are not Muslims.*

Recent surveys show that a little over half of the population believe that Islamic values are "incompatible with basic values in Norwegian society" (Brekke et al., 2020, p. 15). At the same time, many organizations, politicians, researchers, and individuals – including Muslims themselves – are working to counter that narrative. The government-owned media – Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation – has also played a role in ensuring racial, ethnic, and religious representation within their news programming.

Rural immigration in Norway

Norway possesses several positive characteristics in relation to immigration. There is available land, jobs, and positive infrastructure, giving Norway a high "absorption capacity" (Jacobsen, 1996, p. 666). While Oslo and the surrounding area boast the highest immigrant populations in the country, rural Norway has become more diverse in the past two decades (Sætermo Turid, Gullikstad, & Kristensen Guro, 2021). Understanding social dynamics in both urban and rural contexts is important, especially in a country where settlement policies ensure immigrants are dispersed throughout the country (Rogne et al., 2020). Several immigrants and refugees, now living in Oslo, trace their success back to the small Norwegian towns they once called home. They say these smaller communities fostered their learning of language and social codes as well as their interaction with ethnic Norwegians.

Rural communities throughout Norway vary from one another, influenced by politics, religion, geography, and history, among other factors. Some members of rural Nordic societies have recognized immigrants' contribution to population growth and local economic development (Søholt, Stenbacka, & Nørgaard, 2018). National surveys show that the ability to speak Norwegian and employment are perceived as the most important factors contributing to integration (Brekke et al., 2020). The sharing of basic Norwegian values and having Norwegian friends also ranks high (ibid).

In southern Norway, employment proves to be a challenge for the entire region, especially for refugees (Hellang & Espegren, 2022). According to national studies, explanations for lower employment rates among refugees include the health, competence, and attitudes of immigrants themselves as well the ability of the Norwegian labor force to include and utilize their resources (Bratsberg, Raaum, & Røed, 2016). Discrimination is also found to

play a role (Birkelund, Rogstad, Heggebø, Aspøy, & Bjelland, 2014). Magnussen (2020) reveals unequal power relations, plagued by prejudice, between certain immigrants and the institutions tasked to help them in southern Norway. Through the story of one woman from Somalia, she demonstrates that integration actors meant to help may also become obstacles when they adopt attitudes of "presumed employability" (Søholt et al., 2018, p. 226) for certain groups of people. Yet, this natural categorization of people is inevitable (Alba & Nee, 2003):

> *Placing people into categories, each associated with expected behavior and treatment, allows humans to deal in a routine and predictable manner with strangers and acquaintances outside their primary groups.*

Shibutani and Kwan (1965, p. 39) claim that small villages are the exception, where there is time and opportunity for individuals to know one another. While more village-like than Oslo and other cities across Norway, only a small population of Lindesnes hails from what could be considered a small village. And while rural areas like Lindesnes possess more "acquaintance potential", it is found that "intimacy" of encounter is far more important than "frequency" of encounter in building understanding (Cook, 1962, p. 74). As such, meeting with someone once a week – whether at a volunteer activity, on the job, or at school – does little for integration if there is not a more intimate or memorable exchange.

Beyond economics, local attitudes and practices of the local community are found to play a key role in refugee retention and integration in rural areas (Nordregio, 2017). Rural receiving societies in Norway are shown to expect certain attitudes and actions from the immigrants they welcome *(Søholt et al., 2018, p. 226):*

> *Having the right attitude, taking the initiative, joining local organizations, developing language skills, and making an effort are all expected.*

While there is much emphasis on the employment of immigrants, especially in a strong welfare state, joining the workforce does not guarantee integration for immigrants and can sometimes even have the opposite effect (Haaland & Wallevik, 2016). In southern Norway, Haaland and Wallevik (2017) urge others not to overlook the volunteer sector as

an important arena for integration. This includes involvement with activities that set integration as a goal as well as long-established secular and religious organizations within southern Norway (ibid). By becoming involved with volunteer work, immigrants fulfill many expectations from the receiving society, as outlined by Søholt et al. (2018) and national surveys (Brekke et al., 2020). Volunteer work may also foster more informal social spaces than school and work, which in turn could lead to the type of experience that Cook (1962) emphasized as important to building tolerance and understanding.

Measures of integration

There is some consensus that to measure something as complex as integration, one should examine cultural, social, political, and economic aspects of daily lives (Hamberger, 2009). Building on previous integration studies and their own fieldwork within refugee communities, Ager and Strang (2008, p. 170) put forth an even more specific framework to examine integration via 10 core domains divided into four broad categories.

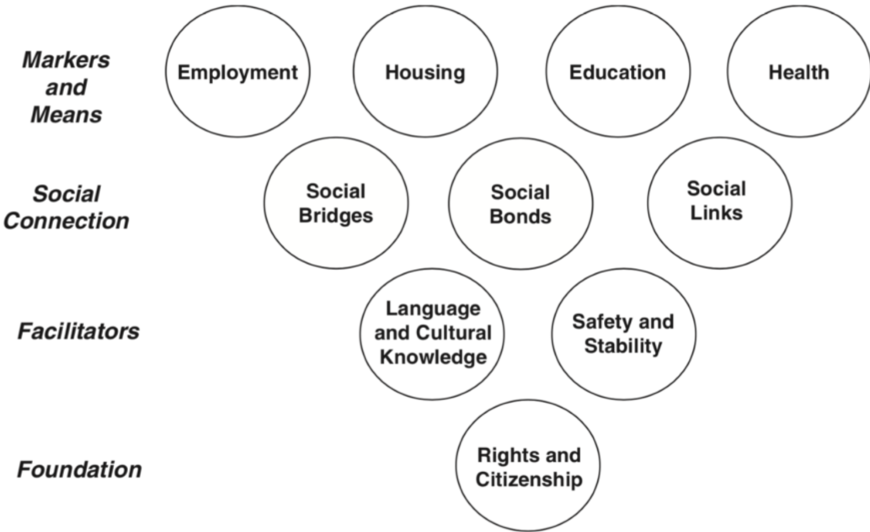

Figure 3 A conceptual framework defining core domains of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 170)

At the **foundation** of the framework is *rights and citizenship.* In the Norwegian case, the rights and obligations of different immigrant groups is of particular importance and, as the findings show, influence outcomes. Learning Norwegian and gaining *cultural knowledge* as well as one's sense of *safety and stability* become **facilitators** to outcomes.

Having equal rights, being able to communicate, and feeling safe contribute to a sense of integration and enable social connection. Within the category of **social connection**, Ager and Strang (2008, p. 178) highlight three core domains based on the work of other theorists. Relationships among "family and co-ethnic, co-national, co-religious and other forms of groups" are known as *social bonds.* Relationships that bring together two different groups are *social bridges*. Interaction with "structures of the state" are *social links* (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 181). These relationships form the "connective tissue", linking one's foundation and facilitators with their outcomes (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 177). While often used as measurable outcomes or **markers** of integration, factors such as *employment, housing, education,* and *health* can also be seen as paths or **means** to integration*.*

While these domains are often used to measure the integration of foreigners to a new place, I have loosely applied these domains to ethnic Norwegian participants to shed light on the receiving society's relation to integration. Given Ager and Strang's (2008) framework, it can be expected that Norwegians will usually have an advantage when it comes to being integrated in Lindesnes. Most will have a stable **foundation** and **facilitators** in place. Immigrants, however, will have to catch up, as they learn the language and work toward achieving other factors over time. When applied to ethnic Norwegian participants, these core domains clearly demonstrate the power differential created by immigration. For one group of immigrants – refugees – this power balance is even more askew. When refugees are granted asylum, they are given formal government support but that comes with both rights and obligations. Other non-refugee immigrant groups have fewer obligations from the state but also receive less support. When many asylum seekers arrived in Lindesnes in 2015 and 2016, there appeared to be a subconscious understanding of this imbalance, given the receiving community's involvement at language cafes, clothing drives, demonstrations, and other fundraisers targeted at helping refugees.

Ager and Strang's (2008) core domains provide a good starting point to assess integration. But integration does not happen in a vacuum. These core domains are heavily influenced by the society that a newcomer enters. Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx (2016) provide a useful model that take this into account. Their heuristic model for the empirical study of

integration processes moves beyond viewing integration as a linear, individual process, and recognizes the multi-directional and relational nature of the phenomenon. It has relevance to this study due to its focus on the relationship between and among immigrants and the receiving society. It also becomes a useful tool to detect hierarchies of power and influence within integration processes.

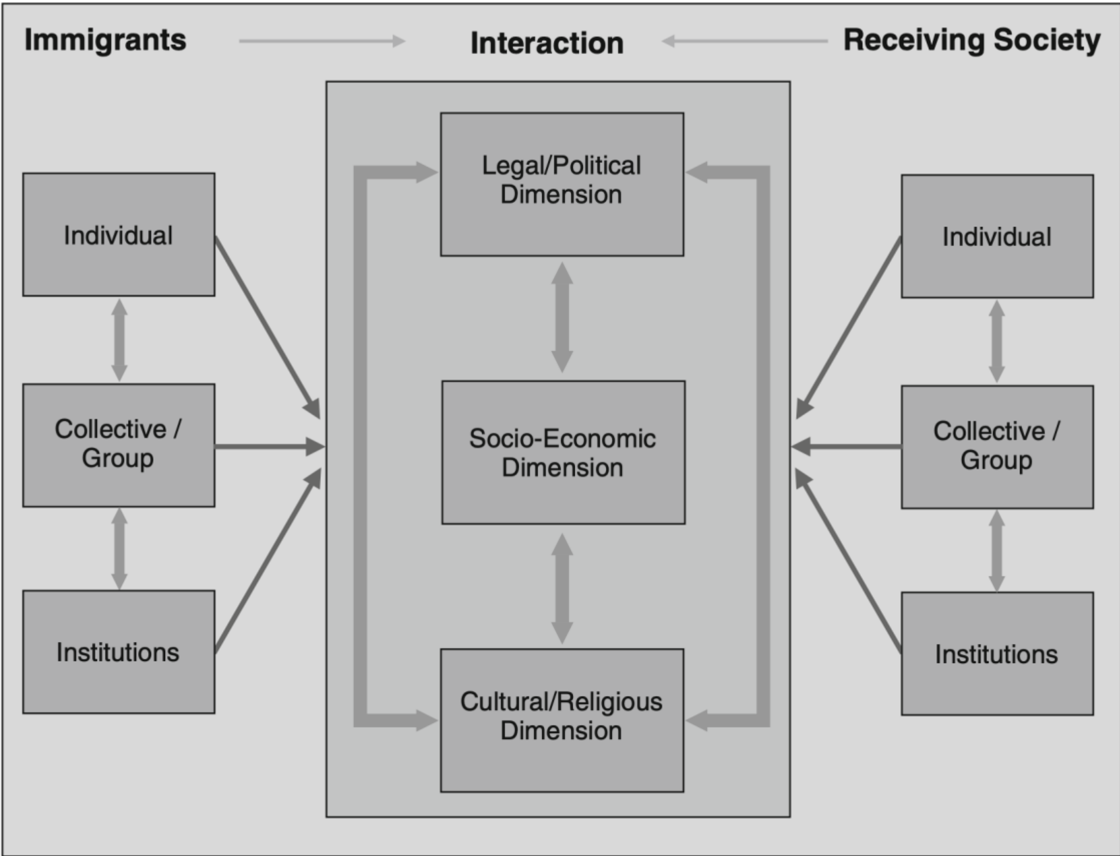

Figure 4 A heuristic model for the empirical study of integration processes (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016, p. 16)

Per the model, these interactions can happen on an individual level, a group or organization level, and at the institutional level. The model plots these interactions among three dimensions: 1) *legal-political* 2) *socio-economic* and 3) *cultural-religious*. The *legal-political* refers to residence and rights, much like Ager and Strang's (2008) **foundation** of *rights and citizenship*. The *socio-economic* refers to "the social and economic position of residents" and examines if immigrants have equal access to services (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016, p. 15). Finally, the *cultural-religious* refers to how immigrants and the receiving society perceive and accommodate one another (ibid). Taking the view that

integration is a multi-dimensional process or relationship with multiple actors, the perceptions and role of the receiving society must be present in any holistic research on integration. The receiving community must participate and buy into multicultural values for peaceful co-existence. This includes established immigrants in the receiving society.

Chapter 4 Methodology

This study relies on a social constructivism interpretive framework and employs an ethnographic approach to data collection. The data generated through fieldwork is qualitative. Both quantitative and qualitative data generated by national agencies and the media were used to give context to the data generated through fieldwork. Data was collected through observation, participant observation, and interviews and processed per guidelines set forth by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD).

Social constructivism

Refugees and immigrants are often spoken of as homogeneous groups. Researchers, journalists, and everyday individuals can too quickly let the singular voice of a minority individual speak for the entire group they represent. For this reason, I have chosen to employ a social constructivism interpretive framework to this study. This framework recognizes that both individuals and societies are complex, and that meanings are not fixed. In social constructivism "multiple realities are constructed through our lived experiences and interactions with others" (Creswell, 2013, p. 36). This study generated data through my relationship and interaction with study participants. My identity and everyday experiences in Lindesnes frame my understanding of the information participants shared with me.

Rather than beginning the research with a hypothesis, it began with a curiosity around the concept of integration. I was especially interested in the role of the receiving society in relation to integration. To investigate that, however, I wanted to see the big picture – one that included all individuals with legal stay in Norway. For this reason, I have included refugee, non-refugee immigrants, and ethnic Norwegian participants. Not only did I want to learn how they perceived themselves, I wanted to know how they perceived one another. One of the first questions I asked each of the participants was to define integration. While I could have provided a working definition of integration for the sake of this study, I knew participants would revert to their own

personal understanding of the word. So, for example, if a participant defined integration as assimilation, per Berry's (1980) definitions, it helped me to gain a deeper understanding of their point of view when they used the word "integration". If I had not let participants first define "integration" then I would simply be imposing my understanding and definition of "integration" onto their answers, which could lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. By letting participants define integration prior to our interviews and employing an interpretivist approach, I hoped to avoid producing oversimplified and homogenized knowledge (Bryman, 2016).

Ethnography

While ethnographies have traditionally studied the *exotic* (usually outside of the Western world), there is much to be learned in our own backyards. As traditionally homogenous societies become more diverse, it is important to understand the social implications of that transformation on both newcomers and the receiving society. For this reason, I have included refugee, immigrant, and ethnic Norwegian participants. Ethnography generally studies a *culture-sharing group* and, in this case, I consider legal physical presence and participation in the Norwegian society the shared culture (Creswell, 2013, p. 94). While refugees are immigrants, I distinguish between refugee and non-refugee immigrants when relevant because of their unique circumstances as well as rights and obligations, by law, when residing in Norway. When the *exotic* find themselves outside of their natural habitat, attributes of their new surroundings can help or hinder their survival. Studying solely refugees, immigrants, or ethnic Norwegians would represent only one piece of the integration puzzle. Norwegians may well be considered *exotic* by some of Norway's newest inhabitants.

To understand what integration means and some of the ways in which it happens in Lindesnes, I have drawn on the experience and access I have in my own community and employed an ethnographic approach. Ethnography "seeks to understand societies by having the researcher in the same social space as the participants in the study" (Madden, 2017, p. 16). Gaining access to a particular social setting or group of people can often be the most time consuming and challenging part of ethnographic research (Bryman, 2016, p. 425). I was fortunate to find myself embedded within groups of immigrants and refugees in my community.

While the research did not start as ethnography at home, it became that overtime, as Lindesnes transformed from a foreign to a familiar place for me over the course of the study. Both my interactions and observations of Norwegians, immigrants, refugees, and the system over the past six years have undoubtedly influenced my analysis and translation of the participants' points of view. My own experience as a student and work immigrant and partner to a refugee in Lindesnes, by nature, became my point of comparison as I listened to each participant. In the presentation of my findings, I have used quotes often, in an aim to present each participant's perspectives as accurate as possible. In the analysis, however, a more scientific perspective combined with my own beliefs prevails to present a *cultural interpretation* (Creswell, 2013, p. 92).

During the study, the perception of my own overlapping identities became apparent. Participants from all stakeholder groups positioned me "inside" their group or "like one of them" during interviews. For some refugee participants, my marriage to a refugee gave me this "in". Immigrants saw me as a fellow immigrant, though we quickly learned our visa grounds led to different challenges and opportunities. Whiteness and my education level linked me to some ethnic Norwegians, and my role as a researcher and volunteer linked me to integration actors. I do not pretend to understand the inside experience of being a refugee nor an ethnic Norwegian. However, I would consider myself an "insider" among work immigrants and integration actors. This itself reveals relationships, visa status, race, education level, and social involvement influence the way others perceive us, determining whether we become a part of the "us" or "them "within the Norwegian society.

While the original intention of the research was to discover what integration means and uncover some of the ways integration "happens," the study went beyond that. Many research participants made direct suggestions for improvement in Lindesnes. The analysis of the data led to additional recommendations. In that way, I hope this has morphed into applied ethnographic research that can influence future policies and behaviors of Lindesnes residents (Madden, 2017, p. 17).

Types of data

The study relies primarily on qualitative data collected through ethnographic methods including observation, participant observation, and semi-structured individual and group interviews. Literature, media, and statistics from agencies such as Statistics Norway (SSB), the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), and the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) provided additional qualitative and quantitative data, giving context to the empirical data. Reading local and national news and reviewing statistics prior to and throughout the process of conducting interviews helped to inform the interview guide as well as the selection of participants.

Data collection methods

Observation / Participant observation

Since early 2016, I have participated in several ongoing volunteer activities with integration-related goals. I officially started my graduate studies in the fall of 2018 and, since then, most of the people I have observed are aware of my status as a researcher. However, there was usually not a clear switch for me or participants to know when I was observing something that would contribute to the research. Madden (2017) describes it well when he writes, "The recorder that resides in the body of the ethnographer is always 'on'." I have gone about my daily life as I typically would and situations that contribute to my understanding of integration in the municipality happen frequently and unexpectedly. When something notable happened, I wrote about the experience in a notebook or in a secure digital file once I was home.

Semi-structured individual and group interviews

From mid-2019 until February 2022, I interviewed 36 people. Most of the interviews were conducted in Norwegian. About one third were conducted in English. Two of the interviews were in a foreign language I do not speak, and a translator facilitated the conversation. The interviews, on average, lasted one to two hours. In addition to these sit-down interviews, in which I followed an interview guide, I also engaged in several informal follow-up chats with several of the participants during volunteer and community activities and at private gatherings.

Initially, I identified four groups of stakeholders and planned to interview at least five people from each of the groups:

- **Integration actors:** Municipal staff and leaders; Leaders and members of community organizations working toward integration in Lindesnes
- **Refugee residents** of Lindesnes
- **Non-refugee, immigrant residents** of Lindesnes
- **Ethnic Norwegian residents** of Lindesnes

I desired to interview integration actors – including refugees, immigrants, and ethnic Norwegians – because of their above-average involvement and contribution to integration. Their beliefs and actions often set the tone around integration in Lindesnes. I have combined municipal employees and those involved with community organizations (including volunteer and religious groups as well as clubs and associations) as Lindesnes is a small municipality, and this was the best way to protect the identities of those I interviewed.

While refugees are immigrants, I distinguish between the two when relevant. This is due to stark differences in their reasons for moving and visa grounds, that come with different rights and obligations that affect integration. This study does not include participants waiting on decisions in asylum cases – known as *asylum seekers*. When an individual is waiting for a decision in their asylum case, integration has several other obstacles (DeWaard, 2018; Strang & Ager, 2010). For this reason, this study will focus on a time and place that is considered to be a semi-permanent home and not a "station," a word often used by refugees and migrants for a place they do not plan to stay long-term.

Finally, I also interviewed ethnic Norwegian residents, who are the majority in Lindesnes. After several interviews, I realized that among ethnic Norwegians in Lindesnes, it was also important to include people born in Lindesnes and people born elsewhere in Norway, as the experience was distinct. Furthermore, it was important to include people who were born in Lindesnes, moved away, and later returned, as well as people who were born in Lindesnes and never left.

To recruit participants, I initially contacted community leaders and acquaintances whom I met through volunteering, community events, and mutual friends. Some I knew very well; others I had met just once. From there, I used snowball sampling to broaden the group from acquaintances to strangers (Bryman, 2016, p. 415). This was critical to avoid generating data from within a bubble of like-minded people. I asked several participants to recommend others whom I should interview. A handful of participants emerged as key informants, helping me to find other participants who could represent experiences and opinions I had only heard about secondhand. Within my sample of interviews, I was conscious to include racial, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, political, age, geographic, and gender diversity. Past studies and my own experiences reflect that these factors can impact one's integration experience. By including diversity among participants, I was also able to compare experiences and identify patterns among people from similar age groups or of a particular race, rather than only viewing participants through the simplified stakeholder group(s) to which they belonged. Individuals have multiple and overlapping identities, and it was important to remember that none of the stakeholder groups are homogenous.

Interviews were conducted in public spaces, at participants' places of work, in the home of participants, and in my home. In most circumstances, I let the participants take the lead in determining the meeting point for the interview, as to make them most comfortable. When I met in the home of participants or they came to my home, the interviews usually took on more of a relaxed, conversational tone accompanied by snacks, coffee, and tea. During the early interviews, I found myself asking most or all the questions on the guide. Throughout the interview process, I narrowed the set of questions, having learned which ones were most likely to generate the most valuable information to the study. The interviews became more and more conversational over time.

Originally, I planned to organize focus groups but, due to the coronavirus pandemic, I was not comfortable assuming the responsibility for such gatherings. The intention of organizing focus groups was to see how people conversed with each other on the topic of integration versus how they talked with me in an interview setting. Norwegian is not my native language nor am I Norwegian, so I was particularly interested in gathering groups of ethnic Norwegians to hear them dialogue on the topic, involving myself as a guide or

observer to the conversation. To generate this data, I found a few groups of people who were already meeting regularly and asked them to participate in group interviews. By taking this approach, participants were not exposing themselves to any additional public health risks. However, the conversation was certainly influenced by the fact that these groups of people were already comfortable with each other. I do not view this as negative, however, as it possibly led to people being more relaxed and speaking more freely.

Data processing

Interviews were recorded with an external audio recorder. Once complete, the audio files were transferred to the University of Agder's secure OneDrive server and deleted from the device. The interviews conducted in English were transcribed verbatim using artificial intelligence. Ideally, I would have verbatim transcripts of all the interviews conducted in Norwegian as well, but I was unable to find an affordable transcription service or individual to take on this work in a timely fashion. To substitute, I listened to the interviews in their entirety at least once (and up to three times) and typed up very detailed notes (including exact quotes) in English. By having all the notes and transcripts in one working language – English – I was better able to code the data.

Data analysis

The empirical data consisted of a notebook full of handwritten notes from interviews and observations as well as the interview transcripts and detailed summaries. The transcripts and detailed interview summaries amounted to about 250 pages. The high volume of data to process in the time given for the study necessitated the research to focus on coding two very broad categories of data.

1. The meanings of integration
2. The mechanisms and obstacles of integration

A master spreadsheet became a quick reference guide for analyzing the data. Each participant was assigned a code, allowing for the anonymization of their data. The spreadsheet contained biographical data including gender, general age group (18-30, 30-60, 60+), stakeholder group(s), if they were born in Lindesnes, and a general indication of

their foreign connections. For example, for ethnic Norwegians it was noted if they had a foreign parent, were married or living with a foreigner, or had lived abroad themselves. In addition, synthesized answers to the following questions were pasted into the spreadsheet as a quick way to compare results.

1. Do you feel integrated? Why/what factors in your life make you answer the way you do?
2. Who is responsible for integration?
3. Why does integration matter?

Meanings of integration

While researchers are constantly defining and redefining integration and its nuances, the differences appear to be overlooked by the general public. With this prior knowledge, I asked participants to define integration during the interviews. These definitions were coded and assigned to one of the three below categories, which emerged from the data.

1. Integration as a process: Focus on adaption of the newcomer
2. Integration as a relationship: Focus on interaction
3. Integration as an aspect of multiculturalism

Each category and the definitions within it were then compared with past integration studies to gain a baseline understanding of what integration means to inhabitants of Lindesnes. I provide this section as a prelude to exploring the mechanisms and obstacles to integration and as a means of context.

To gain additional understanding of participants understanding of integration and what it means to them, they were also asked if they themselves feel integrated. They were then asked follow-up questions. If they answered yes, they were asked why they feel integrated and what factors in their lives make them feel integrated. If they answered no, they were asked why they do not feel integrated and what factors in their life contribute to that feeling. Participants also revealed who they believed was responsible for integration and answered why it mattered. The data throughout this section is discussed in relation to

both Ager and Strang's (2008) core domains and Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx's (2016) heuristic model, revealing areas of importance to integration in Lindesnes.

Mechanisms and obstacles of integration

While narrative stories of the participants would have been an ideal way to present this data, the study area is a relatively small community. To protect participants identities', I have taken a topical approach to organizing, presenting, and discussing the data.

To organize the data and present the findings related to how integration happens, I first turn to Ager and Strang's (2008) core domains. I categorize the data among the following domains: *employment, housing, education, health, social bridges, social bonds, social links, language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability*, and *rights and citizenship* (ibid). This helps to paint a broad picture of experiences in Lindesnes and reveals areas of particular importance to integration in Lindesnes.

I then discuss the categories of *employment, education* (including *language and cultural knowledge*), and *social connection* through Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx's (2016) heuristic model for studying integration. Using this model helps to highlight interaction between and among immigrants and the receiving society across three dimensions: *legal-political, socio-economic* and *cultural-religious* (ibid). These interactions are also considered along the individual, organizational, and institutional level (ibid).

Ethical considerations

This research was approved by the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) and abides by the rules set forth by NSD. The privacy of informants has been protected in the collection, processing, and analyzing of data. Prior to interviews, participants were given information about the project, verbally and in writing. The written project description was pre-approved by NSD. In addition, project participants signed consent forms. An external audio recorder was used to record the interviews. Upon completion of the interviews, the audio files were moved to the University of Agder's secure OneDrive server and deleted from the device. A handful of the interviews were entirely anonymous, at the request of the participants, so no consent form was signed, and audio was not

recorded. In these instances, I took fully anonymized notes and used the data only as background information. Throughout the findings, immigrant participants' countries of origin and other identifying details have been made intentionally vague to further protect their identities.

Research obstacles and limitations

Language and cultural barriers, the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic, and my identity and personal connection to what I write about have all influenced this research. When I began this study in 2018, I had just moved to Norway and did not speak Norwegian. My own integration process and interaction with the receiving society has run parallel to this research. My understanding of the Norwegian culture and language has evolved immensely in the past four years. In the first few years of my studies, academic literature published in Norwegian was inaccessible to me. Only in the past year have I been able to tap into the vast amount of relevant literature published in Norwegian. As such, my literature review has a bias toward English-language publications and may not reflect the full depth of perspectives offered by Norwegian-language publications.

As my field work commenced in earnest, the first case of coronavirus was reported in Norway. National and local restrictions limiting social gatherings followed. My desire for in-person interviews and observation persuaded me to delay my field work. In doing so, my Norwegian language skills improved and, by the time I conducted most of my interviews, I was able to speak the language and, furthermore, understand the community in greater context. That said, there will always be nuances lost in translation – even among two people speaking the same native language. As humans, we listen to others through the frames of our own experiences and understanding. In the findings, I have done my best to represent the participant's points of view – primarily through the use of direct quotes. If interview content was unclear to me, I asked participants for clarification and turned to other native speakers for additional layers of understanding.

The coronavirus also affected my plan to organize several focus groups. At the time of my fieldwork, coronavirus was widespread in Lindesnes and, therefore, I was not comfortable bringing groups of people together. To overcome this obstacle, I found groups of people who were already planning to gather or who gathered regularly and

conducted group interviews. I believe this provided an adequate substitute for the data I hoped to generate from focus groups.

Finally, my personal identity undoubtedly influenced this research. The topic I pursue is of a personal nature, as my partner is a refugee, and my daily life is intertwined with the refugee and immigrant community here in Norway. I identify as an immigrant in Norway. I am aware this can both contribute to and detract from my ability to produce valid research. It may have influenced the way participants spoke to me. While there are residents of Lindesnes who are critical, skeptical, and even opposed to immigration, I was not able to firsthand collect this data. My identity, my partner's identity, and my own method of sampling may have affected this. This critical viewpoint, however, is present in the research through stories from participants as well as citations to other academic work. By choosing to take a social constructivist approach, I believe I have been able to incorporate my experience and identity into the research in transparent and ethical ways.

Chapter 5 Meanings of integration

This chapter sets out to provide contextual understanding of how research participants in Lindesnes define and relate to integration. I compare participants understanding of integration – generated through both their words and actions – with that of past integration studies and briefly discuss the findings in relation to both Ager and Strang's (2008) core domains and Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx's (2016) heuristic model for studying integration.

Direct definitions

Before exploring how integration happens, I wanted to gain an understanding of how the participants of this study defined integration themselves. I believed knowing this would give me deeper understanding of how participants responded to the other interview questions. Upon examining the various definitions of integration, I was able to categorize them into three focus areas:

1. Integration as a process: Focus on adaption of the newcomer
2. Integration as a relationship: Focus on interaction
3. Integration as an aspect of multiculturalism

Integration as a process: Focus on adaption of the newcomer

Most of the definitions focused on the actions, feelings, and adaptation of a newcomer. In other words, integration as primarily an individual process. In the context of these interviews, most people were referring to foreigners coming to Norway, but a handful of ethnic Norwegians mentioned that integration was also a process they went through – to a lesser degree – when moving to Lindesnes from other areas of Norway. Some Lindesnes-born participants also mentioned having to re-integrate after moving away from the area, even if they were only gone for a few years. Some definitions focused more on being a part of something and feeling at home, while others took a focus on what must be done to succeed, such as learning Norwegian and participating in society. Definitions in this category were given by participants from all four stakeholder groups. A representative sample of these definitions is shared below.

> *Integration is a process in which one moves toward a goal of living and succeeding in a society.*

> *Integration is participating and contributing to society and speaking Norwegian.*

> *I believe integration means that I learn the language – the most important – find myself a job, educate myself. Make some friends. Know the culture and traditions here in Norway. Food is a part of integration. Activities. Everything is connected to integration. Integration comes naturally when you live here, it happens in your everyday life.*

> *The point when you become just one more in the society, you speak the language, know the culture, you are included.*

> *Integration is to become a part of society. To feel at home.*

> *You must learn habits, culture, language, rules, laws. Language is very important.*

> *To adapt to a society, despite where and what you come from.*

Integration is achieving a good life in Norway, then you are a part of something.

Integration, for me, really means to fit into the society where you live and participate, have a job, have friends. Participate in the school, participate in activities, go out for walks.

The definitions in this category fall in line with Berry's (1980) understanding of how immigrants adapt to a new environment. In this case, however, participants were clear to point out that some facets of integration in Lindesnes apply not only to immigrants but also Norwegians.

Per Berry's (ibid) definitions, assimilation is a rejection of one's native culture and adoption of their new culture while integration is a blending of one's native culture into their new culture. Most of the definitions given in this category, given the context of the full interviews, could be classified as integration. A few of the definitions, however, would be more appropriately classified as assimilation.

Integration as a relationship: Focus on interaction

Several participants defined integration in reference to how people treat each other, with an emphasis on their role in relation to integration. In other words, seeing integration primarily as a relationship. Most participants who gave this definition are integration actors in Lindesnes. Given that most of the participants in this category are involved daily with integration efforts influences their definition of integration. It is their paid or volunteer job to contribute to integration, so they have likely been exposed to more discussion and academic perspectives on integration. They have also interacted with foreigners more than the average resident of Lindesnes. All the definitions in this category are shared below.

I think of belonging ... that one feels they belong to a society. To be part of a society where you belong. To belong, you must be welcomed.

When you come to a new land, you might be lacking knowledge. It can be challenging. It's like climbing a mountain, but you never get to the top. So, we must help them up the mountain. We are all people. We need help. We need each other. We are like a tool to help them so they can manage on their own.

My first thought would be like, how do you make people part of a community. Like how do you make people feel at home … that you can contribute with something, but you also feel it's both give and take?

Integration is treating others the way I would like to be treated. The golden rule.

It's a positive word that means that we should be open to each other and that all people have the same worth … despite our different countries, religions, backgrounds.

Integration means that we all work well together. That I get along with my neighbors, can communicate with the people I work with, and that I can do my job well. And that my children get along with others. That we create understanding of each other.

The definitions in this category, given the context of the full interviews, exhibit awareness of integration as an interaction or relationship, most often alluding to the participants' own relationship with newcomers – a two-way relationship (Miholjcic, 2019, p. 15).

Integration as an aspect of multiculturalism

Finally, a third category emerged that included mentions of differences and the idea of preserving a foreign identity and culture parallel to accepting the Norwegian culture. Definitions in this category were given by participants from all stakeholder groups. All the definitions in this category are shared below.

I believe that integration is not that we are all the same, but that we can feel something in common, that we can feel at home, that we are welcome in each other's presence. And that it's okay to be different in the way many people are different from different cultures. I think it's not about being the same at all. It's more about how this [difference] is tackled in the meeting with the majority.

For me personally, I feel integrated when I'm very comfortable with who I am, my culture, my identity, that I'm confident about myself and, also at the same time, I feel that I know enough about the new culture or the country that I live in … what the rules are, mostly the unwritten rules, that the society has.

Integration is to become a part of a flock. Whether you come from another country, another place in the country, or even another socioeconomic class. And you find many flocks. So, the question is, how peaceful is it among the flocks?

Integration is the ability to understand the local language, the ability to understand the local customs, and an ability to adjust to local customs and local culture, not necessarily adopting, but being able to live parallel or in tandem with us.

The definitions in this category, given the context of the full interviews, show an awareness of how multiculturalism comes into play with integration. They also demonstrate an understanding of integration as both relational and multi-dimensional (Strang & Ager, 2010). One definition asks if the "flocks" will get along. Another asks how the majority will receive differences. These two definitions exhibit an awareness of integration as both an individual and societal phenomenon. They also reveal the opinion that multiculturalism can both help and hinder a society, which is congruent with past studies of integration. While some of the definitions painted multiculturalism among a blended and harmonious society, others hinted to and directly discussed how multiculturalism can lead to the segmenting of society into different groups and, in the worst-case scenario, segregation and unrest between and among groups. This concept came up in several of the interviews. Terms used to describe the segmenting of society into groups varied and included flocks, subcultures, ghettos, and gangs. How participants defined and related to these groups varied widely. For example, one ethnic Norwegian resident of Lindesnes considered there to be several flocks in Lindesnes, his being a small flock of like-minded, non-religious people with similar political ideologies. He said other flocks exclude him but, as he is not interested in being a part of these flocks, he accepts that. This does not affect his sense of integration. However, another ethnic Norwegian resident of Lindesnes considered the entire community of Lindesnes as one flock saying:

Residents have a responsibility [to integration]. That responsibility lies at the foundation of what it means to be a person. That we have a responsibility for our flock. We must take care of those around us. We will have a much better life if we can ensure … everyone has it good.

The way people define and relate to others in the community impacts their willingness and interest in helping each other. People were more willing to help others in their flock, but some had a much narrower definition as to who was in their flock.

In addition to the definitions falling into these three categories, one participant defined integration as the opposite of segregation. This participant lived outside of Norway for most of their life and was previously involved with fights for civil rights. Their general stance on integration and, in particular, the treatment of refugees in Norway echoed recent debates related to racism; that it is not enough to not be racist, but that one must be actively anti-racist. They quoted Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, "To remain silent and indifferent is the greatest sin of all." This definition and the discussion that followed demonstrates an understanding of integration as both relational and multi-dimensional (Strang & Ager, 2010).

In sum, when linked to past integration research, the average resident of Lindesnes municipality, whether a refugee, immigrant, or ethnic Norwegian, defined integration congruent with research from 30 to 40 years ago. Their direct definitions of integration focused on the process of a newcomer adapting to a new society and did not necessarily consider the role of the receiving society, the state, and other institutions.

About one third of the participants, primarily young refugees and integration actors, defined integration in a way that went beyond the more traditional definition and could be classified as a two-way process or relationship. Some of the definitions included aspects of multiculturalism, though this was painted in both a positive and negative light.

This section presented the direct definitions that participants gave of integration *in their own words*. However, some participants' definition of integration varied from their

understanding of it in their everyday lives, uncovered through additional questions and observations. Most participants revealed a more nuanced and thoughtful understanding of integration, that revolved not only around the adaptation of a newcomer but also recognized the role of the receiving society. A few participants cited they rarely to never think about integration; discussing it for this project was a first. In these interviews, the participants' framing and thinking about integration appeared to be forming, and the ideas throughout the interview were incongruent. In conclusion, asking people to explicitly define integration gave some insight into their understanding of integration, but further conversation that included concrete examples, personal reflection, and observation yielded richer data. This is discussed in the next section.

Participants understanding of integration beyond the direct definition

While it was useful to ask participants to define integration explicitly, additional questions led to more personal reflection on the topic and yielded deeper understanding of what integration meant to participants. These questions included:

- Do you feel integrated in Lindesnes? Why/what factors in your life makes you answer the way you do?
- Who is responsible for integration?
- Why does integration matter?

Do you feel integrated? Why or why not?

When ethnic Norwegian participants of the study were asked this question, they often laughed, asked me to repeat the question, or repeated it out loud to be sure they understood what I was asking. Most had never considered this question pertaining to themselves and responses to the question were not always immediate. This revealed some distance from the concept of integration among this group. It is not clear whether they believed, as ethnic Norwegians, that integration is assumed or if they believed integration was merely not a requirement for them. This personal reflection revealed data not obtained when they were discussing integration objectively about "others". When immigrants and refugees were asked this question, the response was natural and quick, as if they had been asked this question before.

Most study participants answered yes to this question. When asked what factors contributed to their sense of integration, the same themes came up again and again. I have classified these among Ager and Strang's (2008) core domains. Having some form of **social connection** was the number one reason why participants of this study felt integrated. Responses in this category included the mention of having a network, family, relationships, and friends in Lindesnes. The second most commented on domain was *safety and stability*. Participants felt integrated because they felt comfort, belonging, acceptance, and safety in Lindesnes. Some said they felt at home. The third most commented on category was *language and cultural knowledge*. People felt integrated because they could communicate, because they knew "how society works". One participant, who was born in Lindesnes, said he felt integrated because he "speaks Mandal's dialect". The final category that emerged was *employment.* Work, both paid and volunteer, gave participants a sense of purpose and a means of contributing to society.

Only four participants did not answer yes – three ethnic Norwegians and one refugee. The three ethnic Norwegians all gave the same answer: "yes and no". One of the participants who gave this answer elaborated on his answer in the following way:

> *I think that we all adapt to different environments, to fit in to the situation. But you know, your soul will always be your soul. And if you feel that you can never really share your soul, you're not really integrated. And that's maybe the part I'm missing here. So you feel you can share pieces of yourself that you know will be accepted and have a great time but like you can't show your whole self.*

He then went on to describe a society where he believes he could feel better integrated.

> ***Participant:*** *I mean if you look at people who went through a lot of hardship early in their lives, they seem to just cut the crap at some point in their life. Yeah, it's just straightforward. They can just tell it like it is. I like that because ... it can be hard, they're rough, you know? But, you know, still it's from their heart. It's not a show.*

Interviewer: *So, are you saying that integration would be if you lived in a community where you could all be honest with each other but still accept each other, even though everyone would not think the same thing?*

Participant: *Yes. My best friend, for example, he can say he loves [politician], who I don't think much about, but I feel he's my brother anyway.*

In other words, here the participant is describing *safety and stability* – through acceptance and tolerance – as necessary elements to integration. The part of him that feels integrated, he says, comes from the fact that he understands the "rules, limits, and how to behave". In other words, he has *language and cultural knowledge.* However, despite his Norwegian ethnicity, what he describes could be classified as assimilation. He has been assimilated into his own society.

One refugee said he was partially integrated.

[After six years in Norway] I feel more integrated than I was before, but still, I need to be more integrated. It's a bit challenging ... I'm maybe 60% integrated.

This participant said what contributed to his sense of integration was having children in school, speaking the language, attending university, and working part-time. He said having a stable job and more Norwegian friends – *social bridges* – would help him to feel more integrated.

Who is responsible for integration?

Most participants viewed integration as a shared responsibility among newcomers as well as the receiving society. This is consistent with national surveys (Brekke et al., 2020). In Lindesnes, emphasis was put on particular actors within the receiving society, such as NAV, Lindesnes Learning Center, businesses, the municipality, and schools.

Everyone has a responsibility to integration. I, who came to Norway, have a responsibility to participate in the society. Society has a responsibility to accept me. If

they accept me, and I participate, then we can create integration. But if I participate and then society says "no, stop!" then I can't participate.

The receiving society expected immigrants to learn Norwegian and "contribute to society". Many emphasized *employment* as well as an immigrant's obligation to know and follow laws and rules. One participant explained that when immigrants fail to integrate and must go on social support, she is affected.

We must save them. It is society's responsibility. We can't lose anyone! I pay a ton of taxes. It comes back to me.

She put emphasis on the welfare state's responsibility to ensuring integration. Others emphasized that, in a generous welfare state like Norway, immigrants have a responsibility to trust, understand, and appreciate their new society. The below conversation demonstrates a difference in both perception and expectation of an immigrant, depending on where they come from. Here the perception is that certain immigrants from Africa and the Middle East may not act in solidarity with their new society and lack appreciation for the welfare state. I share this longer exchange as it represents what many ethnic Norwegians expressed to me – a complex mix of expectation and acceptance.

Participant 1: *What makes people from such natural resource-rich countries come, what is that about? What is it that makes them come to this country, we are flooded with people ... well, not flooded, but they are coming. They come knocking on our door because they don't have it well. I am thinking of Africa, they come from many African countries, from the Middle East. They are wealthy nations that have a lot, but they do not have ...*

Participant 2: *They have war.*

Participant 1: *Yes, but I'm talking about the other countries without war. The come knocking on our door.*

Participant 2: *There is poverty. The resources are not divided evenly.*

Participant 1: *So how can we avoid those resources not being evenly distributed? It is that that creates …*

Participant 2: *Unrest?*

Participant 1: *Unrest, right? And it's there I think about the cultural message that they bring … it is so important with integration that they understand this is a land of community that as a community has created the welfare state we have today.*

Participant 2: *No one gave it to us.*

Participant 1: *… We have, throughout our development, created a society of openness and we think about each other.*

Participant 2: *We are in solidarity.*

Participant 1: *Yes, we are in solidarity. I find that many who come do not have this same experience.*

Participant 2: *We have great trust in our society …*

Participant 1: *Of our leaders.*

Participant 2: *We trust each other. While other societies and countries do not have that trust. Especially authoritarian lands.*

Participant 1: *They must … as I said, I think that integration is so important ...*

Participant 2: *Yes, but integration is both ways as you say …*

> ***Participant 1:*** *But there is a responsibility. I would not call it assimilation, I don't want to go there, but they need to have an understanding why …*
>
> ***Participant 2:*** *An understanding of what the Norwegian society is.*
>
> ***Participant 1:*** *Yes. And I am so, so, so thankful to have been born into this society.*
>
> ***Participant 2:*** *We are lucky.*
>
> ***Participant 1:*** *There isn't anywhere that has it better. I would love those who come to also have that feeling and not just anger that they didn't get money for this or that – though I do agree more money could be given especially to children and youth – but that they recognize this and are thankful.*

This exchange illustrates a concern and protectiveness for the welfare state. As previous studies show, immigration can be viewed as a threat to this (Brochmann & Djuve, 2013; Fraser, 1995). This opinion was more often expressed by participants who were born in the two decades after World War II, during the development of the Norwegian welfare state.

A notable number of participants also put emphasis on the responsibility of parents to integration outcomes.

> *Parents have a huge responsibility. The way they think decides whether their children are happy or not here in Norway. They react to their parents' feelings. For example, some parents sit and drink coffee and complain about how cold it is in Norway and dream of going back to their homeland after the war, while their young kids sit around and hear this. It creates bad feelings for the children. It's like chaos for the children's identity. They feel that they don't belong to Norway, that they will go back to their country one day, that they will not live here forever. [The parents] present Norway like a temporary place, and this prevents their children from investing in the future here. I see many families like this, unfortunately.*

While this quote reflects the role of refugee parents, the same view was also cited by ethnic Norwegian participants. They stressed the importance of modeling good behavior to their children and encouraging their children to be inclusive of their immigrant classmates.

Why does integration matter?

As the previous section detailed, members of the Norwegian welfare state had a vested interest in integration from an economic standpoint. Beyond that, all participants in Lindesnes took interest in integration for additional reasons, citing desires for peace and equality.

> *We need to be a society in which the weakest link can be a part of it. We cannot have a society in which 20 percent of the people are excluded. We need a society where everyone has a place and has equal value.*

> *I believe integration is so important to avoid conflicts. There will be a big crisis if we have only segregation and assimilation. Integration is so important so that all will participate and belong in society. When we feel that we are a part of society, we take care of each other. But if we feel excluded, we don't care as much.*

> *If there isn't integration, things will be totally broken. It's like corona. Someone who is not integrated can be dangerous and infect others around them.*

Discussion

In asking people to directly define integration, many non-immigrant participants answered in a more theoretical and distant way. When considering Ager and Strang's (2008) core domains, there was emphasis on immigrants gaining *language and cultural knowledge* and *employment*. When people were asked if they themselves felt integrated, the answers revealed the importance of *social connection* and *safety and stability* over *language and cultural knowledge* and *employment.* This does not necessarily reveal that *language and cultural knowledge* and *employment* were not important to ethnic Norwegians. However, it may show that these factors were taken for granted or more easily attained.

When participants directly defined integration, most used a simple definition referring to the process a newcomer goes through. Few participants noted the role of the receiving society. However, when participants were asked what contributed to their own sense of integration and discussed the concept more at length, a more nuanced understanding of integration was revealed that nodded to the importance of acceptance, safety, and peace. These answers show the undeniable importance of the role the receiving society plays.

Participants direct definitions of integration were also a lot simpler than their actions. For example, someone with a slightly anti-immigrant rhetoric or political leaning volunteered to help people learn Norwegian. Her actions showed a deeper recognition of integration as relational or multi-dimensional, even if the words she chose to describe integration sounded more like a textbook case of assimilation. Here you see rhetoric versus action. Individuals said one thing, but their actions were not entirely congruent with their words. In Norway the concept of *dugnad* is powerful. I would describe it as the coming together to accomplish a task. In Lindesnes, groups of people work together to clean their neighborhoods, plant flowers, raise money for worthy causes, and so much more. There is positive social pressure to participate in these efforts. Hagelund (2020) has also observed *dugnad* as an influencer of immigration policy in Norway.

> *This rhetoric of dugnad and shared efforts seem to have been efficient, at least for a time, in coordinating actors across political divides.*

In smaller communities, I have witnessed this Norwegian cultural value is particularly strong. One participant called dugnad “holy”; holy enough to sway people to be helpful to others whom they may have little desire to understand. That said, I perceive this help can sometimes be more performative than relational and presume this may contribute to why some immigrants and refugees are left wondering why some ethnic Norwegians do not engage with them more outside of organized activities.

Regarding participants own assessment of their integration, the overwhelming majority cited that they feel integrated in Lindesnes. Per the direct definitions this study generated, however, I believe most answered the question based on their personal process rather

than giving weight to how they are received, perceived, or treated. Revisiting Hagelund's (2009, p. 100) observation of integration in practice in which newcomers *function* and the receiving society *handles* the difference was also my prevalent observation. Had I focused the integration question more on how newcomers are received and instead asked participants if they were "an accepted part of society," per Garcés-Mascarñas and Penninx's (2016, p. 14) definition, I wonder how the results would compare.

Given Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx's (2016) model, participants from all stakeholder groups put emphasis on individual immigrants, institutions of the receiving society, and, to a lesser extent, organizations of the receiving society in achieving *legal-political*, *socio-economic*, and *cultural-religious* equality. In Lindesnes, there are very few organizations and institutions from within the immigrant community. There is a heavy reliance on institutions of the receiving society to contribute to integration. This does not come as a surprise in a strong and generous welfare state such as Norway. Institutions of the receiving society focused heavily on *language and cultural knowledge* and *employment* through the Introduction Program. As such, they are designed to put immigrants on a path to socio-economic independence. However, when participants assessed their own integration, *social connection* and *safety and stability* ranked highest. The principal institutions in Lindesnes tasked with integration are NAV and Lindesnes Learning Center. However, as revealed later in the findings, these institutions were not highly cited for being major facilitators for *social connection* or *safety and stability*. These aspects of integration were far more likely to be addressed by co-nationals, groups of the receiving society, and individuals of the receiving society. This demonstrates the importance of the receiving society on all three levels – individual, group, and institutional – if equality is to be reached across the dimensions.

Chapter 6 Mechanisms and obstacles of integration

With some context in place as to how residents of Lindesnes define and relate to integration, this chapter discusses both mechanisms and obstacles to integration. In order to examine these factors, I turn to Ager and Strang's (2008) core domains as a categorical tool and present data from each domain. Then, in the following chapter, I analyze these findings with an emphasis on the interaction between and among immigrants and the

receiving society through Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx's (2016) heuristic model for studying integration.

Markers and Means

Employment

Throughout Norway, there is emphasis on employment as a measure of integration and consensus that having a job contributes to integration. According to data from this study, jobs provided income that in turn created opportunities. They also provided a sense of purpose and belonging as well as a potential place to meet people and become more connected to Norwegian language and culture.

Members of all stakeholder groups reported difficulty in securing permanent, full-time jobs in Lindesnes. Finding part-time and temporary jobs was more accessible to all groups. Starting wages paid to refugees and immigrants was often cited as low, due to their education not being recognized in Norway and salaries being largely determined by experience. This compelled many refugee participants and some immigrant participants to enroll in vocational and higher education in Norway as a path to higher wages and more job opportunities. Some refugees and immigrants found employment through entrepreneurship, such as the of opening fast foods restaurants and niche grocery stores. A high percentage of immigrants who came to Lindesnes through marriage to Norwegians started their own businesses after being unable to find meaningful employment. Having partners with established networks and stable jobs contributed to their ability to do so. Partners of employed work immigrants exhibited a vulnerability to unemployment. Statistics show unemployment is generally about 15% to 20% higher among refugees and also noticeably higher among family immigrants when compared to the non-immigrant population (IMDi, 2019b).

For employed participants of this study, the workplace served as a physical meeting point, bringing immigrants, refugees, and ethnic Norwegians together. Sometimes this interaction happened among coworkers. Other times the interaction happened among employees and clients. Ethic Norwegians placed more value on the workplace as a space for integration than immigrants, particularly in relation to their role and contribution to

integration. At work, they tended to feel more comfortable taking the first step to initiate communication and offer support to immigrants, especially refugees.

> *At my job, yes, I have a responsibility. I think it's great if I can help. I think it's nice if I can employ [refugees]. I try to see them without a stereotype. I feel they have perhaps fewer opportunities. So, when it comes to work, I know it's easier to find work when you are known and have a network already, so I am extra glad if someone from a foreign country is hired.*

> *Integration is a big part of my job – especially for mothers of children. There are many [mothers] who tell us that the only time they speak to someone other than their family is when they come to pick up their children at daycare. I learned from my colleagues that it is important to treat the parents the same – regardless of where they come from. This meant a lot to me, and I think this also means a lot to the parents, to be treated the same.*

When immigrants' workplaces brought them into contact with ethnic Norwegians, it also influenced the receiving society's attitudes and views on integration.

> *When I go to the pharmacy, there are no ethnic Norwegians that work there. I love it! I want to be a part of the world. I don't have to go out to the world, it has come to me. Makes me think, wow, something is working. Right here there are four different countries and cultures working together.*

> *I smile every time I think about it … when [refugees] started to get work at the nursing home … of course some of the older generation is a bit skeptical but as soon as refugees started working there, there was only positivity.*

While some interaction between immigrants and the receiving society via employment was brief and transactional, other interactions became relational and enabled the building of *social bridges*. One participant cited the caring and authentic relationships that developed between refugee women and the elderly they worked with in the nursing home. While some were skeptical of "refugees" or "darker skin", the elderly slowly

warmed up to their new caregivers and became curious. After some left the job, the elderly continued to express concern for and ask about these women and their families.

Refugee participants cited more about the struggles of finding a stable job than about the workplace being a mechanism for integration in Lindesnes.

> *I believe [the municipality] has put forth a lot of effort. But once you finish Intro, it continues to be so challenging to find a job. It's a difficult transition. I have applied for many, many jobs, but I never found a job. I have applied for at least 50 jobs. It takes time. I have gotten interviews sometimes but never a job.*

> *Many of my friends have left Mandal because they have not found steady jobs. They were always hired temporarily. NAV pays when you have an internship, and when that time is up, they don't get to stay on with a job. That applies to Norwegians too – not just refugees.*

> *The biggest challenge is that today there are more jobs than people who need to work. But there is not a match. We need nurses, teachers, plumbers, electricians. But those who are unemployed, they don't necessarily have those competencies.*

Many asylum seekers arrived in Lindesnes eager to work and were discouraged to learn they would have to wait to enter the workforce. Once gaining residency, they were required to complete the Introduction Program, through which they learn Norwegian language and culture. The Introduction Program, in essence, becomes their full-time job, and they are paid a salary. This salary is enough to live modestly in Lindesnes but lower than the average salary of Lindesnes residents (Kommune Profilen, 2018). Most take two years to complete the program, though some take less time and others take longer. Some work part-time while in the program. These jobs have included delivering newspapers, cleaning, translating, and working as substitutes at daycares and nursing homes. While some refugees came without prior education, others had worked for years as engineers, laboratory technicians, factory owners, and teachers. Others were in the midst

of their university educations. Once in Norway, they learned that the education and experience from their home countries carried little weight in Norway.

> *In early 2019, I attended a summer job fair in Mandal. The municipality, a hotel, restaurants, and a waste management company were among the businesses recruiting. When I looked around the room, I saw a bunch of Norwegian teenagers and foreign adults. I found it interesting that we are being considered for the same jobs. Walking around with my well-educated friend from Afghanistan, we started to feel uneasy about how Norway views our labor value. Do our experiences and skills acquired outside of Norway count for anything? Or are we considered inexperienced teenagers, regardless of our pasts?*

> *We know the chance of getting a stable job in Norway is much greater for those with Norwegian papers, but there are some who manage … who go right into a store and get a job there.*

Completing the Introduction Program and then continuing or restarting their education in Norway is a common path for most refugees. For many, it will be years from the time they arrive in Norway before they are *qualified* and able to apply for a full-time job. Participants from all stakeholder groups agreed that Lindesnes would benefit if there were a faster track to work.

> *Many who come here have not been to school for years. They have worked for many years and now they must go sit at school, and they just want to work and provide for their families.*

> *We must see each one of these refugees as a resource.*

While most immigrants who come to Norway are expected to find work on their own, refugees are given support through the Introduction Program and NAV. During winter, summer, and fall vacation, some refugees interned at local businesses. NAV served as the facilitator between refugees and the businesses and tried to make a match based on interests and abilities. Refugees were interested in internships for a variety of reasons,

including language practice, the chance to observe and learn about a particular profession, and the desire to eventually become a paid employee. While interning, refugees continued to receive a salary from the Introduction Program, but instead of going to class at Lindesnes Learning Center, they reported to the workplace. Employers usually required interns to work a full eight-hour workday whereas students in the Introduction Program attended class for six hours each day.

> *The internships are a very good part of Intro. But you work longer hours [than if you were to go to Intro] for the same pay. The municipality could give some incentive. Some say, "Why would I go work eight hours when I can go sit at school for just six hours and relax and enjoy myself? … It's too easy, too comfortable at school. Many don't think about the future and how it would be helpful to take an internship.*

Some participants' internships eventually turned into full and part-time jobs – primarily at area bakeries and chain grocery stores. One participant started a job at minimum wage, but his pay has since increased. As an employee, once his tasks are done, he can go home. However, when he was an intern, the rules said he had to stay eight hours. So once his main task was complete, the employer found other small jobs for him to perform that were of a different nature than the task he desired to do, including scrubbing walls and floors.

> *When they get "slave people" [interns] from NAV, they don't need to hire anyone and pay wages. They could have employed people and paid them wages. But instead, they take people through NAV. That is not good for the interns or unemployed people who would like to work for wages.*

Despite this criticism, most cited their internships as an important aspect to integration. Internships contributed to participants speaking better Norwegian (particularly the local dialect) and learning more about how the Norwegian workforce operates.

> *Now that I have an internship, I feel I am integrating. I participate with [the receiving society]. I desire to work with them in the future when I finish school.*

Some refugees who continued their education after the Introduction Program were eligible for paid apprenticeships – a requirement for them to complete vocational education. Difficulty was also cited in finding apprenticeships. Participants found job sites willing to take an apprentice, but they had no money to pay them.

Several cultural obstacles were cited by refugees and immigrants in finding an internship, apprenticeship, or job. Discrimination toward Africans and women wearing hijab were reported. Cases of immigrants changing their names to sound more neutral and less foreign were also cited. Some integration actors spoke of cultural clashes regarding attitudes, often about women in the workplace. It was cited that some women who come to Norway have never worked before and, though they are willing to work, they have a lack of awareness about their skills outside of the home. When asked what they want to do, they are uncertain, and this makes it hard for integration actors to know how to help.

> *Many women who come here have never had a choice. They couldn't choose their partner. They couldn't choose their education or work.*

Others cited that some immigrant men grapple with working for a female boss, which could limit their work opportunities. Finally, refugees cited confusion about knowing the best path to take to finding employment. Hearing stories from co-nationals about "studying forever" and still not being able to find stable jobs discouraged them from wanting to continue their education. One refugee participant said he felt "completely lost" and in need of a career mentor who could provide more detailed information about his options, with a focus on the labor needs in Lindesnes. When asked what this mentor would look like, he described someone who was knowledgeable, enthusiastic, creative, and available. He preferred this information be delivered from an institution rather than an individual or organization, saying this would increase his trust.

The role of advisors at NAV was highlighted as a major determinant to whether participants found meaningful internships and eventual work. Many reported high turnover among their advisors. Some spoke positively about their relationship with their advisor, others felt frustration and a lack of support.

I have told my full story to each advisor, again and again. That has been very difficult for me.

I think my advisor at NAV got bored with me; they don't seem to want to help anymore. They are not genuine. They do bring excitement or creativity to our meetings. I feel that I must go to them with both my problem and a suggested solution for there to be any progress. This takes so much effort, time, and energy on my part.

Others cited their involvement in volunteer and community organizations as their key to finding jobs. This involvement improved their Norwegian language skills and gave them larger networks within the receiving society. Individuals who found work through their volunteer and community involvement were sometimes recruited by employers. Having local connections was also cited as a benefit by ethnic Norwegian business owners.

When we had a business, we benefitted a lot because we were from here. There is definitely favoritism for local people.

Acknowledging that immigrants are less likely to have local networks to connect them to work, one participant cited a municipal project decades ago in which business leaders were given the responsibility to find jobs for refugees. In the end, she said that some refugees ended up with two jobs.

Housing

The location of a home and neighborhood demographics in Lindesnes prove to affect integration more than the conditions of the home itself. None of the participants complained about the standard of their housing or connected it to integration. Ethnic Norwegians and immigrants primarily owned homes while refugees more frequently rented. Refugees who lived in Norway longer were more likely to own homes. While immigrants chose where they lived, refugees were settled throughout the municipality. The majority lived in the city of Mandal. Those who lived in smaller towns throughout the municipality – primarily families – felt strongly connected to where they lived and did not desire to move to Mandal. They cited liking the peaceful environment, affordability, and

privacy from their co-national and co-ethnic groups. Many of them traveled to Mandal five days a week for school and work. Some made this commute via bus; others drove themselves. Those who relied on the bus felt their participation in activities was somewhat limited. Barriers to having a car were primarily economic, including both the cost of obtaining a driver's license and the car itself.

Strong beliefs were expressed that, when it comes to refugee settlement, Lindesnes should use the entire municipality.

> *Now the policy is such that they just want things to be as simple as possible, so they settle refugees in Mandal. It's simpler to settle refugees in Mandal … you save money and stress, but I don't think it's necessarily better. Refugees can be just as glad in other places throughout the municipality. We should use the entire municipality. It has meant a lot to the local society in [rural area of Lindesnes] to receive refugees. They have a long tradition of settling refugees.*

Many refugees – particularly young, single refugees – cited a desire to live close to the center of Mandal, however. While waiting for residency, they lived together in houses chosen for them by the asylum reception center. Some of these houses were far from the city center.

> *We lived up in the hills. It was tragic. It was so far from the city, and we didn't have bicycles or a car. We would stay home all week and go once a week to shop. We didn't have residency yet, so we had no courses or activities. We were depressed. It was very difficult. We told the employees at the reception center that we wanted to move closer to the center, but they said they didn't have any houses there. After five or six months we moved down to the city because the house we lived in was sold. So, we moved to the city, then we began to go out and meet people. I have heard the same story from a family here in Mandal. They also live very far from downtown, and they don't have transport. It's a big issue.*

Once this participant moved to the center of town, he said his mental health improved, and he was more eager to learn Norwegian and participate in activities. The official integration plan of Lindesnes Municipality for 2020-2023 prioritizes settling refugees near public offices and daycares "to facilitate opportunities for successful integration" (Lindesnes Kommune, 2020).

Ethnic Norwegians expressed some concerns about having too many immigrants concentrated in one area of town. In Lindesnes, however, they said this is less likely to happen than in larger cities like Oslo.

> *There is an advantage in coming to a smaller place. In the large cities, people just hang around the people like them. There is not this same level of segregation in a smaller place.*

> *If you want to meet others and participate in the society, I think Oslo is the worst place. Because it is so big, and it isn't easy to meet others. And people keep to their own.*

The government itself discourages the resettling of refugees in areas where 30% or more of the population is made up of immigrants (Lindesnes Kommune, 2020).

Education

For adult refugees arriving in Norway, language and cultural education is delivered through the Introduction Program. Once complete, there are several different educational paths that refugees may take. Non-refugee immigrant participants in Lindesnes were less likely to enroll at educational institutes in Norway. Immigrants who studied in their home countries send their diplomas and transcripts to the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT). NOKUT then evaluates the documents and determines a Norwegian equivalency. Often these documents are not approved or only partially approved in Norway. Others who have studied do not have documents. Depending on the NOKUT-approved education level, after the Introduction Program refugees had the option to participate in education at: high school, vocational school, or the university. It was not uncommon for those who were attending university in their native countries to have to repeat high school subjects before qualifying for vocational schools or the university in Norway.

During the Introduction Program, there was little interaction with the receiving society other than the teachers. The exception was during winter, summer, and fall vacation, when students could participate in internships at local businesses. Participants noted, however, that integration is broader than immigrants interacting with ethnic Norwegians; it was also important that refugees and immigrants interact with each other. Lindesnes Learning Center became an important space in that sense.

> *You can find students from 15 different countries who speak 15 different languages in one classroom.*

Sharing time and space every day with the same group of people contributed to understanding and resource sharing, but it also led to conflicts between ethnic, religious, and racial groups. Two participants of this study cited some degree of bullying or prejudice due to these factors. Now finished with the Introduction Program and continuing their education, neither of them has felt this within their new learning environments in which ethnic Norwegians are the majority.

The goal of the Introduction Program is to equip refugees with the tools they need to participate in society – knowledge of language, culture, and the Norwegian workplace. Some participants went straight to the workforce after completing the program, but most continued their studies. Many worked part-time while they studied. Once refugees enrolled in high school, vocational school, or the university, they shared the classroom with the receiving society. As such, the educational experience in the first year or two in Norway contributed primarily to *language and cultural knowledge.* It also facilitated *social bonds* among co-nationals and *social bridges* among immigrants. Once immigrants shared the classroom with others from the receiving society, education contributed to the deepening of that knowledge while at the same time contributing to the building of *social bridges* and better *employment* opportunities.

Refugees cited that the educational system in Norway was challenging to navigate. They also cited frustration about how long it took to "catch up" to their former educational status. For example, a refugee with a bachelor's degree and a stable job in his home country had to start from nearly zero once in Norway. NOKUT approved his degree but the hiring entity for his profession – the Norwegian Directorate of Health – did not. After six years in Norway, he is one year shy of finishing a bachelor's degree after going through the Introduction Program, completing some high school classes required to apply for university in Norway, and enrolling in university. He said being able to work in his profession and have a stable job sooner would have contributed to his sense of integration.

Several other participants did not finish university degrees in their home country. NOKUT evaluated their transcripts and gave them partial credit toward an equivalent degree in Norway. Most of these participants chose to start new careers and begin their education again rather than continuing the same area of study here in Norway. One participant decided to change his career based on personal interest and available jobs in Lindesnes. Another decided to switch fields based on the amount of study time that earning his original degree would have required in Norway.

> *In this country, to have the best chance at being employed you need a Norwegian education document, or one that is approved in Norway.*

> *It's hard to give advice to refugees. We tell them they need a degree, but then they see their neighbor without education get a job. But it has a lot to do with personality.*

In addition to personality, attitudes and perceptions of both immigrants and the receiving society impact an immigrant's educational path. Some refugees found studying "boring", "difficult," or "bureaucratic" and discouraged other refugees from continuing their education after the Introduction Program. Some studied for years and have yet to find work. Yet other immigrants, who have found jobs after studying in Norway, motivated co-nationals to take the same education. Attitudes of the receiving society also influenced refugees' choices. A young refugee woman who shared her plan to study law was told to consider an alternative (*easier*) course of study by her teacher. Another participant said studying nursing was "too challenging" for most refugees in Lindesnes, citing the logistics of obtaining the necessary fluency in Norwegian, the responsibility of having a family, and the commute to Kristiansand. In general, refugees cited a lack of guidance, support, and information related to educational choices.

> *I want to work and am willing to study, but I do not know where to start. I feel completely lost.*

Only a handful of refugees cited receiving enough information to make informed educational choices. Ultimately, the opinions of co-nationals and integration actors

influenced the educational – and eventual career – paths of refugee participants for better and worse.

Health

Health does not appear to be a major factor contributing to one's sense of integration in Lindesnes. By Norwegian law, the same health rights and services are provided to all groups of stakeholders in this study. The topic of health was only cited twice by retired refugees who said that having access to the same health services as "everybody else" contributed to their satisfaction and feeling of integration in Lindesnes. Had the interview questions been formulated to specifically inquire about health and experiences with the health system, I anticipate the findings in this category would yield more robust data.

Social Connection

Social bonds

Relationships among families, co-ethnic, co-national, and co-religious groups in Lindesnes are widespread. The Lindesnes Learning Center, mosques, churches, weddings, and holiday celebrations provided important physical spaces that fostered this interaction for immigrants. The receiving society had a plethora of physical spaces that fostered such interaction. Integration activities arranged by a community organization – led by a refugee – was also cited as a major contributor to *social bonds* – and *social bridges*. Relationships among those with a shared language, culture, or beliefs were the most common form of social connection across all stakeholder groups.

> *Syrians and Eritreans, they like to be around people from their own country. It's easier to be around each other. But we [Norwegians] are the same! We are not necessarily so open to new things. Change is scary.*

> *My observation is that people with the same culture and language often end up hanging out with each other. Why don't we mix more?*

These relationships provided important feelings of belonging, acceptance, and support to participants. Information sharing was also prominent. Informal leaders emerged from co-

national and co-ethnic groups of immigrants. These leaders typically spoke Norwegian and had built strong *social bridges*. They were viewed as successful within their co-national and co-ethnic communities and felt a responsibility to help “their own”. These leaders were often contacted by co-nationals and co-ethnics for advice related to life in Norway. They provided help through translating documents, giving career and education advice, and introducing people to others, from within and outside of their group(s). It was not rare for them to invest several hours each week helping others.

While usually a positive contribution to integration, these relationships also caused obstacles. War in refugees’ homelands, former political affiliations, cultural expectations, social control, and difference in attitudes toward both immigrants and the receiving society created tension among co-nationals. It was also not uncommon for immigrants to consciously avoid members of their co-ethnic, co-national, and co-religious groups once they came to Lindesnes. Some attempted this for a few weeks before returning to the comfort of their community; others have adopted this attitude for years. Due to strong public perception that immigrants cannot be integrated if they only hang out with others “like them”, some prioritized befriending and interacting with ethnic Norwegians. This was expressed by several participants – both immigrants and ethnic Norwegians – in various ways.

> *I dare say [immigrants] who have Norwegian friends are better off. They have it better. Maybe I’m wrong?*

> *They don’t need to quit being friends with their fellow country men and women, but they also need to go beyond that.*

> *If you just wake up, go to school, speak your mother tongue to your own countrymen, go to the store and don’t talk to anyone, and go home, that is not a good life.*

Some believed members of their shared group would not accept them as they are, due to divergent beliefs on religion, relationships, and lifestyle, so they purposely maintained only surface *social bonds***,** such as sharing a meal or meeting for coffee but not discussing personal issues.

I have many friends from different places … Norwegians, [people from my country of origin], but it is a little complicated in my situation. I have friends … but I also have limits, so they don't come too much into my life. I find it easier to be friends with Norwegians, they are more open than [my ethnic group]. It was also hard for me to make friends in [my country of origin].

We don't have so many [people from my country of origin] here, but if you live in another place, the other [people from my country of origin] watch what you do and tell each other. They try to find something shameful. I try not to give that so much importance. I feel totally free. I am part of both [country of origin] and Norwegian culture.

Religious beliefs, interpretations of how to practice faith, and disagreement about who should lead religious groups have also created division among co-religious groups in both the receiving society and among immigrants in Lindesnes.

Social bridges

This type of relationship was of particular concern among all stakeholder groups and highlighted as a major mechanism and obstacle to integration. Project participants tended to have relationships with co-nationals but most desired to have more *social bridges*. Conversations with immigrant participants revealed that interacting with and having close relationships with ethnic Norwegians was important to their sense of integration. Ethnic Norwegian participants also valued their relationships with immigrants but did not define their sense of integration by their number of non-ethnic Norwegian friends.

Social bridges were more prevalent among immigrants than between immigrants and ethnic Norwegians. The shared experience of being an immigrant, learning Norwegian, and often sharing the classroom or workplace facilitated these relationships.

My best friend is from Eritrea. We don't have the same language, culture, or religion, but we have a common language – Norwegian – and the common experience of immigrating here.

> *Where do you find new friends? That is a big part of integration. Where should you go? You can't just stop people in the store and ask if they will be your friend.*

Organized activities, such as volunteering and joining local associations, clubs, religious groups, and community events provided the best opportunities for the creation of *social bridges*. When refugees and immigrants were active members or leaders within such activities and groups, they were more likely to be cited as contributing to integration.

> *I hear many people say that Norwegians are cold compared to other places and that it is hard to meet people. Yet I think associations and clubs are a very easy way to step inside of something here in Norway.*

The needs of immigrants and the type of activity that built *social bridges* varied greatly. One's ability to speak Norwegian, gender, length of time in Norway, and age were factors that affected this. Having a common interest was a major factor to the building of *social bridges* between immigrants and the receiving society. Some of these common interests included music, sports, food, volunteering, the environment, and religion.

> *As long as you have the same interest, it goes well. That prevails over where you come from.*

However, while some ethnic Norwegians felt satisfied volunteering a few hours a week or being kind to their classmates and coworkers while at school or on the job, some refugees wondered why the relationships did not extend beyond these organized frames.

> *80 to 90 percent of my immigrant students truly desire to have Norwegian friends. They desire that, but they don't know how to make it happen. They tell me, "In the classroom they speak to me, but once I go out into the hallway, they don't speak to me. We play football together, but if we meet after football, there is no one who talks to me or says hi.*

Ethnic Norwegians cited cultural differences related to social interaction. What is considered polite in one culture may be interpreted as impolite in another. Expectations around one's relationship with their neighbors is one example. Most study participants, among all stakeholder groups, had only superficial relationships with their neighbors. Refugees were more likely to express a desire and expectation to know their neighbors better.

> ***Member of receiving society:*** *We are a little more selfish, and we think about our own things. We don't go out to the refugee neighbors down the street and ask them if we can help them with something. We have new neighbors, and we wave at each other, but that's enough. And if they were foreigners, it would be the same. We would rather not disturb them.*

> ***Member of receiving society:*** *Perhaps us Norwegians are a little scared of getting involved in other people's lives. We are reserved and scared that others will think we are invading their privacy and that can hinder us, I believe, in caring for others.*

> ***Immigrant participant:*** *Yeah, here it's polite to not go [to greet the neighbors]. That is different than in my culture.*

> ***Refugee participant:*** *We have enough friends, but we don't have so many Norwegian friends. We have friends from our country and also other refugees. I am open to meeting other Norwegians, but I can't force them to be my friend ... I have invited Norwegians to my house, but they don't come to my house. I have tried to invite my neighbors. I don't know why ... they don't come. Maybe they have other plans? Or they do not want to come to my house? They are kind people, but they don't come to my house. I have now stopped inviting them.*

Prejudices, stereotypes, and assumptions generated among immigrants about the receiving society and vice versa also had a big influence on these relationships.

> *My Norwegian teacher says, "Oh, in a few years you will take off your hijab." But I won't. I will participate in the society, without taking off the hijab. That's my personal choice.*

Many believe that we are forced to wear hijab. But there are also stereotypes from our side. Some say that Norwegians have sex all the time. Both prejudices are wrong.

What I think can be scary is that [some Islamic practices] remind me of the extremism in Norway from before – Christian fundamentalism.

One refugee family desired for their children to befriend Norwegian children but wondered if this would negatively influence their children. This fear came from stories and experiences from co-nationals, causing them to hesitate before trying to build *social bridges*. Lack of contact between immigrants and ethnic Norwegians appeared to exaggerate these ideas of the "other".

A group discussion revealed that some ethnic Norwegians build "big differences" in their minds, which can inhibit their one-on-one engagement with immigrants outside of organized activities. Some theorized that it is not that they do not want to interact with immigrants, but they feel vulnerable or uncertain how to approach them and what to talk about, citing small talk is not their strength. Another ethnic Norwegian participant said that taking initiative and including new people can be scary because it requires you to "open your heart and be a little vulnerable". To do this, requires surplus energy. "Shame" was also cited as an obstacle for ethnic Norwegians in interacting with African immigrants.

I don't know many Africans. You have the whole history of European exploitation which always seems to come up in my mind, and this is really not a good thing because I didn't really have anything to do with that but still I really feel … I have to remedy it somehow. And that's not going to be a natural … way of being together. And I'm not happy about that … it's the shame which is quite deeply rooted that creates a barrier.

Other ethnic Norwegian participants cited that there will always be stereotypes and prejudices toward certain groups when they first come to Norway but that, with time, people become more used to the "newcomers" and the discrimination fades as the "strangers" become "familiar".

We have grown up with prejudices. My parents grew up in war. No one liked the Germans when I was young. Then in the '60s Pakistanis came to Norway. They smelled different. They ate garlic and food with a strong smell … they were strangers to us. It was something new … eventually, [new immigrant groups] are not so dangerous anymore because they become familiar to us.

Empathy motivated several ethnic Norwegian participants to become involved with integration efforts. Those who were born in Lindesnes, moved away for a few years, and then returned showed understanding for immigrants, saying that reintegrating to Lindesnes was a challenge, even for them. The same sentiment was expressed by ethnic Norwegians not born in Lindesnes. One referred to herself as an immigrant.

Integration affects not just people who come from other countries but also people who come from northern Norway and Oslo.

You have to have the right contacts in Mandal. I was excluded for years and was then suddenly included when I knew the right person.

Loneliness taught me a lot. It affects how I treat other people. I know how important it is. I like to think that I have empathy.

Stories of successful immigrants in the media and public recognition of immigrants were also cited as motivators for the receiving society to build bridges. When Lindesnes municipality publicly recognized a refugee for his contributions, one participant said it was an "ah ha" moment for some and proof that despite being a refugee, one could be integrated and successful. She cited that this public recognition was a sign that Lindesnes has become more accepting and welcoming than in the past.

Immigrants who came to Lindesnes through marriage to Norwegians tended to have more *social bridges*. Work immigrants and partners of work immigrants tended to have fewer *social bridges* and more relationships with other work immigrants and co-nationals. Refugees primarily reported having *social bridges* with their teachers and older, female

volunteers. Several participants expressed that young adults within Lindesnes could be more active in contributing to integration.

> *We can always do better, especially young adults … they must get off their butts and get out there … I believe there is a gap there. Kids integrate in schools. Retired folks are very active.*

> *Volunteers are mostly older people. I think it's a little rude to say this, I'm a bit embarrassed. They are so good and kind. But for us young men and women, we have a great age gap. It is hard to be close friends with them. It would be nice to have more common interests, hobbies, and experiences. It would be nice to become friends not just at the volunteer activities but in life. When a woman or man who is 70 or 80 years old … we drink coffee and chat, but it isn't easy for either of us to find something in common.*

> *Young people maybe have less prejudice, but they also contribute the least to the process of integration.*

Several participants expressed the desire for Lindesnes to have a municipal activity house where young adults could meet more informally to "play billiards" or "relax". In Lindesnes, bars are often the social meeting point for young adults. Participants who do not drink but desire to socialize cited few physical spaces for them to encounter the receiving society informally. Others said local clubs and organizations that are not explicitly related to integration are difficult to discover unless you know someone who is a member.

Finally, having kids was cited by both immigrants and ethnic Norwegians as one of the best ways to build *social bridges* in Lindesnes. This gave participants a shared experience, something to talk about, and fostered opportunities for meeting in person. These opportunities came through meets ups at daycare, schools, birthday parties, children's activities, and new mother groups (*barselgrupper*). These new mother groups are initially facilitated through the local health station, then the group members take over the responsibility to organize the meet ups. Ethnic Norwegian participants cited

disappointment when immigrants did not participate in their assigned groups, including several cases of refugee women not participating.

> *The barselgruppe is very important. There were many who were supposed to be in my group, and they never came. We wanted to reach out to them, but we could not get their contact information because of privacy and consent laws.*

Some refugee women cited not having a full understanding of the role or importance of the group and therefore did not prioritize their participation. Immigrant women, including refugees, who did participate in these new mother groups cited them as a valuable place for meeting – and befriending – ethnic Norwegian women.

As for the building of *social bridges*, there was no consensus regarding who should take the first step.

> *The Mandalitt has responsibility to take the first step. It is our home city. We are the ones who know the unwritten rules and know where and how things work here.*

> *Make sure no one sits alone. It is such a simple thing we can do. I think that's important. It's about both including and integrating. It's not just about immigrants. We need to be conscious, give it some thought, that we notice those around us. If you go to a meeting and you will be sitting there for two hours, talk to somebody who has no one to talk to instead of talking to the person you have already talked to 10 times previously. We can all be better.*

> *I often take the first step and that's because they [Norwegians] are afraid of us, they are afraid of me ... I don't know, maybe they have read something, and they believe that I'm actually a terrorist.*

Social links

Refugees cited more engagement with municipal and state institutions than other immigrants. These included their interactions with NAV and educational institutions,

including Lindesnes Learning Center. When refugees arrived in Lindesnes, most of their first interactions with the receiving society were with workers at NAV via interpreters. Language was cited as a barrier in some cases when an interpreter was not available. In some instances, refugees were told that their Norwegian was sufficient and that they did not need an interpreter, despite their request. This limited refugees' ability to communicate as much or as often with NAV as they would like. Another factor influencing refugees' communication with NAV was the attitude and helpfulness of their advisor. While some were satisfied with the relationship, others said they rarely contacted their advisors, preferring to turn to co-nationals or trusted ethnic Norwegian friends to help solve their problems or answer questions. The next most cited *social link* for refugees was Lindesnes Learning Center. *Social links* were later made with other educational institutions. Non-refugee immigrants cited few *social links*. Their interactions with state institutions – such as the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), tax authority, and NAV – were minimal and primarily virtual.

Facilitators

Language and cultural knowledge

There was consensus among participants that Norwegian *language and cultural knowledge* are important and necessary for integration in Lindesnes. Immigrants who came to Norway and could communicate in English said this helped them in the beginning, but they quickly learned that Norwegian was necessary to succeed in Lindesnes. They cited that being in a smaller city where English was less spoken pushed them to learn Norwegian faster than many of their co-nationals in larger Norwegian cities. Beyond knowing the meaning of the words, they said better cultural understanding also came through learning Norwegian.

> *Once I spoke Norwegian, I found many new opportunities. [Before] I was a bit dependent on my friends. I couldn't speak Norwegian. I was totally alone.*

> *Well, if you don't speak the language, you don't necessarily know how the society works, which could lead to very many misunderstandings.*

> *When you don’t know the language, you are insecure all the time. You feel unsafe in a way, like you need someone to talk for you and help you with everything.*

How participants acquired Norwegian and cultural knowledge and their beliefs about learning language varied. The majority gained their language and cultural base through learning in the classroom at Lindesnes Learning Center. Virtual resources were also used. Interacting with Norwegian speakers – both ethnic Norwegians and other immigrants – put immigrants’ language lessons to practice through organized activities, associations, volunteering, and work, serving as an important compliment to their classroom learning.

Classroom learning

Refugee and immigrant participants primarily learned the Norwegian language through classes given at Lindesnes Learning Center. This is part of the Introduction Program for refugees. They are paid a salary and, in exchange are obligated to attend 30 hours per week of Norwegian language and social studies classes. An additional 7.5 hours is to be spent on homework, amounting to a full-time job. According to national surveys from 2021, the overwhelming majority of participants in the Introduction Program enjoyed learning Norwegian and also find it useful to their future (IMDi, 2021a).

Lindesnes Learning Center is the only place for in-person teaching of the Norwegian language and social studies in Lindesnes for adults. While refugees are paid a salary to study, there are different language and social studies rights and obligations for other immigrants, depending on both their country of origin and visa. Some are entitled to free Norwegian and social studies courses, others must pay. The impact this has on integration is explored further in the core domain of *Rights and Citizenship*.

Many work immigrants from the EEA relied on English or even their native languages at work. The grounds of their residency did not require them to learn Norwegian. An ethnic Norwegian participant shared why she believed learning Norwegian was important, even if it was not required.

A lot of Norwegians complain especially about Polish people who don't speak Norwegian. You learn a lot from the news regarding culture and context, and this requires Norwegian. Language is important.

The quality of teaching affected how quickly participants learned Norwegian and their relationship to the language itself. When a teacher lacked knowledge or enthusiasm for their students' learning, it became an obstacle for some. Both immigrant and refugee participants cited that the pace of the teaching was, at times, slow.

For me, it was boring to go to school. We have to go to school, regardless, even though it's boring. It's something we must do. I studied a lot in my country and had started university and then I had to begin with the basics again.

One refugee participant attended the Introduction Program for three years, before enrolling in high school. She said the experience was uncomfortable for her because, at 18 years old, she was considerably younger than most studying. This same participant lived as a refugee in another country before moving to Norway. In this country, she was enrolled in the school system with the receiving society right away and not given specialized language courses. Within three months, she learned the foreign language through immersion.

There was no force. There is no one forcing you, and you aren't forcing yourself. You just go to school. You have the subject. The teacher comes, gives you work. You do it. That's how things work, but there's no force. I didn't feel like I HAD to do it, and it made it very easy.

Here in Norway, she would have preferred to start directly at the high school, sharing a classroom with others her age, but not earning credit or a grade until she "picked up the language." She emphasized the importance of being surrounded and immersed in the language, something the current system does not facilitate. Today, she feels a lot of pressure when it comes to learning the language.

If I don't learn Norwegian, I won't go anywhere. That makes me very stressed. This makes it hard for me to learn Norwegian. I feel I am under gunpoint.

New regulations have helped to streamline the Introduction Program, enabling those who learn more quickly to study together and advance more swiftly to their next goal. Lindesnes Learning Center and the high school in Mandal have also partnered to offer a preparatory course (*kombinasjonsklassen)* to minority language speakers between 16 and 20 years old. Through the class they learn Norwegian language and social studies, complete their primary education, and are prepared for the transition to high school. This course physically takes place within the high school. Now those between 18 and 20 years old who are required to study Norwegian and social studies can do this among their peers through this preparatory course rather than attending the Introduction Program.

Virtual learning

A handful of participants used both paid and free Norwegian language learning resources from the internet, primarily YouTube videos. One of them learned exclusively through online resources, but most used virtual learning as a compliment to their classroom learning at Lindesnes Learning Center.

Learning by speaking

While Lindesnes Learning Center was the foundation for learning *language and cultural knowledge* in Lindesnes, social spaces have proven to be of necessary support. Both immigrant and refugee participants said that while they learned the basics in school, they *really* learned to speak Norwegian through using the language in their daily lives. Immigrants with Norwegian spouses said their partners and extended family played a major role in their language learning.

It's easier to learn Norwegian when you marry into a Norwegian family versus when you come as a family from another country and do not have many Norwegian contacts. It's a major advantage. I learned as much from personal experience or more than from courses at school.

Several participants also mentioned the plethora of language learning opportunities offered through volunteer organizations in 2015 and 2016, in response to the record-number of refugees who came to Norway. Some of these opportunities were explicitly for language and homework help. Most of these opportunities were offered in churches and public spaces. Some private individuals also opened their homes, their living and dining rooms converted into temporary classrooms. The opportunity to learn language provided by volunteer organizations and individuals was particularly useful for asylum seekers who were waiting on decisions in their cases. One integration actor shared a memory from their experience.

> *We were very concerned that they speak Norwegian. So, we tried to spread ourselves out ... so us Norwegians were not all sitting together. There were some participants that would only speak Syrian in the beginning. So, I sat right between them and spoke Norwegian. Sometimes we needed someone to help with translation because we didn't always understand each other. Some had better [Norwegian] language ability than others. It was very funny ... one day one of the women who was very reserved when it came to speaking Norwegian, who had almost never said a word in Norwegian, shouted to others who were speaking a lot in [their native language], "You must speak Norwegian!" And then she smiled.*

Volunteers at these activities used various approaches to teach language. Some were top-down and consisted of volunteers speaking about cultural topics they believed were important – Christmas, table manners, education, health – while immigrants sat writing words in notebooks, speaking little, and appearing only mildly interested. This observation was reminiscent of Hagelund's (2009, p. 100) concept of integration in practice. In other words, assimilation masquerading as integration. Some language activities were dominated by volunteers speaking Norwegian unintentionally. This happened when the participants had little to no knowledge of Norwegian and had no common language with the volunteer or other participants.

Other language activities were more interactive and organic, with immigrants and volunteers mutually determining the topic of conversation and partaking in the conversation. Volunteers showed interest in learning about the native cultures of the

immigrants, representing a two-way exchange. In this scenario, immigrants spoke and engaged more in the activity. Occasionally, participants brought volunteers homemade snacks.

Other activities provided arenas for speaking Norwegian, but language was not the primary focus. Such activities often gathered people to cook – both Norwegian and foreign foods – or take walks and hikes. For some immigrant participants, these opportunities provided a more comfortable and "equal" setting in which to practice Norwegian, particularly those with a basic level of Norwegian. Some volunteers took an interest in learning foreign languages.

> *We made food while we learned language. I could learn their language, and they could learn Norwegian.*

These activities combined language learning with cultural experiences. Refugees and immigrants cited that it was through these activities they learned culture through "living" it rather than reading about it from a book. For example, by taking a hike, participants were experiencing something that is a Norwegian value while learning the language. They also learned details of Norwegian everyday life, like the importance of having an *underlag* – a small cushion to sit on to keep dry and clean – and wearing reflectors when it was dark to avoid being hit by a car. In addition, they observed how ethnic Norwegian couples and families interacted with each other.

Some non-refugee immigrants who engaged with these activities expressed hesitancy about their involvement, as the attendees were predominately refugees. They felt uncertain if they were welcome and, if so, if they should take on a role as a participant or volunteer. They were more comfortable during activities in which there was not a clear "giver" and "taker".

Refugees who arrived in Lindesnes in the past few years reported having few opportunities to practice Norwegian with fluent Norwegian speakers. The coronavirus pandemic and measures that restricted the gathering of people influenced this. Integration actors also cite that as the number of refugees settling in Lindesnes decreased,

the “trend” to help refugees has also waned, providing fewer opportunities to those settling here recently. Those who arrived in Norway before the pandemic said the opportunity to casually speak Norwegian with fluent Norwegian speakers was as important to their language learning as their participation in formal classrooms.

> *It took me one year to learn Norwegian. I am very social. I talk a lot. I like to talk to people. You can’t learn language alone, even if you read books and watch television. But you can learn from others [who speak the language] – which expressions they use, you learn from friends.*

In addition to learning and practicing Norwegian with ethnic Norwegians, several participants mentioned the value of speaking Norwegian with other foreigners. Some of the above activities were organized and led by refugees themselves, who said they improved their Norwegian by teaching it to others. In the past, ethnic Norwegians recall refugee groups gathering and speaking only their own language. While they still see this today, they say it happens less than before. Now, refugees come from so many different countries and do not necessarily speak the same language.

> *Refugees that come [here] are out of their comfort zone. They tend to hang out with other refugees. But many, in between them, could only communicate in Norwegian.*

> *Now they come from many different countries … but they have to use Norwegian as the common language.*

> *First, we spoke English. We played together. We studied together. Many who come from Africa, they also speak English. The teacher recommended that we all speak Norwegian. And stop with English. Then a few months later we were sent to [the “mainstream” school]. There were some students from Afghanistan who don’t speak English, so then I was forced to speak Norwegian to communicate … it isn’t just Norwegians we integrate with.*

Finally, joining local organizations and “mainstream” community activities – primarily volunteer activities – was mentioned as a way to practice and learn language. Within local

organizations and organized activities, common interests gave participants something to discuss.

> *Organized activities and associations are the easiest places to meet Norwegians and talk with them. There is not such a big chance of casual encounters here. To talk to them, you must have something in common to connect.*

> *You can play football. You can do gymnastics. You can have the same interest that some other people have and then talk about that. It's a way to learn language.*

However, a certain level of Norwegian – or English – was needed before participants were comfortable enough to engage with the majority group in these settings. Integration actors said language groups and activities targeted at refugees and immigrants serve as an important bridge to prepare foreigners for participation in these "mainstream" activities. Yet the opinion was also expressed that so-called integration activities primarily attract refugees, who get to know one each other, but provide limited interaction with other members of the receiving society. Most of that interaction is with retired, female ethnic Norwegians. They argued the best spaces for language learning were through participating in long-standing local organizations, volunteering, and community-wide events.

In addition to studying and socializing, some workplaces proved to be an important space for language and cultural learning. Working as a server in a restaurant was a common profession that helped immigrants to practice and learn better Norwegian.

> *I think the most important thing for those who come here is work. This is the place where you find someone to talk to.*

Refugee participants also said time at their internship was a major contribution to their *language and cultural knowledge*.

> *I learned more about the local dialect at my internship than at school. It is not easy to understand. At school you learn a language that almost no one actually speaks. I had*

to concentrate so hard when people talked to me [outside of the classroom]. I couldn't understand the entire sentence. Now I am more familiar with the Mandal dialect.

Safety and stability

When participants answered what contributed to their sense of integration in Lindesnes, many cited feeling safe and comfortable. Undoubtedly, *safety and stability* contribute to one's sense of integration. While both immigrants and ethnic-Norwegians cited that they feel safe in Lindesnes, a refugee of color and another who uses hijab believe they may cause fear in others.

> ***Participant:*** *They are a little bit afraid. I had one experience with a couple. The man had previously helped me. And so later I went to their home to ask if I could [borrow something], and the man wasn't home, but his wife was. But she was very scared … she went up to the second floor and looked at me through the window. She didn't open the door for me. She asked me from the window what I wanted. I realized then she was very afraid of me. I explained that I wanted help from her husband and then she felt a bit safer. Her husband was very kind to me. She was very skeptical of me at first, but she did start to talk to me later. It takes some time.*
>
> ***Interviewer:*** *Why do you think she was like that?*
>
> ***Participant:*** *I think because I am a Black man ... maybe ... I don't know? In the beginning, I was shocked. It was the first time I felt someone was afraid of me … some people are a little skeptical of me. It's not nice, actually, but I haven't experienced extremely negative things.*

One participant who uses hijab was called a terrorist by her classmates years ago. At the time, she felt unsafe, uncomfortable, and often avoided going to class. She said the teachers did not intervene or punish the students who were bullying her. Since then, she said new laws have been passed that provide better protection of students being bullied.

> *Once a girl showed me a blog on Facebook about Islam and terrorism and such things. And she said to me, "You go to school, you are not a terrorist." "Of course, I'm not a*

terrorist," I said. She asked me, "Then why do they write such things?" And I told her I had no idea, we are not terrorists. I have to explain myself all the time. And I have to talk to them first so that they feel safe. Because they are so scared.

No participants of this study directly said they feel unsafe due to racial and religious diversity in Lindesnes. One non-refugee immigrant said her interaction with her refugee neighbors has contributed positively to her feeling of safety in Lindesnes. They often chatted with her from their balcony and brought her homemade food.

Knowing them made me feel safe. It made me feel like I would know where to go if I was scared.

When lack of stability was cited, it was usually attributed to uncertainty or challenges related to work, which is explored in the domain of *employment*. Ethnic Norwegians frequently cited "trauma" as being a potential obstacle for refugees struggling with stability. No refugee or immigrant participants cited trauma as a specific obstacle to their integration.

Foundation

Rights and citizenship

Given I interviewed only refugees and immigrants with valid residencies, issues pertaining to rights and citizenship was not prevalent in the interview data. Had I interviewed individuals who were waiting on asylum decisions or individuals who had been denied asylum, the data would be very different in this category. However, observation and participant observation yielded some data in this category. Below I share a personal experience from early 2019.

I am at the police department in Kristiansand, Norway, handing in an application for a work visa. I have worked as a freelance journalist for the past decade, but my student visa in Norway prohibits me from freelancing. Former clients are asking me to work – and I desperately want to say yes. Through the suggestion of a Norwegian friend, I decide to apply for a skilled worker visa as a self-employed person with a company in Norway. When I slide

the stack of papers under the glass window, the official seems uncertain about the type of visa for which I am applying. I inform them about the details I found on the website of the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and present all the required documents. They reply, "Oh yes, I see now. We prioritize skilled workers so you can expect an answer in five weeks." I receive a positive answer and was granted residency and the right to freelance in less than five weeks. I am stunned. My partner, a refugee, waited one year. On my way out of the appointment, I run into an older Afghan acquaintance in the waiting area who has lived in Norway for eight years. She and I met at a Norwegian language help session. She proudly shares with me that she is only a year shy of obtaining her associates degree and finally ready to look for a job or even open her own restaurant. Later that day I talk with a friend who has recently moved to Norway from a country in the European Union. Though she has a master's degree and worked as a teacher for 18 years in her native country, she is working as a cleaner while she searches for other jobs and practices Norwegian. Her husband, however, is not an EU citizen and has to wait six months before he is able to work in Norway.

As this experience illustrates, immigration laws in Norway treat groups of people differently, depending on one's country of origin and grounds for immigration. When there is special treatment of a group or groups in society, this can become an obstacle to integration (Jacobsen, 1996). Some nationalities are nearly guaranteed asylum while others are not. There are complex reasons for this that the data of this study does reveal, but on a local level I have witnessed this create tension between people from different countries as well as among people from the same country, particularly when one is granted asylum and the other is denied.

Norway also has different rights and obligations when it comes to learning Norwegian and social studies. The legal obligation and who has the right to free Norwegian and social studies courses change frequently, and this section only reflects the data from this study. At present, work immigrants from the EEA are not required to demonstrate a knowledge of the Norwegian language to live and work in Norway. If they want to study Norwegian at Lindesnes Learning Center, they must pay. This influenced their decision to learn the language, among other factors.

The design of this system means that in a single classroom some students are being paid to study, some are attending for free, and others are paying to study. Some choose to be there; others are obligated to be there. This can inadvertently cause tension between groups who have varying rights and obligations. Mild dissatisfaction was expressed by some work immigrants about this situation. While many refugees complete the Introduction Program in two years, some do not. After two years in the program, if refugees can document steady attendance and progress but have not yet achieved a suitable level of Norwegian, they are usually allowed to stay in the program and continue to collect a salary. Some work immigrants say the design of the system discourages refugees from learning quickly, which affects their pace of learning. A refugee participant reflected on sharing the classroom with non-refugee immigrants who must pay to study:

> *I didn't think about it when I was there. But if I think about how she or he can go back to their country at any time, I would switch ... like I would take that option and give them the free course.*

One work immigrant from the EEA who chose to study Norwegian said she understood why others do not study Norwegian, especially when it was not required at their workplace. She cited that both time and money are valuable resources for immigrants and that learning Norwegian requires both. While some ethnic Norwegians in Lindesnes complain about Europeans not learning Norwegian, others are studying European languages – such as Portuguese and Polish – to better connect with their immigrant coworkers.

Chapter 7 Analysis of the meanings, mechanisms, and obstacles to integration

As the findings illustrate, integration does not have a singular definition or way of happening for inhabitants of Lindesnes. Individual refugees, immigrants, and ethnic Norwegians have varying skills, priorities, perceptions, and personalities. How participants relate and contribute to integration – and each other – vary greatly. Comparing participants definitions and understanding of integration with previous

studies on the topic and categorizing the findings among Ager and Stang's (2008) core domains reveals key areas of importance for study participants.

In Lindesnes, *employment, education*, and *social connection* appear to be the pillars of integration. However, the findings also reveal a complex and overlapping relationship among the factors contributing to integration. For example, while speaking Norwegian served as a foundation that positively affected most other integration factors, it was not always the starting point. A handful of participants were able to build *social bridges* and find jobs even before they spoke Norwegian. In addition, speaking the language did not guarantee *employment*, access to *education*, or even *social connection*. Less tangible and researched factors, such as the attitudes and perceptions of both immigrants and the receiving society, played an important role. The findings in the domain of *safety and stability* reveal experiences of discrimination, fear, and possible racism that undoubtedly affect one's labor, educational, and social experiences. This necessitates further examination into the relationships and interactions between immigrants and the receiving society. Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx (2016) heuristic model for the study of integration helps to shine the spotlight on these interactions and demonstrate both mechanisms and obstacles to integration. Per the model, these interactions can happen on an individual, group, or organization level (ibid).

Furthermore, the model helps to reveal inequalities as well as gaps in integration involvement in Lindesnes. The findings show that in present-day Lindesnes the actions and attitudes of individuals combined with the ability of institutions to perform their jobs has the greatest influence on integration outcomes. When individuals within institutions approach their work professionally and view immigrants free of prejudice, outcomes are better. Group dynamics play an important role among co-nationals. Immigrants from the same country are likely to influence one another, and the same can be said among ethnic Norwegians. Organizations of the receiving society have tremendous potential to contribute to and influence integration outcomes, as evidenced in the past, but their contributions have waned in recent years. Finally, outside of specific roles, individuals of the receiving society expressed feeling little responsibility for integration outcomes.

To further examine the findings, Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx's (2016) model plots interactions among and between immigrants and the receiving society along three dimensions: 1) *legal-political* 2) *socio-economic* and 3) *cultural-religious* (ibid). Within the findings, Ager and Strang's (2008) core domain of *rights and citizenship* briefly addresses the *legal-political* and how it can impact integration. This dimension was not an area of concern for most participants, and I will therefore not analyze it much further within this section. It is, however, shown to condition the *legal-political* and *socio-economic* outcomes for immigrants. Preliminary data presented in this category demonstrate a need for further analysis of Norwegian immigration laws and policies, examining the fairness of visa decisions as well as rights and obligations based on nationality, ethnicity, religion, and visa class. The remainder of this analysis will primarily consider the *socio-economic* and *cultural-religious* dimensions of integration via three categories of findings: 1) employment 2) education (including *language and cultural knowledge*) and 3) social connection (including *social bridges*, *social bonds,* and *social links*). The findings point to these three categories as the pillars of integration in Lindesnes.

Across the categories of employment, education, and social connection, refugees and ethnic Norwegians put great emphasis, expectation, and trust in institutions of the receiving society to facilitate integration. Yet, the findings show that even an exemplary welfare state cannot ensure integration of individuals and the society alone. Norwegian integration policies and the institutions enacting them focus heavily on Norwegian language and culture learning as well as employment. Yet findings of this study reveal the importance of social connection and safety and stability. Organizations of the receiving society play a more nimble and less bureaucratic role, allowing immigrants to be seen and helped more individually. They also serve as a safety net when state institutions cannot deliver. On an individual level, ethnic Norwegians simultaneously expect a lot from immigrants and underestimate their potential. They also tend to underestimate their own potential to influence integration outcomes. The findings demonstrate, however, that their attitudes and relationships with immigrants can have profound and positive impacts. Finally, immigrants need to be aware of their own power to influence integration outcomes for not only themselves but also their fellow immigrants, particularly co-nationals.

Employment

As past studies have also revealed, the findings show that immigrants' access to and participation in the realm of employment is not equal to most members of the receiving society, putting them at a *socio-economic* disadvantage. This is particularly true for immigrants who come as refugees, partners of refugees, and partners of work immigrants. When defining integration, ethnic Norwegian participants emphasized "employment" and "contributing to society". When asked what "contributing to society" meant, it usually meant "to have a job" or "to pay taxes". This was particularly important in preserving the welfare state. As many of the refugee participants were studying and had part-time jobs, they commented less about the workplace being a site for integration and more about the challenges to find a stable job that they hoped would contribute to their integration. Finding a stable, full-time job took years for many refugees.

Some refugee participants were still enrolled in the required Introduction Program, others were enrolled in vocational and higher education. Their interactions were primarily with institutions of the receiving society. Here the *socio-economic* dimension of integration is conditioned by the *legal-political* dimension via policies that prevent immigrants and refugees from entering the work force as swiftly as they would like (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016). NOKUT's approval or disapproval of immigrants' former education and immigration policies became major factors, especially for refugees and partners of work immigrants. Approval of one's former education also affected an immigrant's eventual wages once hired. The structure of the wage system typically paid employees based on their NOKUT-approved diplomas and experience (in Norway), which pushed refugees, in particular, to enroll in vocational and higher education rather than go straight to the workforce. Those who entered the workforce as early as they were legally and logistically able usually took jobs unrelated to their previous experience and were paid lower than average wages.

Organizations and institutions in Lindesnes, primarily led and administered by ethnic Norwegians, served as the main gatekeepers to employment. At the institutional level, NAV and the Introduction Program are to play a leading role in preparing refugees for the workforce. Once the program finished, however, many cited a lack of support. Refugee participants cited a need for better information and advising in relation to both

employment and education. Previous studies have shown the importance of reduced caseloads for advisors to allow for more individual counseling and follow up of participants of the Introduction Program (Djuve & Kavli, 2018). While NAV helped participants find internships at local businesses, beyond that they were not cited as playing a leading role in securing long-term employment for immigrant participants.

Refugees greatly valued the chance to be present in the workplace via internships but cited that their internships were often too short-lived to become long-term mechanisms of employment and integration. They were seen as more of a steppingstone that provided a taste of "real life" learning of language and culture beyond the classroom. Past studies show that earlier and more time in the workplace during the Introduction Program contributes to employability (Botoon, 2020; Djuve & Kavli, 2018). Whether or not internships contributed to integration was also influenced by how the employer treated the intern and the nature of their tasks. For example, when one intern was sent to scrub walls and floors and had little contact with other employees, this made him feel exploited. Additionally, this work did not contribute to his *language and cultural knowledge* or self-worth. This echoes past findings that employment does not guarantee integration and can even lead to exclusion (Haaland & Wallevik, 2016). For employment to contribute to integration and inclusion it should treat all employees – whether interns through NAV or wage-earners – equally.

At the organizational level, there are no organizations that work directly to help immigrants find work in Lindesnes. However, the findings show that immigrants who were connected to community organizations generally spoke better Norwegian and had larger local networks. Those who participated in volunteer work were generally successful at finding paid employment. Knowing ethnic Norwegians with community connections was a benefit. In places like Lindesnes, being known and "being known of" are important. Active refugees gained positive reputations within the community, even among people they had never met. Their participation in volunteer activities demonstrated appreciation for their community and allowed them to live up to the receiving society's expectations that they take initiative and be involved (Søholt et al., 2018, p. 226). This exposes both a mechanism – and obstacle – to employment. As the findings show, immigrants who were able to build a network within the receiving society

found jobs more easily and, in some cases, were even recruited. Yet this puts those lacking Norwegian language skills and free time at a disadvantage, as they are less able to quickly build a network and relationships with the receiving society through volunteering and joining community organizations. As such, those who may benefit most from employment are often the least likely to be hired. Only a small number of refugees found employment without the help of institutions or organizations, primarily through self-employment or co-nationals.

Individuals of the receiving society *within* local businesses and institutions cited a responsibility to contribute to integration via both hiring practices and the way they interacted with refugees and immigrants *on the job*. They saw it as part of their job to build bridges to immigrants, in particular refugees, and help them on their paths to integration. The same sense of responsibility did not necessarily extend into their personal lives. Employment, therefore, becomes an important arena to activate individuals of the receiving society to contribute to integration through their roles within organizations, businesses, and institutions.

Along the *cultural-religious* dimension, the findings show that the attitudes and perceptions of both immigrants and the receiving society can limit employment opportunities for immigrants. At the same time, once immigrants enter the workforce, their mere presence on the job appears to positively impact their own attitudes as well as those of the receiving society. Unfortunately, a mismatch in available jobs and the skills (or *approved* and *perceived* skills) of immigrants and refugees contributes to local employment challenges.

Immigrants and refugees expressed frustration that local institutions and individuals operating within them seemed to undervalue their skills and experience. Jobs that required less education were more likely to be suggested to refugees, regardless of their abilities and backgrounds. Certain groups of refugees experienced prejudice, despite their efforts and achievements. This is consistent with past studies in the area (Magnussen, 2020). The receiving society's assumptions toward Muslim and African refugees may have led to fewer work opportunities for these groups.

When immigrants were able to secure a job that brought them into contact with individuals of the receiving society, this positively affected the attitudes of the receiving society. Seeing immigrants at work helped individuals in the receiving society believe in the system. Subconsciously, these individuals may have viewed refugees at work as reassurance that the welfare state would not collapse. When everyone contributes, the welfare state is stronger.

When immigrants were employed, members of the receiving society gained more positive attitudes toward them. In addition, employed immigrants cited more positive feelings of self-worth as well. This gain does not happen, however, until an immigrant is qualified to work, and an employer is willing to give them a chance.

Education

Once in Norway, most adult immigrants and refugees *in theory* had equal access to education. However, as in the case of employment, how NOKUT evaluated immigrants' previous education determined participants' options in Norway. For refugees, the obligation to attend the Introduction Program did not allow them to enroll directly in the university. Once again, we see the *socio-economic* dimension of integration being conditioned by the *legal-political* dimension (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016). The right to attend "mainstream" educational institutions existed for adult refugees, but the access was slowed down due to waits for residency, the requirement to attend the Introduction Program, and the lack of educational equivalency between participants' home countries and Norway. Immigrant participants engaged primarily with the Norwegian education system via Norwegian and social studies courses at Lindesnes Learning Center. Whether they paid for or received the courses for free depended on their visa statuses. The findings show that refugees and immigrants did not have immediate equal access to education when compared to the receiving society. However, over time, this access become more equal.

The foundation to employment, further education, and *social bridges* for refugees came through the learning of *language and cultural knowledge*, primarily through the Introduction Program. Yet the program emerged as a double-edge sword. While it contributed to participants' *language and cultural knowledge*, it tended to slow down their

entry to both stable employment and further education. The salary paid to participants also left them at a *socio-economic* disadvantage when compared to the average resident of Lindesnes. In addition, the program facilitated little interaction between immigrants and individuals from the receiving society. However, it created a space for interaction among refugees and some immigrants. This contributed both positively and negatively to integration. This all begs the question, can you put the cart before the horse? Clearly one needs to achieve a certain level of Norwegian before enrolling in vocational school, the university, or going to work, but the long wait for residencies and length of the Introduction Program appeared to both contribute to and slow down factors contributing to integration for participants of this study.

Once refugees enrolled in education beyond the Introduction Program, these institutions became important spaces for integration, fostering the interaction of immigrants and the receiving society. Interactions between refugees and individuals from the receiving society, particularly within formal roles at institutions, often influenced the educational choices refugees made. Here the attitudes and available time of integration actors played a prominent role in encouraging or discouraging certain educational or career paths. This is consistent with past findings (Magnussen, 2020). Many participants felt they were not seen as capable by integration actors. Often, the easiest and shortest educational path was suggested as the best to refugees, regardless of their ambitions. In other instances, there was a complete lack of guidance, support, and information, which made participants feel "lost". Again, in the areas of both employment and education, an emphasis was made by participants on receiving consistent and high-quality counsel. Integration actors in Lindesnes should be keenly aware of the power and influence their positions give them to affect refugees' futures in Norway.

In Lindesnes, *language and cultural knowledge* was also gained through the interaction of immigrants with individuals and organizations outside of the Introduction Program. Social connection, in particular, *social bridges* enabled the learning of language and culture. This happened through employment and participants' involvement with volunteer and community organizations. The first contact between immigrants and individual members of the receiving society was almost exclusively through an organization or institution, except for immigrants with Norwegian partners. In addition,

important contributions to immigrants' *language and cultural knowledge* came from their interaction with other immigrants.

How organizations and individuals from the receiving society chose to impart *language and cultural knowledge* to immigrants varied widely. In the more successful cases, there was *cultural-religious* balance. Fluent Norwegian speakers, primarily ethnic Norwegians, showed interest in also learning about the foreign languages and cultures of immigrants. Participants cited this motivated them to learn Norwegian faster and made them more likely to attend activities. These types of interactions were also cited as more likely to develop intimacy among participants, facilitating *social bridges.* Intimacy, rather than frequency, of interaction is a key component in influencing group's perceptions of one another, which undoubtedly influences integration (Cook, 1962).

In the past few years, the number of individuals and organizations from the receiving society offering language support has waned. Individual immigrants expressed wanting a link to interact directly with individuals and groups of fluent Norwegian speakers. Lindesnes Learning Center has become the leading – and only – point of language and cultural interaction for many individuals. This was not the case for immigrant participants who arrived in Lindesnes in 2015 and 2016. The data emphasize the importance of individuals and organizations in the receiving society to immigrants' ability to speak better Norwegian. While the Introduction Program served as a foundation, one-on-one interaction and community involvement proved to take language levels beyond the basic. With the recent arrival of Ukrainians and the end to corona restrictions, there is promise new opportunities will emerge.

Social connection

While employment and education are largely influenced by institutions and conditioned by the *legal-political* dimension, especially for refugees, social connection is more affected at the individual and group level. Individual immigrants tended to have strong connections with other immigrants from their homeland but desired more contact with individuals of the receiving society. On the institutional level, the Introduction Program, which usually lasts two years, offered little opportunity for refugees to interact with individuals of the receiving society. One participant called it segregation. Short

internships provided the only opportunity for encounters with the receiving society, outside of teachers and staff at Lindesnes Learning Center. Institutions in Lindesnes focused on the teaching of the Norwegian language and job preparedness. The findings suggest that more formal consideration could be given to helping connect immigrants with the receiving society. Participants with more connections to ethnic Norwegians tended to find jobs faster and speak better Norwegian. Integration policies should be careful to not focus too heavily on only one or two aspects of integration without considering their relationship to other contributing factors.

Spaces for meaningful encounters between immigrants and the receiving society came primarily through volunteer and community organizations with explicit integration goals. Some immigrant and refugee participants played leadership roles within these organizations of the receiving society. This facilitated the building of *social bridges* immensely, as there was less skepticism as well as positive social pressure when immigrants were invited by co-nationals. With this knowledge, Lindesnes would be wise to hire and formally include more refugee and immigrants in their integration efforts, not just as participants but also as teachers and leaders. Organizations could also benefit from breaking out of the Norwegians-as-volunteers and refugees-as-participants mold, hosting activities that provide more equal footing. As the previous section discussed, this fostered more *cultural-religious* equilibrium and intimacy among participants.

Additionally, given that the needs of immigrants and the type of activity that helped them to meet ethnic Norwegians varied greatly, Lindesnes should offer activities that appeal to a variety of interests. Some should be targeted at those who have just arrived, and others should help those who may have been here longer but still haven't "found their place" within the society. Unfortunately, many of the activities that were previously targeted at integration, and thus immigrants and refugees, are no longer operating due to the decrease in refugee arrivals and the coronavirus pandemic. As Lindesnes begins to receive Ukrainians, there is hope that these community organizations will recognize the need to revive activities and create opportunities for *social bridges*. This will benefit not only Ukrainians but also refugees who arrived during the coronavirus pandemic and have had few opportunities to meet ethnic Norwegians.

Local clubs and organizations that are not explicitly related to integration could also do a better job of reaching out to refugees and immigrants and including them. The findings show that common interests help cement relationships, but immigrants are not always aware of existing clubs, organizations, and activities in Lindesnes. Opportunities for social connection are being missed in this realm for not only immigrants but also some Norwegians.

The *cultural-religious* dimension plays a principal role in social connection, and attitudes and prejudices became obstacles to the forming of *social bridges*. *Social bonds* conditioned the building of *social bridges* for refugees, immigrants, and ethnic Norwegians. Given that the most common type of interaction for participants was between people from the same country, how one's friends and family viewed other groups within society encouraged and discouraged participants engagement with other groups. Groups of people who spent little time with other groups often had more prejudices, demonstrating the importance of *social bridges* in achieving *cultural-religious* equality. One participant shared that over time new groups of immigrants become more familiar and, thus, less threatening to the receiving society. Yet if people are not willing to shed prejudice and learn, time will do little. For example, past studies as well as data from this research show that while Muslims have been arriving in Norway for decades, there is general skepticism of them and their values within the receiving society. At the same time, Muslim participants of this study – particularly women who chose to wear the hijab – faced discrimination and expressed feeling misunderstood.

The findings also emphasize the importance of organized frames of social contact led by organizations of the receiving society. Outside of the frame, both immigrants and the receiving society felt lost, to some extent, and uncertain how to engage with one another. Differences in culture, religion, race, and language exaggerated this. Individuals of the receiving society generally felt compelled to contribute to integration, but most often within official roles at jobs or within organizations. Without an official role, this sense of responsibility to integration waned. While ethnic Norwegians put emphasis on immigrants engaging with and befriending the receiving society, immigrants' attempts to build *social bridges* were not always successful. Retired people – primarily women – in Lindesnes have opened their doors and hearts to many immigrants, which has had

profound impact on the lives of many individuals in Lindesnes. Yet young adults in Lindesnes are cited to be less engaged with integration efforts and the daily lives of immigrants and especially refugees. There is a contradiction in expectation and action. While ethnic Norwegians expected immigrants to have *social bridges*, they were not always willing to be the one on the other side of the bridge. This is found to affect immigrants' ability to integrate across all dimensions.

Chapter 8 Recommendations

While most participants of this study reported general satisfaction and a sense of feeling integrated in Lindesnes, communities can always strive to be better. The findings and analysis reveal several potential facilitators to integration in Lindesnes. Leaders, policymakers, and residents should consider the following:

- **A faster path to work for refugees:** This could come through longer internship periods or a model of the Introduction Program that more evenly balances work and study. There is also tremendous potential for local businesses to partner with the Introduction Program and offer regular positions.
- **More personalized and in-depth career and education mentorship:** This would ideally be offered via partnerships among institutions (ie. NAV, Lindesnes Learning Center, other educational institutes). Refugees should be made aware of the local job market and wage expectations as well as education options within their first year in Norway. Participants of the Introduction Program would benefit from having contact with employed immigrants and ethnic Norwegians in Lindesnes representing various careers. Family immigrants would also benefit from access to this information. A model previously employed in Lindesnes (*Samarbeidsmodellen KMV*) offers valuable lessons in the coordination of integration actors to achieve this recommendation (Hellang & Espegren, 2022).
- **Appreciation of one-on-one contact:** Individuals from the receiving society within institutions and organizations as well as private individuals have the power to support and learn from immigrants. One-on-one interactions between immigrants and the receiving society prove to have lasting impact on perceptions. Beyond these one-on-one

interactions, how immigrants and ethnic Norwegians talk about each other with co-ethnics and co-nationals influences perceptions.

- **Increased representation:** Local organizations and businesses should more actively recruit immigrants and refugees. The municipality and other public institutions would also benefit from having more minorities in leadership positions. This not only contributes to social connection but also to better communication and trust between and among immigrants and the receiving society.
- **Mobilization of young adults from the receiving society:** Immigrant participants between the ages of 18 and 40 expressed a strong desire to connect with more of their ethnic Norwegian peers. Findings cite a lack of involvement and initiative within this age group in contributing to integration.
- **Creation of a public activity house:** The success of such a space would rely on it being accessible, "hip", well-managed, and used equally by immigrants and members of the receiving society. A diverse programming of events would attract a mix of people.
- **Continuation of inclusive, integration-specific activities**: Language, culture, and homework support activities were plentiful for asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016. Today, there are fewer offerings but still a great need for these bridging activities that help immigrants to speak better Norwegian, make friends, find jobs, gain confidence, and eventually connect with other community activities and organizations. Non-refugee immigrants should also be made to feel welcome and included at such activities. When activities have an aim to bring members of the receiving society together with immigrants, they should prioritize fostering meaningful exchanges among participants.
- **Awareness of prejudice:** Both immigrants and the receiving society need to be aware of their attitudes and prejudices toward each other and actively work toward replacing prejudice with experience and knowledge. To conclude this section, I use the words of a participant:

I think that attitudes in other people, we cannot do much about, but we can certainly do something about our own attitude and, just through our own attitude and through our own action, we can set an example.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

As the 22 July Committee found, a system is truly "the sum of the individuals who take decisions and perform actions" (NOU, 2012, p. 15). In Lindesnes, individual immigrants as well as individuals of the receiving society have made many decisions and performed many actions that have contributed to integration in Lindesnes. While there are challenges, most participants of this study are satisfied living in Lindesnes. These findings suggest that rural communities, not just urban centers, may provide meaningful and vibrant spaces for integration in Norway. While there is no singular definition or route to integration, this study revealed several contributing factors. Both ethnic Norwegian and immigrant participants tended to agree that speaking Norwegian, having a job and friends, and feeling a sense of safety and stability are all important to having a good life in Lindesnes. Immigrants who have humbly and patiently move through the bureaucratic system in Norway, have found varying degrees of success.

By having ethnic Norwegians reflect on their own sense of integration, it revealed that members of the receiving society are not as dependent on or influenced by immigrants and refugees. However, the decisions and actions of the receiving society greatly influence outcomes for immigrants. In Lindesnes, how individual integration actors, especially within institutions, approach their jobs has a major influence on integration outcomes for both individual immigrants and society as a whole. Institutions in Lindesnes play a major role in helping immigrants to learn Norwegian and prepare refugees for the workplace. However, findings show the limitations of institutions alone. Organizations and private individuals of Lindesnes have risen to provide vital support when the hard work of immigrants and the services of institutions have not been enough. Their contributions have proved of particular importance in helping immigrants to build social networks and find belonging in Lindesnes.

Fortunately, immigrants and the receiving society in Norway recognize that integration is a shared responsibility. It requires refugees to learn Norwegian and acquire a certain level of cultural fluency, not just through attending the Introduction Program but by engaging with their new society through community and volunteer activities. It requires most immigrants to work and respect basic Norwegian values. It relies on individuals, groups,

and especially institutions of the receiving society to show up for immigrants and treat them as equals. For this to happen, one must be aware of their prejudices and actively work to see immigrants as individuals and not as simplified categories they may appear to represent.

Immigrants are not a homogeneous group. Neither are Syrians, Somalis, or Pakistanis. Each immigrant in Norway has come here for a different reason and possesses different strengths and challenges. Discrimination and racism affect the success of the entire Norwegian society – not just integration outcomes. Future studies should further explore how these factors influence policy as well as everyday life for minorities. What receiving societies expect from immigrants is well documented. Future research would also benefit from taking a focus on what immigrants expect from their new societies. The answer to improved integration policy – and a stronger welfare state – could be shaped by the voices of the immigrants themselves.

Norwegians are also not a homogeneous group, and it appears the very concept of what it means to be Norwegian is up for debate. While some are still quick to divide society into an "us" and a "them," the lines are blurring. This year, thousands of Ukrainian refugees will arrive in Norway. There has been a public outpouring of support for this group of refugees in numerous ways. There is political will to expedite their access to learning Norwegian and entrance to the work force. The findings of this study applaud this and cite both as factors to facilitating integration. However, public and political will to support and welcome newcomers should extend to all. Norway has the opportunity to be a country of egalitarian values, not just in philosophy but also in practice. It will take work, time, and patience but, just as immigrants in Norway have found, success can be achieved through humility and willpower.

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