

Walking between Two Worlds:

A cross-cultural exploration of Identity and Belonging through the brown eyes of a Young African Woman in New Zealand

Krishna Ogwaro Mar-Rwoth

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I envision this thesis as a reflection of my personal journey to discover my identity. As a first-generation young African woman, I arrived in New Zealand at the age of five years old from Uganda, with my grandmother in hopes of a better future and greener pastures. But along the way, I also struggled to define my identity as I was living between two different worlds that both defined the identity of a young woman in completely different ways. I struggled to understand where I truly belonged and constantly questioned my identity. The question of “who am I” constantly lingered in my head. This motivated me to conduct this research, aiming not only to contribute to the limited knowledge about the African community in New Zealand, but also to gain insights into how young African women, like me, navigate their identities and sense of belonging in New Zealand while honouring their cultural heritage.

In this journey, I am deeply grateful to God for his eternal love and blessings. His Divine grace and wisdom have accompanied me every step of the way. I am reminded of Mark 10:27 “For God all things are possible,” which has served as a guiding light throughout this endeavour.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Krishna Ogwaro Mar-Rwoth

ABSTRACT

In many first world countries, like New Zealand, an increasing number of African immigrants are migrating to New Zealand for work opportunities, educational opportunities and for a better future. Many families arrive with young children who are then raised to uphold their cultural beliefs and practices, while also integrating into New Zealand society. This study aims to explore the way young African women who have been raised in New Zealand, find their identity and sense of belonging while navigating between their culture of origins expectations and New Zealand society.

Previous research on migrant identities has largely focused on adults and how they adjust to life in a new country. In contrast to existing literature on migrant identities, which has tended to focus on the identity shift experienced by adult transnational migrants, this reveals the particular challenges faced by young African women migrants who have experienced the challenges of forming an identity in New Zealand society through their own perception of their identity as well as the expectations of society.

Arising questions for the study are (i) ways in which young African women construct their identity and sense of belonging in New Zealand society and (ii) the major stressors that young African women face while navigating between both their culture of origin and New Zealand society, and how this affects their identity.

Theoretically, much of this work has been based on Berry's theory of acculturation (Sam & Berry, 2006) and Phinney's ethnic identity development approach (Phinney, 1991). An Afrocentric framework adopted by Tuwe (2018) was also used during the interview process that encourages African women to define their identity through an African lens according to their authentic cultural values and traditions and encourages storytelling.

The research found that participants take values and morals from both cultures and society to form their identity within New Zealand society, while also experiencing challenges such as racism and discrimination, family and community expectations and gender bias which can affect their identity construction, sense of belonging.

CHAPTER ONE:

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

“I have come to realise that what I look like or the reason behind my family’s migration to a foreign land does not validate my belonging in Aotearoa. It would be a pretty boring world if we all looked the same, acted the same, dressed the same and had the same life journeys.

For me, finding my identity and belonging is all about feeling connected to others, the world around me, and my life experiences. I feel connected to the land of my ancestors and Aotearoa. I have found a sense of belonging and developed an identity that blends the differentiating cultures of the land of the long white cloud as well as the landlocked country known as the pearl of Africa.”

- Krishna Ogwaro Mar-Rwoth

Introduction

This research project is a cross-cultural exploration in the spaces of Identity and Belonging through my brown eyes, navigating through my experiences in Aotearoa. The exploration identifies and analyses key areas of family, mental health, and intersectionality as a basis of inquiry.

The main research questions that underpin this study is:

1. How do young African women construct their cultural identity and sense of belonging within New Zealand society?
2. What are the challenges that young African women come across in their identity journey?

The remainder of Chapter One consists of three sections. The first section presents the key concepts of the study recorded in this thesis, and the second explains how the research progresses from an identity basis to an analysis of African storytelling tools. The third section is a discussion of the rationale for the research and the research questions, and the fourth section concludes this chapter by showing how the thesis is organised, and how each chapter contributes to the achievement of the purpose of the research.

Background

I specifically selected the topic of identity because I am an immigrant in New Zealand. At the age of five years old, I moved from the land of my ancestors (Uganda) to the land of the long white cloud (Aotearoa/New Zealand), which I now call my home. Growing up in New Zealand, I found myself embarking on a journey of self-identity. I was constantly reminded by my grandparents of their expectations of me and cultural expectations as a woman, while slowly integrating into New Zealand's carefree society. It was a walk in two worlds. There were constant battles between wanting to fit into New Zealand society while having the fear of disappointing my grandparents and still being expected to practice my African traditions and beliefs, which often clashed. This had a significant impact on the development of my cultural identity, navigating how to be collective in an individualistic society.

The concept of 'identity' made me wonder how young adult African women construct and deconstruct their identity and sense of belonging within New Zealand society. I want to identify the different challenges that young African women come across in their identity journey, and the first place to start was to examine my own journey first as the basis of comparison. To satisfy the thirst of my curiosity, I will attempt to respond to these ideas by having discussions and conversations with young African women of immigrant background, living in New Zealand. These discussions will allow me to fully understand their feelings, attitudes and experiences. From a sociological approach identity is described as a relationship between the self and society (Stets and Burke, 2003). This means that individuals influence society through action and reciprocally and society influences individuals through language and social interaction (Stets and Burke, 2003).

Theoretical framework

Research by scholars in the field of cultural identity (Schwartz, Luyckx & Vignoles; 2011) shows that the cultural difference between the host country and the country of origin has an influence on adaptation to the host society. When moving to a new country immigrants have their own values and beliefs, bringing with them their cultural values and lifestyle connected to their country of origin. Research has shown that children of immigrants are affected by having to accommodate to both the cultural impact of their parents and of the mainstream culture of the new society (Stets & Serpe; 2013). This at times can cause a lot of pressure and challenges for African youth in areas such as education and career choices, mental health, and identity development (Hecht, Jackson & Ribeau;

2003). Fleck and Fleck (2013) argue that immigrant parents often lack an understanding of the complicated issues faced by their children in the new cultural context which can be stressful for adolescents struggling with identity issues.

As a result of my own experiences as a woman, I will focus on African female youth from immigrant backgrounds who were born or raised in New Zealand. In many African cultures, there is a patriarchal family system whereby females are raised to become mothers, caretakers, and wives while men are raised to become authority figures in their homes and breadwinners (Sathiparsad et al., 2008). It is no surprise that female children face domestic pressures as well as social barriers. Some of these push factors include moving to a western society such as New Zealand where female rights are greatly enforced and celebrated. According to a study by Scuglik and Alarcon (2005), immigrant Somali children's experiences in the United States reveal that the traditional roles of wife and mother are still available and encouraged in some African communities, and that exposure to western societies expand life opportunities available to African females. This has enabled African females living in western societies, such as New Zealand, to challenge their traditional lifestyles and become more indulged into western societies way of life as they attempt to balance their belonging and identity between both worlds.

Rationale of research scope

The purpose of this research is to identify and analyse the cultural challenges first generation young African women immigrants face when living in New Zealand. A particular focus will explore how these cultural challenges affect the development of their cultural identity. It is noted that the term 'identity' and 'cultural identity' will be used interchangeably in this thesis. As mentioned above, the following two research questions will be used in this research to identify the cross-cultural challenges that contribute as factors to shape one's cultural identity.

1. How do young African women construct their cultural identity and sense of belonging within New Zealand society?
2. What are the challenges that young African women come across in their identity journey?

These questions will enable an open and honest conversation around how young African women view their cultural identity and belonging in New Zealand as well as the challenges they have faced along the way.

This research is an analysis of the cross-cultural exploration of identity and belonging between two different cultures, acknowledging the fact that navigating between two cultural worlds can be difficult (Schwartz, Luyckx & Vignoles; 2011). African immigrants who are raised in New Zealand are often influenced by the two differentiating cultures of the western world and African traditions. These two cultures often collide with each other as their views on identity and belonging often differentiate. Through the utilisation of African oral storytelling as a methodological framework, this thesis will reflect on the cultural challenges African female immigrants face while growing up in New Zealand, and how this affects their identity.

Thesis structure

The structure of this thesis is organised to flow consistently from one section to another. This first chapter, which serves to ground the research in its own history and in the philosophy of the researcher, is followed by a brief outline of the general research background.

Chapter two, which gives a more detailed background to the research, begins to frame the response to the first research question: *How do young African women construct their cultural identity and sense of belonging within New Zealand society?* The review of literature in this chapter deals with broad themes in cultural identity providing nuances into the second research question: *What are the challenges that young African women come across in their identity journey?* The purpose of this chapter is to provide a platform for later discussion about identity and belonging which sketches out directions in framing answers to the research questions.

Chapter three deals with the methodological foundations of the study, exploring ideas people's words and narratives as the primary data source, allowing for detailed descriptions and interpretations (Ryan et al., 2007). Chapter four records the process of research, explaining the method of data analysis and the interview questions in the data collection.

Chapter five completes the findings and discussion. This chapter discusses key ideas about cultural identity and belonging and ultimately answers both research questions that address the purpose of research.

The last chapter of the thesis draws together the themes from the interviews and places them in context of the problem that the research addresses. It also suggests useful areas for future research and limitations.

Summary

In summary, this research aims to generate conversations and contribute to greater knowledge in ways young African women living in New Zealand build and shape their identities and reveal the likely effects behind this concept. This research also has the capacity to highlight African storytelling as a methodology that allows participants to share their lived experiences in a new way that contributes to the understanding of the cultural challenges African female migrants face while growing up in New Zealand.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Our world has become more multicultural because of high migration rates due to different circumstances. Over the decades, different countries have exchanged ideas, products, and customs to create an interconnectedness of people and businesses worldwide. The migration of individuals from different countries eventually led to global, cultural, political, and economic integration. This concept is known as globalisation which, according to many historians, first occurred during the 1800s (Jacks et al., 2010). Globalisation has contributed to multiculturalism by blending and incorporating several different cultures.

An example is the concept of offering various cultural cuisines from different countries. Globalisation has given small countries like New Zealand the opportunity for economic growth and cultural exchange with different countries. The world is becoming increasingly diverse, and people of many religions, languages, and cultural groups are co-habiting. Although some worry that globalisation will harm culture and traditional identities (Kaul, 2012; Jensen et al., 2011), globalisation can also be viewed as a way to incorporate different cultures into a concept of multiculturalism. In Aotearoa, there are more nationalities and ethnicities than countries worldwide. The top five ethnicities are New Zealand European, Māori, Pacific Peoples and Asian.

Table 1 The six major ethnic groups in New Zealand, 2006, 2013, and 2018 Censuses

Ethnic Groups	2006 (%)	2013 (%)	2018 (%)
European	67.6	74.0	70.2
Māori	14.6	14.9	16.5
Pacific peoples	6.9	7.4	8.1
Asian	9.2	11.8	15.1
Middle Eastern / Latin American / African	0.9	1.2	1.5
Other ethnicity	11.2	1.7	1.2

(Statistics New Zealand, 2020)

Integrating into a new society with many different cultures and a different way of life can become a conflict between navigating one's culture of origin and one's new cultural environment. New Zealand is a multicultural society that allows individuals to exchange ideas, values and habits, which can increase the value of life and develop one's identity. However, in saying this, New Zealand is also an individualistic society whereby individuals prioritise their own needs rather than their community's. In contrast, immigrants from ethnic countries such as African countries identify more with a collective approach as they prioritise the needs of their community rather than their individual needs. Therefore, challenges such as these make integrating into a new society for immigrants challenging as individuals are forced to navigate between their culture of origin and their new environment. This is because immigrants face considerable changes in their physical, social, cultural, and economic environments (Ide et al., 2012). Focusing on the growing population of first-generation female immigrants of African background living in New Zealand, this chapter will analyse previous theories proposed to explain findings on the development of immigrant youth identity in their host country. Although the literature covers a wide variety of theories, this review will focus on a few major themes that emerged repeatedly throughout the literature, including acculturation theory, ethnic identity theory and factors of integration into society.

This research mainly focuses on first-generation young African women from immigrant backgrounds raised in New Zealand. In this research, young African women refer to women of African descent (both parents of African descent) between the ages of 18 and 24 and raised in New Zealand. Many African cultures have a patriarchal family system whereby females are raised to become mothers, caretakers, and wives. In contrast, men are raised to become authority figures in their homes and breadwinners (Sathiparsad et al., 2008).

The settlement period/stage in New Zealand

New Zealand's (Aotearoa) cultural influences are predominately European, and the indigenous people of Aotearoa are known as Māori. The relationship between New Zealand Europeans has continued to be complex since European colonisation. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the founding document of New Zealand and was signed in 1840 by the British and Māori, promising "to protect Māori culture and to enable Māori to continue to live in New Zealand as Māori, while also giving the Crown the right to govern New Zealand and to represent the interests of all New Zealanders (New Zealand Ministry of Justice, 2020). However, the differences in the Māori and English text of the Treaty of Waitangi have led to different understandings of the meaning of the Treaty. Despite this, "New Zealand is characterised by a culture of tolerance and harmony" (Brougham & Haar, 2013, p.1144) by

the many different cultures that inhabit today. New Zealand's cultural influences are predominately European and Māori. However, immigrant groups have tended to assimilate into the European lifestyle. Therefore, this research will focus on the European cultural effects on African immigrant youth.

The first arrival of Africans in New Zealand began in the early 1990s, mainly from Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia through humanitarian programmes due to war and political crises, and from the early 2000s as migrants from South Africa and Zimbabwe (Chile, 2020). There has been a significant increase in the African population between 2006 and 2018. With a current population of 16,890, 28.6% of Africans living in New Zealand were born in New Zealand, and 71.4% were born overseas (Stats NZ, n.d), as seen in the graph below.

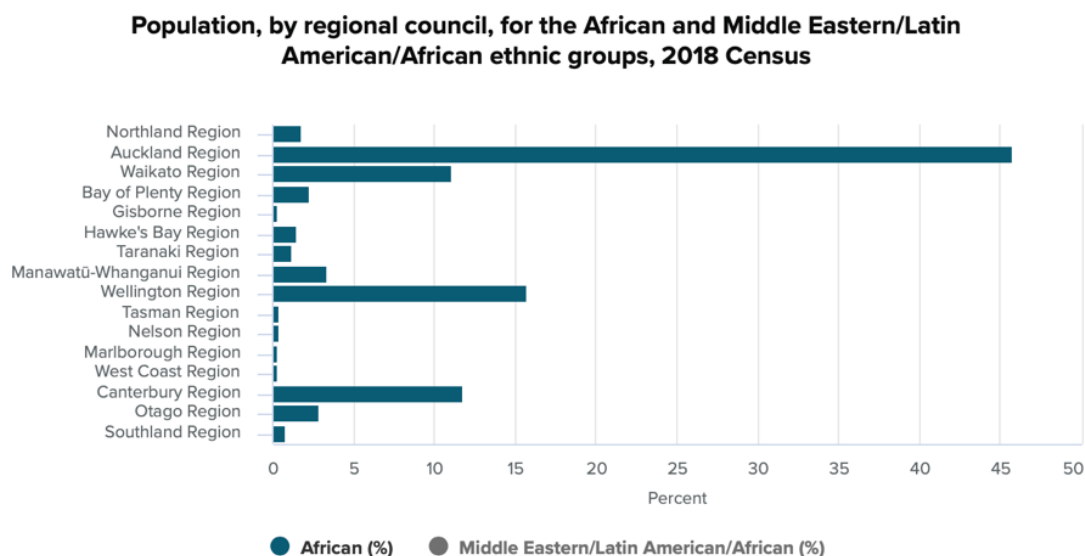
Birthplace for the African ethnic group, 2006–18 Censuses

Birthplace	2006 (%)	2013 (%)	2018 (%)
New Zealand	19.6	25	28.6
Australia	0.5	0.5	0.7
Pacific Islands	0.2	0.2	0.1
United Kingdom and Ireland	3.1	3.9	3.9
Europe (excl United Kingdom and Ireland)	0.7	0.7	0.7
North America	2.5	2.4	2.9
Asia	0.5	0.6	0.8
Middle East and Africa	70.2	64.1	59.3
Other	2.7	2.7	2.8

Figure 1 Birthplace of African ethnic groups

Overall, the African population remains less than 1% of the ethnic population of New Zealand (Stats NZ, n.d). However, an article by Tuwe (2012) argues that the official population figures of Africans living in New Zealand must be more accurate due to the classification of Zimbabweans and South Africans as Europeans in the New Zealand 2006 census. African immigrants mostly resettle in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch, with Auckland accommodating the most significant population (Stats NZ, 2020).

Figure 2 African population by region



Key concepts and definitions

It is crucial to provide fundamental concepts and definitions to establish a common understanding of the topics that will be discussed in this research.

Youth:

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and social affairs (2018), a *youth* is defined as a person between 15 and 24 years old. For this research and following the United Nations definition, African youth will be individuals between 18-24 years of African descent born in one of the 54 African countries.

Table 2 List of 54 African countries

54 African Countries		
1. Algeria	2. Gabon	3. Niger
4. Angola	5. Gambia	6. Nigeria
7. Benin	8. Ghana	9. Rwanda
10. Botswana	11. Guinea	12. Sao Tome and Principe
13. Burkina Faso	14. Guinea-Bissau	15. Senegal
16. Burundi	17. Ivory Coast	18. Seychelles
19. Cameroon	20. Kenya	21. Sierra Leone
22. Cape Verde	23. Lesotho	24. Somalia
25. Central African Republic	26. Liberia	27. South Africa
28. Chad	29. Libya	30. South Sudan

31. Camoros	32. Madagascar	33. Sudan
34. Democratic Republic of the Congo	35. Malawi	36. Swaziland
37. Republic of the Congo	38. Mali	39. Tanzania
40. Djibouti	41. Mauritania	42. Togo
43. Egypt	44. Mauritius	45. Tunisia
46. Equatorial Guinea	47. Morocco	48. Uganda
49. Eritrea	50. Mozambique	51. Zambia
52. Ethiopia	53. Namibia	54. Zimbabwe

I have decided not to include youth under 18 in my research because I want to gain insight from women who have had many years of integration and experience in New Zealand society and are now at the age of early adulthood. Youths under 18 years require parental consent, which would increase the complexity of this research. Also, some interview answers may be influenced by others, needing more depth and originality. Some young people under the age of 18 years are also not able to express their voice in a clear and in-depth way. Therefore, conducting research with young adults over 18 benefits my research by providing in-depth answers to the research questions and limiting the consent process.

Immigrant:

It is essential to define the term immigrant. An immigrant is described as a person who chooses to move to another country, intending to settle there permanently (Dabić et al., 2020). New Zealand has always been a nation of migrants, built initially upon the tribal base of its indigenous Maori population. The 1840 Treaty of Waitangi permitted early British settlement and European migration to New Zealand (Ward & Masgoret, 2008). Migration between African countries and New Zealand is not a new phenomenon; however, it was not until the 1990s and the 2000s that migrant numbers grew largely because people were fleeing from war, persecution, death, and political unrest (Walrond, 2009) predominantly from Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Sudan. It is estimated that between 1992 and 2001, 3,000 refugees settled in New Zealand (Tuwe, 2018). In addition to the African refugee population, approximately 46,806 migrants arrived in New Zealand between 2002 and 2003, mainly from Southern Africa (predominantly South Africa and Zimbabwe) (Tuwe, 2018). According to Statistics New Zealand’s 2018 Census (n.d), there are currently 16,890 African immigrants living in New Zealand. Of this, 8,265 are females, and 71.4% were born overseas. From this analysis, it can be concluded that there has been and continues to be an increase in the African population in New Zealand since 2018 due to factors such as war and unrest in the country of origin, economic opportunities, and better education. Also, in 2019 cabinet agreed to increase the size of

the Refugee Quota from 750 to 1,500 places per year from 2020 (New Zealand Immigration, n.d), which would also be another factor in an increase in the African population in New Zealand. However, due to Covid- 19 and border restrictions, this number was not met in 2020 and 2021 (New Zealand Immigration, n.d), forcing a decrease in the migration of the African population to New Zealand. Therefore, the term immigrant will be used in this research to refer to all who enter New Zealand for permanent resettlement, regardless of the documents upon entry or reasons for migration. This includes volunteer migrants and refugees.

First-generation immigrant

This research will mainly focus on first-generation women immigrants of African origin. First-generation immigrants are foreign-born and have to adapt to a new social environment. In contrast, second-generation immigrants are born in the residence country with at least one foreign parent (Pew Research Centre, 2013). In most cases, they are citizens of the residence country. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between these two groups when investigating the integration challenges faced by first-generation African women of immigrant background in New Zealand. A study by Maehler et al. (2020) on the cultural identity of first-generation immigrant children and youth reveals that young first-generation immigrants identify more with their culture of origin compared to their residence country, whereby identity was found to be more moderate depending on migration-related factors.

In the same way, research by Birman and Trickett (2021) on the acculturation of first-generation Soviet Jewish refugee adolescents and children into American society suggests that acculturation appears to occur in a linear pattern over time with the acculturation to the American culture increasing and the acculturation to the Russian culture decreasing over time. This suggests that youth and adolescents find it easier to assimilate into their host country with the cost of losing their country of origin, culture and values.

Defining Identity

My research pivots on the concept of identity, which is not an academic field that allows a linear, singular understanding. In fact, the concept of identity is so capacious as to draw on the research of scholars across many disciplines, including aspects of sociology and psychology (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Brewer & Gardner, 2004; Cooley, 1922/2004; Mead, 2004; Scott, Corman & Cheney, 1998). Although my research concentrates principally on cultural identity theory, I am aware that many scholars such as Brewer and Gardner (2004) and Sluss and Ashforth (2007) describe

identity as multi-layered, formed from an amalgam of three separate yet intermingling levels: personal, role/relational and social. Sluss and Ashforth (2007, p. 9) believe that individual identity originates from comparisons of "...traits, abilities, goals, performance and the like", suggesting that the formation of personal identity, is, as Gioia, Schultz and Corley (2000) and Albert and Whetten (2004) showed, a matter of establishing distinctions between *self* and others.

The second of the three levels of identity is role identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000), and refers to "the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation, into the self, of the meanings and expectations associated with that role and its performance" (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). Positive performance in role-based identity can improve self-esteem and self-efficacy (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007; Stets & Burke, 2000), and requires people to compare their role to counter roles (Burke & Reitzes, 1991) as a means of discerning their personal purpose (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007) and distinctiveness (Stets & Burke, 2000). As part of the second level of identity, relational identity allows people to define and evaluate the relationships that accompany their roles. Such definition and evaluation can influence self-concept as the nature of the role-relationship is internalised into definitions of the *self* (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Internalisation creates a tension between belonging, on the one hand, and the need for separation and uniqueness on the other (Albert & Whetten, 2004; Brewer, 1991; Brewer & Gardner, 2004; Leonardelli, Pickett & Brewer, 2010; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007).

All research on identity postulates that it is a product of social interaction (Brewer & Gardner, 2004; Margolis & Catudal, 2001; Mead, 2004; Swann Jr, 1987). Individuals "assess the identity implications of interactions and initiate behaviors that maintain or restore congruency between the identity and the reflected appraisal" (Burke & Reitzes, 1991, p. 242) and by reflecting on their interactions, make choices about which attitudes and behaviours to adopt into their self-concepts. The selection process that accompanies reflection reduces the number of identities available to the person, ultimately creating a sense of the unique self (Lifton, 1970; Parekh, 2009; Scott, 2007).

Although the two concepts of identity discussed above will, to some extent, inform the data analysis, the third level, social identity, is so important to the design of this research that it is explored in detail in chapter three. At this point, however, I have come to a general definition of identity as the self-meanings (Burke & Reitzes, 1999; Parekh, 2009; Peek, 2005; Pratt, 2000; Schlenker, 1986; Stets & Burke, 2000) that include "core beliefs, assumptions, values, attitudes, preferences, decisional premises, gestures, habits and rules" (Scott, Corman & Cheney, 1998, p. 303) used by individuals to evaluate their own conduct and the conduct of others (Burke & Reitzes, 1991; Parekh, 2009; Scott et al, 1998). Many of the same elements that comprise the general definition of personal identity

established above are also, unsurprisingly, present in a definition of cultural identity, although of course, the focus is narrowed to the cultural context.

The notion of identity evolves the characteristics and attributes defining a person or group (Clayton, 2003). These characteristics and attributes are applied to form the answer to the question “*Who am I?*” which can change over time, depending on one’s social environment and beliefs (Carter, 2012). Various internal and external factors, such as family, loved ones, society, ethnicity, opportunities, interests, and culture, impact the answer to this question.

Cultural identity, then, is understood here as the adoption into an individual’s self-concept the traditions, norms, obligations, rituals and values of a given culture and sets parameters for evaluating cognition and determining behaviour within the cultural context (Greeley, 1985; McAllister, 2004; Minkler & Cosgel, 2004).

According to Rymarz and Graham (2006) individuals with a strong or salient cultural identity derive high levels of satisfaction from the traditions of their cultural actively engaging in practices of such as regularly attending cultural activities (Rymarz & Graham, 2006). The reward for establishing a strong, belief-based cultural identity is, according to Rymarz and Graham (2006) and Stark and Finke (2000), the belief in the formation of a personal relationship with one’s culture and being unconsciously conscious actor in the culture. Cultural identity, much like other aspects of identity, is expressed in interactions with others. Obviously, the more individuals interact with people who share their cultural beliefs, the more likely they are to establish and preserve a vital cultural identity (Olson, 1993). However, although Olsen’s work has considerable utility in explaining the way in which cultural identity is maintained, his scholarship is at odds with earlier work, such as that of Berger (1967). Berger argued that because culture lost the hold it once had as the purveyor of traditions and time, cultural identity can now, to some degree, incorporate personal choices and opinions.

Despite the greater space that is now available for personal interpretation, cultural organisations still play an important part in establishing and reaffirming cultural beliefs and thus are essential to the sense of cultural *self* (Ammerman, 2003; Berger, 1967; Olson, 1993). Although Lee’s (1971) research in the Federal Public Health Service did not involve the study of cultural organisations, he did show that the loss of familial and cultural models of identification encourages individuals to identify with cultures to construct self-meaning. Individuals may enhance their feelings of self-esteem by associating with elements of their culture whose values they perceive as congruent with their own and as expressing positive attributes (Abrahamson & Anderson, 1984; Ashforth & Mael, 1989;

Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994; Pfeffer & Fong, 2005). People who enhance their self-esteem by identifying with their cultures in a close manner, are likely, according to Cheney (1983a), Dutton et al (1994), and Hogg and Terry (2000) to conform with its rules and traditions, leading, ultimately, to the result that the "goals of the culture and those of the individual become increasingly integrated and congruent" (Hall, 1971, p. 176). Such goal alignment, obviously, can be beneficial to a culture because it gains the loyalty of members and probable active engagement with its culture (Martin, 2002; Meyerson & Martin, 1987; Schein, 1992). Equally obviously, it can also benefit the individuals in terms of belonging, self-worth and other psychological needs (Pfeffer & Fong, 2005; Swann Jr, Milton & Polzer, 2000).

Defining Culture

Cultural identity is based on socially constructed categories that teach individuals a way of being, including expectations for social behaviour or ways of acting (Yep, G.A., 2002). It can be seen as fundamental to our identity. For example, while I am a student and part of a class, I can also understand myself as a black woman, as this is part of my cultural identity. Cultural identity is internally constructed and (usually) from birth. Clarke (2008) mentions that we are born into a particular set of essential identifiers such as "race, ethnicity, gender and class" (p.24); that we are expected to understand ourselves, the world, and the way we act based on those things. Therefore, cultural identity cannot be chosen; pre-existing historical and social traditions drive it.

Africa is the second largest continent in the world (after Asia), with several thousand ethnic groups who speak over two thousand languages (Vanham, 2015). This means that the African continent is filled with different cultures. For many people, culture differentiates them from other groups and societies worldwide (Clarke, 2008). A study by Idang (2015) associates "culture with a person's distinct traits such as language, music, religion, social norms, values, dressing, art and dancing" (p. 98). In this research, values refer to one's beliefs about what is right and wrong and what is essential in life. The African continent is culturally rich and diverse, consisting of different countries with various tribes.

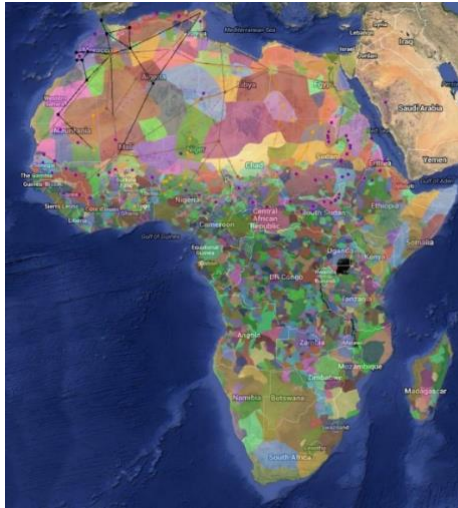


Figure 3 Harvard University map of ethnicity in Africa.

Harvard University's map of ethnicity in Africa shows the diversity of African ethnic groups. Each colour roughly represents most of an ethnic group in each country based on how locals self-identify (Fisher, 2015). This map clearly shows that Sub-Saharan Africa has the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. Each country and tribes acquire unique characteristics, such as speaking different languages and practising numerous religions, social values, morals, and political values that all contribute to African culture.

Regardless of the differences, most African countries share a common cultural belief in the importance of togetherness and community. This indicates the importance of collectivism within African societies. Collectivism theory emphasises the importance of group dynamics and the well-being of a group rather than an individual (Westen, 1985). For example, many African cultures emphasise the importance of a community and family. All decisions are made as a group, even ones affecting an individual. This significantly limits women's ability to express and practice their individuality as they are placed in roles that de-emphasise their personal goals and instead prioritise their obligations within their family and community.

In contrast, individualism affirms the needs and desires of an individual over a group and encourages independence. Collectivism is mainly practised in traditional societies such as Latin America, Asia and Africa. In contrast, individualism is practised in primarily Western societies such as Western Europe, Australia, North America, and New Zealand (Triandis, 2001). For example, in individualistic societies, women are encouraged to make decisions that will impact their goals and values in education, employment and financial decisions. Individualism is crucial because it allows women to exercise their freedom.

My culture: The rich heritage of the Luo people

My ancestors are known as Jo- Luo (Then Luo people), who settled in Uganda many centuries ago. The Luo are a Nilotic-speaking group believed to have originated from Sudan (Dietler & Herbich, 1993). Due to the Luo migration, Luo people can be located throughout southwestern Kenya, Northern Tanzania, north-eastern Ethiopia, northern Congo-Kinshasa and northern and western Uganda. The Luo people speak multiple languages, including English, Kiswahili and their native Luo languages (Dietler & Herbich, 1993). However, it is important to note how different these languages are grammatically and vocabulary-wise.

Luo people from Uganda, known as the Alur and Acholi, use the oral tradition of Wang Lei to tell the Luo legend of Nyipir and Lyabongo - The legend of the Spear and the Bead (Mutesi, 2013), who separated after a bitter dispute. Their dispute leads the two brothers to take different directions giving birth to sub-ethnic groups: The Alur (Nyipir) and the Acholi (Labongo). The Alur refer to the site as Wan-Lei or Wandhi- Lei. Wang refers to 'where', Lei means 'axe' and Wadhi 'landing site' (Cross-cultural Foundation of Uganda, 2021, p.6). Among the Alur, Wang-Lei is literally translated into "the site where the axe was cast into the River Nile" (Cross-cultural Foundation of Uganda, 2021, p.6) to symbolise the separation between the two brothers. Due to their migration to Uganda, the Luo introduced their culture, language and some animals and groups to their settled areas. They also continued their oral tradition of telling stories as entertainment and teaching life lessons to the younger generation.

African story telling

"It is the storyteller who makes us what we are, who creates history. The storyteller creates the memory that the survivors must have - otherwise their surviving would have no meaning"
- Chinua Achebe

The African oral tradition comprises stories and history passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. The stories, proverbs, myths, poems and folktales of Africa's oral traditions weave a social fabric, binding communities together and preserving cultural values and traditional beliefs. According to Oamen (2011), storytelling was an oral schooling system to teach African norms, values, beliefs, traditions and culture. Often the traditional oral stories surface from accounts of past events such as war, migration, human existence, life and death and relationships among humans and animals (Okpewho, 2009). This highlights the importance of storytelling in keeping history alive and passing on old traditions to new generations. The stories also include folktales, myths, songs,

eyewitness accounts, and stories passed down over the years by word of mouth (Edosomwan & Peterson, 2016). Parents, grandparents, and relatives used storytelling to pass down knowledge of culture and history to the younger generation and give them a sense of place and purpose. The oral tradition of African storytelling is one of the oldest traditions. However, it is still used across Africa and worldwide as entertainment to develop the imagination and teach lessons about everyday life.

The man who never lied

(Anike foundation, n.d)

Once upon a time there lived a wise man by the name of Mamad. He never lied. All the people in the land, even the ones who lived twenty days away, knew about him.

The king heard about Mamad and ordered his subjects to bring him to the palace. He looked at the wise man and asked:

"Mamad, is it true, that you have never lied?" "It's true."

"And you will never lie in your life?"

"I'm sure in that."

"Okay, tell the truth, but be careful! The lie is cunning, and it gets on your tongue easily."

Several days passed and the king called Mamad once again. There was a big crowd: the king was about to go hunting. The king held his horse by the mane, his left foot was already on the stirrup. He ordered Mamad:

"Go to my summer palace and tell the queen I will be with her for lunch. Tell her to prepare a big feast. You will have lunch with me then."

Mamad bowed down and went to the queen. Then the king laughed and said:

"We won't go hunting and now Mamad will lie to the queen. Tomorrow we will laugh on his behalf."

But the wise Mamad went to the palace and said:

"Maybe you should prepare a big feast for lunch tomorrow, and maybe you shouldn't. Maybe the king will come by noon, and maybe he won't."

"Tell me will he come, or won't he?" - asked the queen.

"I don't know whether he put his right foot on the stirrup, or he put his left foot on the ground after I left."

Everybody waited for the king. He came the next day and said to the queen: "The wise Mamad, who never lies, lied to you yesterday."

But the queen told him about the words of Mamad. And the king realized that the wise man never lies, and says only that, which he saw with his own eyes.

What makes African storytelling unique from traditional storytelling is its ability to be used as a tool to teach important moral and cultural lessons and provide entertainment for all ages. For example, the story above, “The man who never lied”, tells the story of a man who never told any lies. In the story, a king wanted to trick the man into telling the queen that he would cook a feast for her, which he never intended to do. This story has been passed down many generations to teach the importance of honesty and never allowing anyone to trick you into doing something wrong. Tuwe (2018) uses an Afrocentric storytelling framework in her research to create narratives intending to tell African stories and place African people as co-participant instead of the subject of her research while also emphasising and strengthening African values. Likewise, an article by Dodd (2021) examines leadership, emphasising African literature and storytelling as a methodology of centring marginalised voices and communities and promoting change.

Oral storytelling emphasises repetition of the language and rhythm, two of its most essential characteristics. Storytellers often repeat words, phrases, gestures, sounds and stanzas. Repetition helps the audience remember the stories and allows them to join in with the storyteller. Storytelling was and continues to be a big part of African culture nationwide. As the participants for my research are all from different African countries, I will encourage them to implement storytelling as they share their experiences of growing up as a first-generation immigrant African women in New Zealand society. My research will use storytelling to identify the different information shared by the participants concerning the interview questions. Storytelling is fundamental for African communities in New Zealand to express their emotions, worldviews and thoughts to others regarding their identity and sense of belonging in New Zealand society.

Support systems/tools

When African immigrants arrive in New Zealand, they are provided access to various support systems to facilitate their settlement and integration. Specific programs may vary depending on the region and the individuals' circumstances.

Resettlement agencies

Resettlement agencies, such as the New Zealand Red Cross, play a crucial role in supporting African immigrants during their settlement process regarding housing, learning the English language, employment and making connections in the community (New Zealand red cross, n.d). The Red Cross supports immigrants to integrate and feel secure in their new country. This support is essential in

shaping one's identity because it helps immigrants overcome the challenges of moving to a new place and gives them a sense of belonging.

Education and cultural integration

Public schools in New Zealand offer free education to immigrant children, with additional support for language learning and cultural integration (Ministry of Education, n.d). Access to education plays a pivotal role in shaping identity, allowing African immigrant children to develop academically, socially and emotionally. By participating in the education system, children can learn about New Zealand's history, culture, and values while maintaining their own cultural heritage. Education promotes a sense of dual identity and encourages a multicultural perspective, fostering a strong sense of self and belonging for African immigrant children.

Healthcare services

Access to healthcare services through the publicly funded national healthcare service (NHS) is crucial for maintaining the well-being of African immigrants (New Zealand Government, n.d.). Adequate healthcare allows individuals to address their physical and mental health needs, supporting their overall quality of life. Health services contribute to identity formation by ensuring individuals can maintain their health, participate fully in communities, and pursue personal aspirations. By receiving appropriate healthcare, African immigrants can feel valued, supported and empowered in their new home, enhancing their overall sense of identity and belonging.

Resettlement agencies, education and healthcare services are essential for African immigrants in New Zealand to build their identity and feel like they belong. These support systems help them with practical needs, integration into the community, and maintaining their well-being, all contributing to a strong sense of identity and a successful transition into their new lives.

My tools and support system

Upon my arrival in New Zealand, I was provided with various support systems tailored to address my specific needs to help me facilitate integration into New Zealand Society. As an African child, the assimilation process into New Zealand culture entailed various factors such as education, social interactions, family support and language. As I was only five years old upon my arrival, attending school was one of the main ways I learned about New Zealand culture. During school, I had the

chance to meet and interact with children from different backgrounds, and I was able to learn the different customs and traditions practised in New Zealand. Being a young age, I was able to adapt to the English language at a fast pace and was provided extra learning and materials to help improve my English language skills, making it easier to communicate. Outside of school, I joined various sports teams and clubs, where I made new friends who taught me a lot about New Zealand culture. Through play, learning and celebrating also celebrate each other's cultural festivals. This benefited my assimilation into New Zealand society because it made me feel included and helped me connect with local children.

My family also played a significant role in helping me assimilate into New Zealand culture. We often participated in community events and cultural festivals, where we got to share our African heritage with others and learn about the traditions and practices of the local community. My grandparents encouraged me to embrace my African roots and the culture of our new home, which helped me feel a sense of pride in my identity while being open to new experiences. Learning the English language was a significant part of my assimilation process. Being a young age I quickly adapted and learned how to speak English as I was emersed in it in both school and home. I would practice speaking English with my family and friends, and it became easier to express myself and understand others. The more I learnt, the more I felt confident navigating daily life and engaging with people around me.

Assimilating into New Zealand culture as an African child was an adventure filled with learning, friendships and new experiences. I am grateful for the welcoming environment and support from school, my family and the community.

Complexities of the post arrival period in New Zealand

Various complexities mark the post-arrival period for African youth in New Zealand as they navigate the challenges of adapting to a new culture, educational system, and societal context. Complexities include gender, age, discrimination and racism, cultural adjustment and family dynamics.

Understanding these complexities is crucial for developing targeted support systems and interventions to facilitate African youth's successful integration and well-being in New Zealand society.

Gender

Researchers have identified a few factors contributing to young immigrants' integration into their host society. Firstly, gender can be a significant factor in the integration of immigrants. Many cultures have patriarchal practices where families and communities "perceive females as inferior to males" (Litchmore & Safdar, 2014, p.200). As a result, boys tend to socialize towards extrafamilial environments and experiences, while girls tend to socialize more towards staying close to home and family environment (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012). Therefore, boys can socialize and interact with the opportunities their host country offers, which can contribute to their development quicker into the host society than girls. As noted by Warikoo (2005), "Boys choose to distance themselves more from their ethnic identity compared to girls who tend to serve as the family pillar of tradition and culture" (p.804-806).

Further research by Valenzuela (1999) explores how gender interacts with immigration. The results showed that girls in immigrant homes participate more in tasks requiring greater responsibility. At the same time, despite their involvement in household activities, boys did not have the same responsible roles as girls. In comparison, Hungor and Bornstein's (2013) research addresses gender differences and similarities in acculturation, adaptation, value and perceived discrimination among middle and late adolescents. Results showed that gender was a factor in adolescents' acculturation in their private and public lives. Girls experienced less discrimination and showed better adaptation than boys.

Age

Furthermore, several studies (Tan., 2021; Hou et al., 2017) indicate that the age of arrival of an immigrant can affect their integration into society. Research by Hou et al. (2017) indicates that "age at immigration is among the strongest predictors of learning the language of the host country, educational attainment, and economic outcomes" (p.1617). Therefore, at a younger age, immigrants can adapt and receive their host country easily compared to adult immigrants. Similarly, language proficiency is also a crucial factor in integration. Younger immigrants tend to grasp languages easier, making it easier for them to adapt to their new society and culture. Schwartz et al. (2010) reiterate the importance of language for integration into a new society by describing it as "part of the fabric of national identity" (p.5). Therefore, communicating in the host country's language is essential for the social integration of immigrants. Therefore, through acculturation, not only is there a blending of

cultural traditions but also the blending of languages. Hence, this article reinforces the need to recognise factors such as age and language in a cross-cultural context which contributes to a migrant's acculturation experience and how they navigate through their new society to find their identity and sense of belonging.

Discrimination

The approach a host society takes towards immigrants is also essential. Whether there is a welcoming culture or not. Discrimination can significantly impact an immigrant's integration into society. For example, immigrants whose qualifications are highly regarded by host countries may find more favourable employment conditions than those whose employment background is less highly valued. Skin tone and English language proficiency prove to be the critical target of discrimination towards immigrants, with darker skin tones and lower language proficiency being linked to greater levels of discrimination (Ayón, 2015; Szaflarski & Bauldry, 2019). Experiences of discrimination can have detrimental effects on the well-being, self-esteem and mental health of African youth. Addressing racism and fostering inclusivity and cultural diversity is crucial for creating a supportive environment for African youth to thrive and develop a positive identity.

Cultural Adjustment

Cultural adjustments pose a significant complexity for African youth post-arrival in New Zealand. Adapting to a new culture, language, and social norms can be challenging and overwhelming. African youth often experience a sense of dislocation as they navigate unfamiliar environments, leading to feelings of isolation and identity confusion (Berry, 2017). Coming from societies with different customs, traditions, and social structures may cause African youth to encounter difficulties aligning their previous cultural experiences with the expectations of their new environment (Liebkind et al., 2004). This cultural dissonance can create internal conflicts as they strive to maintain their cultural identity while integrating into New Zealand society. Adjusting to new social norms, communication styles, and value systems requires time and effort, further adding to the complexity of the cultural adjustment process (Sam & Berry, 2010). Supportive programs and services that promote intercultural competence, provide cultural orientation, and facilitate cross-cultural interactions can significantly assist African youth in navigating these challenges and developing a positive sense of cultural identity in their new host country (Liebkind et al., 2004).

African youth who have grown up in New Zealand often grow up with a mixed identity that is influenced by both their parent's culture and New Zealand society. They are confronted with cultural walls or pitfalls at every turn. Unable to completely relate to their parent's culture and yet at the same time labelled as "different" in New Zealand society. They form a cultural hybrid, a blend of cultures that can be interesting but also confusing and frustrating to them. Studies conducted by Mude and Mwanri (2020) and Ziaian et al. (2021) show that in some African cultures, youths are expected to follow the views of their parents and elders, however once in a new country such as New Zealand, many youths perceive themselves as embodying New Zealand culture where they are free to make an individual choice to do whatever they wish. Deng and Marlowe (2013) also acknowledge that even though some African youths are grateful to be adapting to New Zealand culture and way of life, they are still expected by family members to maintain most of their original culture and language. This shows that identity and belonging are not just associated with connection to place but also recognises that family and social ties may still exist and that there is a constant need for African youth to accommodate cultural beliefs from both African and New Zealand societies. Deng and Marlowe (2013) also acknowledge that even though some African youths are grateful to be adapting to New Zealand culture and way of life, they are still expected by family members to maintain most of their original culture and language. This raises the idea of identity and how African youth construct their identity to fit into their new environment while maintaining their cultural practices and values. Ziaian et al. (2021) reiterate this by acknowledging that adolescents and youth from refugee backgrounds experience identity issues living between different cultures. They must "navigate between childhood and adulthood, expectations of parents, ethnic community and host society" (Ziaian et al., 2021, p.123). A study by Tuwe (2018) also argues that the negative and biased portrayal of Africa in Western mainstream media, such as stereotyping and othering, impacts people of African descent's integration into society.

Hence, female children and youth face domestic pressures and social barriers. The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (also known as the Banjul Charter) is an international human rights instrument that is tailored specifically to the African context and is intended to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms across the African continent (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, n.d). The Charter combines African values such as dignity, fairness, equality and respect with international norms by promoting internationally recognised individual rights and proclaiming collective rights and individual duties. The Charter also acknowledges the rights of African women in Article 18: *"The State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination*

against women and the protection of the rights of women and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions.”

Despite having laws and regulations that reinforce the rights of African women, many women still face discrimination, have fewer opportunities, are refused education, face more significant health risks, and are confronted with violence and abuse. Similarly, documents such as the Human Rights Commission on Women's Rights in New Zealand (2018) also reinforce the importance of women's rights in areas such as gender-based violence, employment, exploitation and health (Human Rights Commission, 2018). However, in New Zealand, women's rights are enforced and celebrated through equal access to education, working and earning fair wages, expressing their voices, and having the freedom to vote. Societies like New Zealand challenge inequality and provide an environment where everyone, especially women, can freely practice and reinforce their human rights.

A study by Scuglik and Alarcon (2005) on immigrant Somali children's experience in the United States shows that although the traditional role of wife and mother is still available and encouraged in some African communities, exposure to Western societies such as New Zealand expands life opportunities available to African women. These opportunities and new-found freedoms enable African women living in Western societies to challenge their traditional lifestyles and become more indulged in Western societies' way of life as they seek their belonging and identity between both worlds. This article indicates that factors such as acculturative stress, racial discrimination, language barriers, changes in family dynamics and developmental issues, unique experiences of adolescent females, and development of new public/social behaviour patterns all prove to be critical factors in the assimilation process that young African women face within their cultural expectations while trying to assimilate into two very polar cultures into one self-identity. Based on the findings in this article, many factors affect the assimilation process of immigrants into a new society and their mental health. It is essential to conduct further research to understand these factors and their effects on the immigrant acculturation process.

Family dynamics

Family dynamics can become complex and challenging for African youth in New Zealand during the post-arrival period. As African youth and their parents navigate the acculturation process, generational and cultural gaps may emerge, leading to potential conflicts within the family (Farrell & Aubrey, 2017). Influenced by their experiences in the new host country, the younger generation may

adopt different attitudes, values, and behaviours, while parents may hold onto traditional cultural practices and expectations (Muskens et al., 2021). Balancing these contrasting cultural values and expectations can create tension and ambiguity for African youth as they navigate their multiple cultural identities (Huang, 2023). Additionally, language barriers and differing levels of acculturation within the family can further complicate communication and understanding between parents and their children (Graham, 2018). This intergenerational cultural conflict can impact family relationships and dynamics, influencing African youth's overall well-being and adjustment during the post-arrival period in New Zealand.

It is essential to recognise that the complexities faced by African youth in the post-arrival period are not universal and vary among individuals based on factors such as age, education, pre-migration experiences, and available support systems. By recognizing and addressing these complexities, policymakers, educators, and community organizations can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for African youth in New Zealand.

The reality of the complexities

The life of immigrants can be demanding while finding a perfect balance between remembering the memories of a world left behind in the day-to-day struggles of learning the ropes of a new society. Finding a balance between adapting to a new life and remaining true to an individual's ethnic background can be difficult. As a result, young immigrants undergo sociocultural and psychological changes known as acculturation (Sam & Berry, 2006).

Berry's theory of acculturation

Proposed by Berry in the 1970s, the acculturation theory suggests that there are two critical factors in the acculturation process; cultural maintenance and contact and participation. Cultural maintenance refers to valuing and preserving cultural identity. Contact and participation refer to involvement with the dominant culture and other cultural groups (Yu & Wang, 2011). This process can be particularly challenging for African immigrants due to the differences in cultural norms, values, and social expectations between their country of origin and New Zealand.

According to Berry's theory, there are four acculturation strategies based on the interaction of the two factors (Schwartz, 2010) - Assimilation (Adopting social norms of the new culture), integration (adopting the dominant (new) culture whilst maintaining the original culture), Marginalisation (When

someone rejects both the original culture and the new cultural norms), and Separation (When someone rejects the dominant culture and keeps their culture of origin). Research by Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver (2004) suggests that the acculturation strategy used by young immigrants can change depending on their private life and public life. For example, an immigrant may adapt to the host country's social culture in public but may also reject the norms and values of the host culture in private. This shows that the acculturation strategies of immigrants are not definite but change over time. The reality of acculturation complexities is evident in the conflicts; African immigrants may experience between preserving their cultural heritage and integrating into the dominant New Zealand society. This tension arises from the desire to maintain a connection to their roots while also wanting to fit in and be accepted by their peers and the broader community. The struggle to balance these dual identities can create confusion, ambivalence, and a sense of not fully belonging (Muskens et al., 2021).

Fitting in can be particularly challenging for African immigrant youth due to possible experiences of discrimination, prejudice, and racism. They may face stereotypes and biased based on their ethnicity, which can negatively impact their self-esteem and overall well-being. These experiences of discrimination can create barriers to social integration, making it difficult for African youth to fully participate and feel accepted within their peer groups and broader communities. Similarly, one of the challenges African immigrants face is the potential to stand out due to their cultural differences. They may encounter experiences of being different, whether it is in terms of physical appearance, language, or cultural practices. These differences can make young African immigrants more susceptible to stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination, impacting their sense of self and belonging (Farrell & Aubrey, 2017). Racism and discrimination can lead to feelings of self-consciousness, isolation, and the need for young African immigrants to constantly negotiate their identity within their multicultural surroundings.

By addressing these complexities and providing support, New Zealand can foster an environment where African immigrants can embrace their heritage while fully integrating into society, developing a strong and multifaceted sense of self.

Responding to the complexities

African immigrant youth can respond to the complexities of acculturation and culture shock by adopting various strategies and seeking support, such as seeking cultural connections, developing bicultural competence and fostering educational opportunities. African immigrant youth can

navigate their integration journey and preserve their ethnic identity (Smith, 2018). Negotiating identity is a central aspect of the acculturation process for African immigrant youth. They often find themselves grappling with questions of self-identity and the tension between preserving their ethnic identity and adapting to the norms and expectations of the host culture. This negotiation occurs in various domains, including language, cultural practices, values, beliefs, and social relationships. Understanding and addressing these complexities through effective support measures are crucial for their well-being and successful adaptation (Jones & Johnson, 2020).

Seeking cultural connections

Seeking cultural connections is a critical strategy for African immigrant youth in responding to the complexities of acculturation and culture shock (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). This strategy involves actively engaging with their African heritage and building meaningful connections within their new cultural environment. By actively engaging with African cultural heritage and building meaningful connections within their new cultural environment, they can find a sense of belonging and preserve their ethnic identity. Seeking cultural connection involves participating in cultural events, joining community organisations, and connecting with individuals from similar backgrounds. These connections provide a support network and opportunities for shared experiences (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). Additionally, seeking cultural connections extends beyond their ethnic community, allowing them to engage with the broader host culture and promote cross-cultural understanding (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). Overall, seeking cultural connections enhances their well-being, successful adaptation, and integration into the new cultural context.

Developing bicultural competence

Developing bicultural competence is a critical strategy for African immigrant youth in responding to the complexities of acculturation and culture shock. Bicultural competence refers to the ability to navigate and integrate two cultures effectively – their African heritage and the host culture – in a way that allows for a harmonious, balanced adaptation (Berry, 2005). Bicultural competence involves acquiring language and understanding cultural norms and expectations in their African heritage and the host culture. By actively learning the language and familiarising themselves with cultural nuances, African immigrant youth can bridge communication barriers and effectively engage with the local community. Moreover, developing bicultural competence requires reconciling their African heritage with the experiences of the host country, striking a balance between preserving

their ethnic identity and integrating into the new culture (Jones & Johnson, 2020). By embracing both cultures, African immigrant youth can effectively navigate the challenges of culture shock, maintain a sense of belonging, and enhance their adaptation process.

Fostering educational opportunities

Fostering educational opportunities is crucial for African immigrant youth in responding to the complexities of acculturation and culture shock. Education plays a transformative role in their integration process by equipping them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to navigate their new cultural environment and overcome the challenges associated with culture shock. Actively seeking and engaging in educational opportunities is essential for African immigrant youth integration and adaptation in the host country (Lo, 2010). Access to resources such as language classes, tutoring, and career counselling equips them with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of their environment (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). Additionally, educational empowerment enhances their prospects for socio-economic mobility and increases their chances of successful adaptation (Berry, 2005). By pursuing educational opportunities that align with their academic and career aspirations, African immigrant youth can acquire the knowledge and competencies needed to thrive in their host country (Smith, 2018). Such educational initiatives facilitate their integration and open doors to future opportunities, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to society (Jones & Johnson, 2020).

By actively responding to the complexities of acculturation and culture shock, African immigrant youth can enhance their adaptation, strengthen their identity, and thrive in their new cultural context.

Misrepresentation and the present reality

As an African immigrant woman living raised in New Zealand, I have faced my fair share of struggles regarding mental health, wellbeing, family negotiations, and geographical adjustments. The unfamiliarity with local customs, communication barriers, and the absence of familiar support networks impacted my sense of identity and belonging.

Cultural adjustment

Moving to a new country means immersing myself in a different culture with its social norms and ways of life. As a child, I encountered various challenges relating to cultural adjustment that hindered my adjustment to life in New Zealand. One of the primary challenges I faced was the language barrier. English was not my first language, so communicating and understanding others initially took much work. I could only say the words "yes" and "no". Starting school at age five enabled me to quickly learn new vocabulary, phrases, and pronunciations to communicate with my peers and teachers effectively.

Cultural norms and customs were also different from what I was accustomed to. For instance, social etiquette and acceptable behaviours varied significantly between my home county and New Zealand. Learning and adapting to these cultural nuances required observation and active participation in social settings. Understanding the appropriate way to greet others, engage in conversations, and participate in social activities was a learning process.

Mental health stigma

In some African communities, mental health issues are stigmatised, making it challenging to seek help or support. As an African child, I experienced the detrimental effects of mental health stigma within my community. Mental health issues were often met with silence, secrecy, and a lack of understanding. Growing up, mental health was rarely discussed in my household or community. There was a prevailing belief that mental illnesses were a sign of weakness or personal failure. This perspective was rooted in cultural norms and expectations that emphasised strength, resilience, and overcoming adversity.

Consequently, admitting to struggling with mental health issues was perceived as an admission of weakness or even a threat to one's reputation and social standing. The lack of awareness and understanding surrounding mental health conditions further compounded the stigma. Mental illnesses were often misunderstood, with individuals being labelled as "crazy" or "possessed" rather than being recognised as individuals in need of compassion and professional help. This limited understanding perpetuated fear, discrimination, and ostracism, creating an environment where seeking help for mental health concerns was deemed unnecessary or even shameful. As a result, growing up, I felt uncomfortable and often suffered in silence while going through mental health

issues. I believe overcoming mental health stigma in African communities requires a shift in cultural attitudes and increased awareness.

Racism and discrimination

As an African child, the weight of discrimination and racism has left an indelible mark on my life. The hurtful stereotypes and biases I have encountered solely based on my African heritage have affected my self-perception and how I navigate the world. From subtle microaggressions to outright acts of racism, I have faced derogatory remarks, exclusion, and unequal treatment. These experiences profoundly impacted my self-esteem, contributing to insecurity and self-doubt. Moreover, The lack of diversity and representation in many spaces further contributed to a sense of isolation and feeling disconnected from others who share similar experiences. I remain hopeful for a future where inclusivity, empathy, and equality prevail, paving the way for a society that cherishes the worth and contributions of individuals from all backgrounds.

Geographical displacement

As an African child, geographical displacement has been a defining aspect of my life. The experience of being uprooted from my home country and navigating unfamiliar territories has profoundly impacted my identity, sense of belonging, and overall wellbeing. Leaving behind my homeland's familiar landscaped and cultural landmarks, I experience a sense of dislocation and longing for a place I once called home. Adapting to new geographical environments, education systems, and cultural contexts presented challenges but fostered growth and resilience. Despite the difficulties, I have learned to appreciate diverse cultures, embrace new experiences, and navigate the complexities of geographical displacement with strength and adaptability.

Family negotiations

Growing up in an African home, family negotiations significantly shaped my upbringing, values and aspirations. These negotiations involved a complex interplay of cultural expectations, traditional gender roles and the pursuit of individual autonomy. Growing up in an African household, I encountered unique challenges and experiences navigating these family dynamics.

Firstly, respect for elders is deeply ingrained in African culture. Growing up, I was expected to revere and obey my grandparents, aunts and uncles (even if they were unrelated to me), and other

authority figures within the family and community. This often involved adhering to their decisions and following their guidance, even if it conflicted with my desires and aspirations. Negotiating my wishes while maintain respect for elders required delicate balance and open communication. Secondly, gender roles and expectations was significantly reinforced while I was growing up. As a girl, I was assigned domestic responsibilities such as cooking and cleaning from a young age, while my male relatives had more freedom in what they could do. Navigating these gender roles sometimes limited my opportunities for personal growth and independence. Negotiating for equal opportunities and challenging traditional gender norms was constantly met with resistance and required careful consideration.

Lastly, my family's cultural traditions and customs were always taught to be upheld. This formed an integral part of our identity. At times I found it difficult to uphold the traditions and customs I was taught while trying to navigate my way through New Zealand society. There were certain practices that I did not feel were necessary as we were in a different environment, and assimilating into a new culture and negotiating the preservation of cultural practices while embracing the influences of the broader society at times created tension and conflict. I often just wanted to fit in and be seen as 'normal', but I was also expected to uphold traditions that I believed were unnecessary since we were in New Zealand.

In navigating these family negotiations as an African girl child, I have learnt to strive for open dialogue, mutual respect, and willingness to understand different perspectives. Expressing my thoughts and aspirations is crucial while respecting my family's values and cultural heritage. Building bridges of communication and seeking common ground fosters stronger family relationships and allows for the harmonious blending of tradition and personal growth.

African community in New Zealand

New Zealand is recognised for its multicultural society, encompassing individuals from diverse backgrounds, including Africa. While New Zealand has legislation, such as the Human Rights Act 1993, that promotes equality and combats discrimination, challenges still exist. For example, an article written by Radio New Zealand (2021) highlights how racism profoundly impacts migrants, causing them to experience a loss of self-belief, fear, disengagement from society, and a loss of culture and identity. The report highlights that racism leads to exclusion, colonised thinking, and even self-judgment of one's culture among migrants (Radio New Zealand, 2021). As a result, many migrants feel compelled to change their appearance, clothing, language, or behaviour to conform to

Eurocentric expectations in New Zealand . Overall, this article demonstrates that racism is a significant issue in New Zealand, impacting the experiences and well-being of immigrants. It highlights the need for increased awareness, dialogue, and comprehensive measures to address and combat racism within the country.

There is also a high need for increased support for refugees and migrant programs in New Zealand. An article by Armah (2022) highlights the challenges faced by these programs, including limited funding and resources, which jeopardise their continuity and ability to provide essential services. These programs are important in facilitating the settlement and integration of refugees and migrants by offering language support, employment assistance, and cultural orientation Armah (2022). Sustained funding and resources are necessary to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of these programs, which contribute to successful settlement and integration for newcomers. By providing enhanced support, New Zealand can create a more inclusive and cohesive community that values the contributions and enriching experiences of refugees and migrants.

The Ministry of Ethnic Communities in New Zealand plays a significant role in supporting and engaging with diverse ethnic communities, including African communities. They play a crucial role in addressing the needs of African communities, promoting their cultural identity and fostering inclusivity (Ministry for Ethnic Communities, 2023). The ministry's support and engagement with African community organisations provide them with resources, guidance, and funding opportunities to address community needs effectively. By collaborating with African community leaders and organisations, the ministry ensures that their voices and perspectives are considered in policy development and decision-making, leading to more inclusive policies and services (Ministry for Ethnic Communities, 2023). The ministry's provision of information and resources also helps African communities access relevant support, services, and initiatives. Overall, the ministry's efforts empower the African community, promote social cohesion, and foster a sense of belonging in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Cultural identity and belonging

As noted, this research focuses on identity to capture acculturation and how it correlates among young first-generation African women immigrants in their new country of residence (New Zealand). It was not recently that research was conducted on ethnic identity among youth. This is surprising because identity formation is a significant development of youth.

The most commonly used model of identity amongst the youth with migration backgrounds is the ethnic identity development approach. Proposed by Jean Phinney during the 1990s, the ethnic identity development model was seen as "a multidimensional construct, involving cultural or ethnic feelings, attitudes, knowledge and behaviours" (Phinney, 1991, p.194). Phinney (1990) believed that ethnic identity development across different ethnic groups was similar despite background differences. The model focuses on two aspects of ethnic identity: exploration and commitment. *Exploration* is defined as "seeking information and experiences relevant to one's ethnicity", and it can be measured, for example, by "reading and talking to people, learning cultural practices, and attending cultural events (Phinney & Ong, 2007, p.272). Commitment is defined as "a strong attachment and a personal investment in a group" and can be captured by items such as "I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to and "I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means to be me." (Phinney & Ong, 2007, p.276). Although the two components of ethnic identity- exploration and commitment appear different, they are infected closely correlated (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

Phinney's research on the identity approach focuses on developing ethnic identity. This acceleration stream of research has identified that immigrant youth can simultaneously identify with their culture of origin and country of residence. This can be expressed through ethnic identity (identifies with the country of origin) and national identity (identifies with the country of residence). For example, in this model, Somalian refugee children who immigrate to New Zealand may identify with their Somalian cultural values and traditions, which have a Somalian ethnic identity. In contrast, children born in New Zealand would identify with New Zealand's cultural values and traditions. Somalian children may also identify with New Zealand and therefore have a New Zealand identity but a Somalian ethnic identity (Maehler, Zabal, & Hanke, 2019). However, a limitation of Phinney's research is that she did not consider gender as a factor. Integrating gender as a factor would have been a way to contribute to gender equality and create inclusive research results. There was also a need for a longitudinal study, which would have been beneficial in accessing not just what the data revealed at a fixed point in time but also detecting the development or changes in the characteristic of the target population individually and as a group over time. It is important to note that individuals can move back and forth between the stages, and ethnic identity development is not linear. Personal experiences, interactions, and broader social and cultural contexts can influence it. Phinney's model highlights the importance of understanding and supporting individuals' ethnic identity development, as it plays a significant role in their sense of belonging, self-esteem and overall

wellbeing. It also emphasises the need for creating inclusive environments that validate and respect diverse cultural identities.

Summary

This chapter analyses existing theories concerning developing immigrant youth identity in their host country. While a range of theories exists, this review emphasizes several vital themes that consistently appear in the literature: acculturation theory, ethnic identity theory, and factors influencing integration into New Zealand society. By examining these theories, we gain insights into the complex process of identity formation among immigrant youth and the various factors that shape their experiences in the host country. To further explore these themes and deepen our understanding, the following chapter will present the methodology employed in this study to investigate the experiences and identity perspectives of young African immigrant women and the subsequent impact on their sense of belonging.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study aims to investigate the cross-cultural exploration of identity and belonging between the African and New Zealand cultures. This research intends to address the gaps in the study identified above by exploring cultural challenges that young African women face while navigating between their culture of origins expectations and New Zealand society to find their identity and sense of belonging. These individuals find themselves caught between the expectations of their culture of origin and the realities of New Zealand society as they strive to establish their own identity and sense of belonging.

The previous chapter highlighted the importance of acculturation and ethnic identity theory in understanding the integration process of immigrant youth in their host country. It emphasised the significant impact that factors such as age, gender, and discrimination have on this process. This chapter transitions into discussions of the role of in-depth interviews as a practical methodology for capturing participants' perspectives on the research topic. In-depth interviews are chosen for their ability to provide a vivid and comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences (Milena et al., 2008).

This research will require an in-depth analysis of the interview responses. These interviews aim to capture the participants' experiences of growing up in New Zealand and how these experiences have influenced their identity and belonging. It is important to note that current research often overlooks the specific experiences of young African immigrant women (Adelowo, 2012). Therefore, this thesis aims to bridge this research gap by exploring the participants' experiences at a deeper and more nuanced level.

The first part of this chapter will explore qualitative research, providing a rationale for choosing in-depth interviews as the preferred methodology. It will discuss the benefits and strengths of this approach in capturing rich and detailed data. Secondly, this research will discuss the data collection methods used and the importance of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as a crucial tool for

analysing the collected data. Lastly, an overview of the participants involved in this study will be presented, shedding light on their backgrounds and diversity.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It focuses on people's words and narratives as the primary data source, allowing for detailed descriptions and interpretations (Ryan et al., 2007). So, rather than relying on statistical analysis and numerical data, qualitative research methods rely mainly on people's words as the primary data, generating meaning and understanding through detailed descriptions. According to Crossman (2020), qualitative research allows researchers to investigate the meanings people attribute to their behaviour, actions, and interactions with others.

In the context of this study, qualitative research is particularly relevant as it enables an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perspectives of young African women in New Zealand. By employing qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, researchers can capture the participant's individual experiences and opinions, shedding light on the complexities of their cultural challenges and the process of identity formation.

Worldview plays a significant role in qualitative research as it influences how researchers perceive and interpret data and understand the social and cultural contexts of the research participants. Different worldviews provide different lenses through which researchers approach their studies, leading to diverse interpretations and understandings of the research phenomena Koltko-Rivera (2004) defines *worldview* as how individuals perceive the world and their surroundings, which varies across different countries and cultures. Eurocentrism, for example, is a dominant worldview that views the world from a European and Western perspective, often overshadowing other worldviews (Joseph et al., 1990). In contrast, an Afrocentric worldview seeks to liberate African studies from the Eurocentric monopoly and asserts a good African perspective (Oyebade, 1990). By adopting an Afrocentric lens in qualitative research, scholars can challenge Eurocentric biases and embrace African cultural values and traditions as legitimate frames for conducting research (Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2023). This highlights the importance of considering worldview in qualitative research, as it shapes the research process and the understanding of research phenomena.

The Afrocentric Framework

While the use of qualitative research methods is commonly used to understand the experiences of migrants concerning identity and belonging, further research shows that there is a lack of such research within the New Zealand African communities, specifically the African female youth (Adelowo, 2012). Therefore, the Afrocentric framework is employed in this study to provide a unique and personal understanding of the cultural values and perspectives of African female youth in New Zealand. Afrocentricity emphasises that Africans must determine their own reality and worldview, challenging the dominant Eurocentric perspective that often overshadows others (Ince, 2010). An Afrocentric perspective is needed because it presents a positive and new outlook on African study.

The Eurocentric worldview has become so dominant in the contemporary world that it has overshadowed other worldviews. The Afrocentric perspective seeks to liberate African studies from this Eurocentric monopoly on scholarship and thus assert a valid worldview through which Africa can be studied objectively (Oyebade, 1990,p.234).

A worldview is how we see the world and our surroundings (Koltko-Rivera, 2004). Different countries and cultures have diverse ways of seeing the world. Different ethnic cultures have myths and stories to make sense of their surroundings, history, and the universe to paint their framework and worldview. Eurocentrism only sees the world from a European and Western point of view (Joseph et al., 1990), therefore only viewing the histories and cultures of non-western societies from a European or Western way. Schreiber (2000) argues that European methodologies cause many problems for non-European people and reduce the quality of research results. Eurocentricity views the world through a narrow Western lens and overshadows other views, leaving no room for interpretation through a different cultural lens.

In contrast, the Afrocentric perspective seeks to free African studies from Western civilisation and instead assert a valid worldview that positively reflects traditional African values (Oyebade, 1990). The idea of Afrocentricity is described as the study of African people from an African lens (Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013) and African people being subjects of historical and social experiences rather than the objects in European experiences (Asante, 1992). There are several scholars (Abraham, 1991; Hamlet, 1998; Collins, 1991) who have defined the phenomenon but the most prominent scholar who has authored books such as *The African idea (1987)*, *Afrocentricity (1988)*, and *Kemet, Afrocentricity, and knowledge (1990)*, is Dr Asante. Asante (1987) defines Afrocentricity as “*placing African ideals at the centre of any analysis that involves African culture and behaviour (p.6)*”. By

doing this, Afrocentricity encourages a set of principles that place Africans at the centre of their historical, social, economic, political, and philosophical life (Asante, 1987).

To say that we are decentred means essentially that we have lost our own cultural footing and become other than our cultural and political origins, dis-located and dis-oriented. We are essentially insane, that is, living an absurdity from which we will never be able to free our minds until we return to the source. Afrocentricity as a theory of change intends to re-locate the African person as subject. . . . As a pan-African idea, Afrocentricity becomes the key to the proper education of children and the essence of an African cultural revival and, indeed, survival. - (Asante, 1995, p. 1)

Furthermore, Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013) suggest that Afrocentric and qualitative methods complement interpretive schemes to understand, articulate and contextualise the group. However, the Afrocentric paradigm at its core must involve the participants at every stage of the research process, which encourages a spiral methodology of data collection whereby participants, community, researchers, and decision-makers all interact collectively, aligning with the African value of Ubuntu/oneness (Mkabela, 2005). This shows the importance of the Afrocentric method as it challenges the dominant Eurocentric worldview of research, encourages storytelling, and empowers marginalised individuals and communities to take control of their worldview.

The Afrocentric method within this study encourages African women to understand themselves and define their identity through an African lens according to their authentic cultural values and traditions. In addition, the value of African indigenous communities' collective ethics has been disregarded and misunderstood over the years. The collective ethnic or ubuntu recognises that survival comes from group harmony, which is characterised by generosity, love, maturity, understanding, politeness, and humility (Mkabela, 2005). Implementing the Afrocentric method in this research will not only emphasise and strengthen my participants' values and beliefs as African women but also affirm the centrality of African indigenous ideals and values as legitimate frames for conducting research (Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013).

The Afrocentric framework has also been applied in refugee and migrant research, allowing for a meaningful understanding of African situations and combating generalisations of refugee experiences (Opi, 2021; Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018). Research by Opi (2021) uses the Afrocentric approach to understand Kenya's prolonged encampment, allowing a meaningful approach to address an African situation. In contrast, Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama (2018) have

used the Afrocentric framework in their study to identify how African Migrants in Australia construct a sense of belonging, and the role racism plays in their construction. This shows that the Afrocentric framework can be used as an authentic way to guard against generalising refugee experiences. In this study, the Afrocentric framework serves as an authentic approach to highlight the worldview of African immigrant women living in New Zealand and their experiences with identity and belonging.

Reasoning for the selection of in-depth interviews

At the start of my research, I considered using focus group discussions as a methodology. However, given the increase of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, resulting in strict rules globally to close schools and universities (Chandasiri, 2020), I decided to use semi-structured in-depth interviews instead. Semi-structured interviews allowed for the safety of the participants and me and provided them with one-on-one time and the comfort of sharing their personal feelings, opinions and experiences. By utilising this methodology, the study aimed to gain appropriate insights into how young African women find their identity and belonging in New Zealand.

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The advantage of an in-depth interview is that it allows an understanding of other people's lived experiences and the meaning they make of that experience (Seidman, p.9, 2006). However, it also allows confidentiality between the interviewer and the participant, providing a safe and comfortable environment for sharing the interviewee's personal experiences and attitudes (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). I also wanted to build trust with my participants. Moreover, I was not relying on any other form of data; in-depth interviews allowed me to understand and capture the influences and factors in the participants' upbringing that aided in developing their identity and belonging in a multicultural context. Often described as a 'guided conversation' (Curry et al., 2009), in-depth interviews allow the participant to direct the course of the interview while the interviewer listens. Typically, the questions are very open-ended, allowing room for flexibility and adapting to the interviewee's ideas. In-depth questions allowed room to add follow-up questions to get more

information from the participants as the conversations evolved. This method allowed for a deeper understanding of how the participants construct their identity and sense of belonging within New Zealand society. The open-ended nature of the questions facilitated flexibility and the ability to adapt the interview based on the participant's responses, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of how they construct their identity and sense of belonging in a multicultural context.

An alternative research method that could have been incorporated was using focus groups to enrich and validate the concepts identified from the individual in-depth interviews. This would further ensure the credibility of the data. A focus group is described by Daniels et al., (2019) as a collective activity used by researchers to bring together purposely selected individuals to generate unique insights into shared experiences and social norms. Focus groups would have allowed for more open discussions and greater depth in understanding shared experiences and social norms, and their inclusion would have enhanced the credibility of the data.

Data collection

All the Auckland interviews were face-to-face at the participant's homes, while the Wellington interviews were conducted over Microsoft Teams. Due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions and financial constraints, it was difficult to travel to Wellington and conduct face-to-face interviews with *participant 1* and *participant 4*; hence the use of digital tools to interview my participants. Research by Curry et al. (2009) highlights that in-depth interviews via online formats are emerging as a valuable method for difficult-to-reach participants. Digital platforms such as Microsoft Teams proved very useful in times like these.

All the face- to face interviews were recorded via an iPhone (with permission from the participants) and note-taking. In contrast, the interviews conducted on Microsoft Teams were recorded with the record feature in the application, again with permission from the participants. All interviews were later transcribed. All the interviews were conducted in English and took an average of two hours, depending on the participant's response. Questions conducted for the in-depth interviews were based on discrimination, expectations, key influences and factors, sense of belonging and sense of identity (See questions 3.6).

Participants

This study aims to explore the factors and influences that shape the identity and sense of belonging of African young women living in New Zealand society. There were five participants based in

Auckland and Wellington who took part in this research. The in-depth interviews were between two to three hours long. Including more participants in this research might have strengthened it. The reasoning behind choosing five participants was based on the fact that there is a limited amount of young African women in New Zealand, and this was the final number of participants that agreed to take part in this study.

Table 3 Table of individual participant profiles

Participants	Age of arrival	Current age	Country of Origin	Duration of residence (NZ)
Participant 1	3 years old	22 years old	South Sudan	19 Years
Participant 2	5 years old	22 years old	DRC	17 years
Participant 3	5 years old	23 years old	Zimbabwe	20 years
Participant 4	8 years old	23 years old	Rwanda	15 years
Participant 5	7 years old	24 years old	Senegal	17 years

Due to confidentiality, the participants will be assigned identification numbers, which will be used in the quotes added throughout the chapters for examples and clarification of certain themes.

Assembling the participants

The process of assembling participants for this research involved a combination of strategies to ensure a diverse and representative sample. To begin with, social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram were utilised to advertise the focus of this research and reach a broader audience. The use of these platforms allowed for the dissemination of the information about the study and attracted potential participants who met the eligibility criteria. Additionally, word of mouth was employed, with participants encouraged to refer others who might be interested.

After generating initial interest, a selection process was implemented to identify suitable participants. Participants were eligible to participate in the study (i) if they were of African origin. The focus of my research is on African women, so this was very important; (ii) they had to be a first-generation immigrant who had grown up in New Zealand. Since the beginning of understanding oneself begins from early childhood, therefore participants had to arrive in New Zealand as children younger than the age of 9-years old. These criteria insured that each participant grew up with two different cultures: their culture of origin and New Zealand culture; (iii) and were between the ages of 18 and 24 years old. Youth between these ages are in between adolescence and early adulthood and are at the peak of their identity exploration (Arnett, 2006). Demographic information and ages of

arrival and current ages were taken down to understand the different cultures involves in this research.

Overall, the selection criteria ensured that the participants' experiences reflected the specific focus of the study, enabling an in-depth exploration of the factors influencing the identity and sense of belonging of African young women in New Zealand.

Some media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram were utilised to advertise the research focus, and word of mouth was also used. The participants were chosen based on their availability and willingness to participate in the interviews. Before the interviews took place, I had expressed to the participants that I wanted their responses to the interview questions to be raw and honest, therefore I did not share the interview questions with them before hand, instead along with *the Participant information Sheet*, I briefly explained what each question was about, to make sure they were comfortable.

Individual interviews

Individual interviews were a crucial part of the data collection process in this study. Each participant was given dedicated time and attention to express their personal opinions, experiences, and perspectives regarding their identity and sense of belonging. These interviews provided a unique opportunity to delve deeply into the lived experiences of African young women in New Zealand society.

Twenty questions were developed to produce a diverse range of responses, based on the five different participants. The questions were developed with the purpose of gaining insight into the key influences and factors that has shaped the participants identity. The formation of the interview questions was made clear and simple for all my participants to understand, regardless of their knowledge and capability to process the questions. If needed, I would explain the questions in more depth and give prompts to clarify any misunderstanding or confusion. The responses from these questions were then analysed and grouped into appropriate headings that reflected what the main themes surfaced using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis process.

Questions

1. Can you tell me about your family's decision to move to New Zealand?
2. How did this transition impact your identity?

3. Describe the process of settling into New Zealand society?
4. As a woman, were there any rules and expectations from family members and your community that you had to conform to? How did this make you feel?
5. While growing up in New Zealand society did you experience any difficulties related to your background, such as discrimination, stereotyping, or being misunderstood? How did this make you feel? What did you do about it?
6. Are there any activities or practices that you partake in New Zealand society that culturally would not be seen as acceptable for woman in your country of origin?
7. What are some of the similarities and differences you see between your country of origin and New Zealand?
8. In terms of your background, how do you usually describe yourself to people outside your community?
9. Was there ever a moment when you felt extremely ashamed or extremely proud to be from your country of origin?
10. How strongly do you identify with your culture of origin?
11. How strongly do you identify with New Zealand culture?
12. How has growing up in New Zealand shaped your identity?
13. How has growing up in an Africa home/ African culture shaped your identity?
14. In what ways do you think your identity has changed over the years?
15. How would you define your identity today?
16. Can you describe the key influences and factors of your upbringings that have shaped your definition of your identity today?
17. What impact did societal structures have on your identity?
18. Do you feel that you have a sense of belonging?
19. Were there any demands or expectations that you had to abide?
20. What are some perceived opinions that others have about you? (appearance, personality etc)

During the interviews, the participants were encouraged to share their stories in a narrative format, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of their journeys and the factors that influenced their identities. The interviewer maintained a non-judgmental and empathetic stance, creating a safe space for participants to openly discuss sensitive topics. Probing questions were used to delve deeper into specific aspects, clarify any ambiguities, and encourage participants to reflect on their experiences. The interviews were conducted with a balance of structure and flexibility, ensuring that the participants' narratives were heard while also covering the key themes and topics of interest.

The individual interviews provided a rich source of qualitative data, capturing the participants' unique perspectives and insights. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, ensuring accurate representation of their voices and allowing for later transcription and analysis. Additionally, detailed notes were taken during the interviews to capture non-verbal cues, emotions, and other contextual information that may not be evident in the audio recordings. The individual

interviews served as a valuable means to gather in-depth and nuanced data, enabling a comprehensive exploration of the factors shaping the identity and belonging of African young women in New Zealand society.

Conducting the interviews

The interviews in this study were conducted with great care and attention to ensure a comfortable and open environment for participants to share their experiences. Before the interviews, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the nature of the interview process. They were assured that their responses would remain confidential and that their honesty and raw emotions were valued. To foster a sense of trust and authenticity, the interview questions were not shared with participants in advance. Instead, a brief explanation of each question and the participant information sheet were provided to ensure participants felt at ease and were fully informed about the topics to be discussed.

In-person interviews were conducted with participants based in Auckland. At the same time, digital tools such as Microsoft Teams were utilised for interviews with participants in Wellington due to travel restrictions and financial constraints. The use of technology allowed for remote interviews while still maintaining the face-to-face interaction necessary for a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences. Each interview was recorded with the participant's permission, either using an iPhone for face-to-face interviews or the recording feature in the Microsoft Teams application for online interviews. This ensured the accurate capturing of participants' responses for later transcription and analysis.

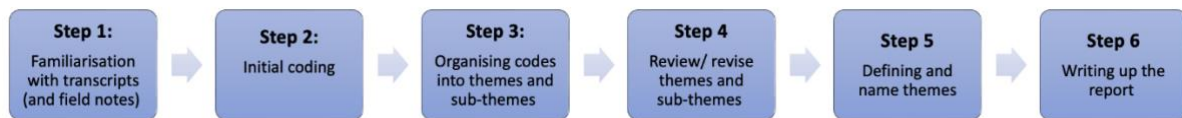
The interviews, which lasted between two to three hours on average, focused on topics such as discrimination, expectations, key influences and factors, and participants' sense of belonging and identity. The questions were carefully designed to elicit rich and in-depth responses, allowing participants to reflect on their journeys and share their perspectives. Throughout the interviews, I remained attentive and responsive as the interviewer, providing prompts and clarification whenever needed to ensure participants fully understood the questions and could express themselves freely. This approach facilitated a deeper understanding of the factors shaping participants' identities and contributed to the generation of valuable insights for the research analysis.

Analysing the data

After the interviews were conducted and transcribed, the responses for each question were analysed using Thematic Analysis which uncovers themes between different data by exploring similarities and

relationships (Terry et al., 2017). There are different approaches to conducting thematic analysis, but the most common form follows a six-step process developed by Braun and Clarke (2006):

Figure 4 Thematic analysis six-step process



Using these steps as a guide allowed me to read through each transcript and highlight common themes, patterns, and interesting statements that surfaced. I then organised these findings into the appropriate categories that reflected the main themes that surfaced. In this case, thematic analysis enabled me to immerse myself in the data and allow themes to emerge from the data during the data analysis process. I took notes during the coding process, writing descriptions of what each code meant and how it could be used to understand the phenomenon.

Once I had completed the data analysis, I thought about the broad themes that emerged and how this would link back to my research. There were standard references by the participants, such as expectations to do well in school, upholding cultural traditions, and experiences of racism and discrimination. These themes link to my research topic of a cross-cultural study of identity and belonging.

Emerging themes

The data analysis in this thesis has revealed several prominent themes that provide valuable insights into the experiences of young African women living in New Zealand society. One significant theme that emerged is the romanticised view of ethnic women. Participants shared their encounters with stereotypes and exoticification, where their African heritage was often reduced to superficial cultural elements. This objectification and romanticisation of their ethnicity created challenges in forming authentic connections and hindered their sense of self-identity.

Another prevalent theme that emerged from the data is the struggle experienced by these women in navigating their dual identities and the resulting identity crisis. Participants shared their experiences of feeling caught between two worlds, their African heritage and the New Zealand culture they were raised in. They discussed the complexities of reconciling conflicting cultural expectations, societal pressures, and aspirations. The participants grappled with questions of belonging and faced

challenges in forming a cohesive identity that incorporated their African roots and New Zealand upbringing.

The theme of identity crisis was closely intertwined with the struggles participants faced. The data revealed that the participants often experienced a sense of uncertainty and confusion about their identities, particularly during periods of transition and self-discovery. They expressed feelings of being disconnected from their cultural heritage while simultaneously feeling like outsiders in New Zealand society. The participants' narratives highlighted the ongoing journey of self-identification and the need for support systems to help them navigate these complex dynamics and develop a strong sense of self amidst their challenges.

These emergent themes shed light on young African women's lived experiences in New Zealand, highlighting the need for further understanding and support to address the romanticised view of ethnic women, the struggles they encounter, and the identity crises they navigate. By acknowledging and addressing these themes, policymakers, educators, and communities can work towards creating an inclusive and empowering environment that allows young African women to embrace their diverse identities and foster a sense of belonging.

Summary

Overall, this chapter presented a detailed account of the choice and justification of the research methodology, methods and procedure. I have located this study within the context of qualitative research design and have argued that in-depth interviews are the best method to provide rich and in-depth information (Milena et al., 2008) about my participants' experiences for this research.

Thematic analysis will also be used to conduct data analysis to find similarities and relationships between the participant's interviews (Terry et al., 2017). Thematic analysis is best suited for this research because it allows me to find and explore patterns of meanings across the qualitative data.

The research findings presented and discussed in the next chapter are derived from the methodological approach outlined in this chapter. Chapter four will further discuss and examine the findings from the participant interviews, with themes outlined regarding each question presented

CHAPTER FOUR:

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate the cross-cultural exploration of identity and belonging among first-generation young African women who were raised in New Zealand. This research aimed to understand and shed light on the challenges faced by these women as they navigate between the expectations of their culture of origin and those of New Zealand society. The central focus of the study was to examine how these challenges influence the development of their identity and sense of belonging.

This research recognised that young African women in New Zealand often find themselves caught between two different cultural worlds. On one hand, they may feel pressure from their family and community to adhere to traditional norms, values, and expectations. On the other hand, they are also influenced by social, cultural, and educational norms prevalent in New Zealand. Negotiating between these two sets of expectations can be complex and may lead to conflicts, dilemmas, and sense of cultural dissonance. The goals of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of these young African women and provide insights to address their unique challenges. By informing efforts to create inclusive and supportive environment, the findings could contribute to helping these women develop a strong sense of identity and belonging that bridges the gap between their culture of origin and the society they reside.

Personal reasoning

This research holds significant personal meaning to me. It resonates with my own experiences as a first-generation young African woman navigating between my cultural heritage and the societal expectations of the country I reside in. By delving into the cross-cultural exploration of identity and belonging among young African women in New Zealand, this research aligns closely with my desire to understand and articulate the complexities of my own journey.

This research aims to shed light on the challenges faced by individuals like myself, who find themselves straddling two distinct cultural worlds. By gaining a deeper understanding of the specific cultural pressures and expectations experienced by young African women in New Zealand, I hope to

provide valuable insights that can not only enhance my own self-awareness but also contribute to the broader discourse surrounding cross-cultural identity formation and sense of belonging.

Research questions

Q1. How do young African women construct their identity and sense of belonging within New Zealand society?

Q2. What are the challenges that young African women come across in their identity journey?

The research questions were designed to guide the study and provide a framework for analysing the findings. These questions aimed to delve into various aspects of the experiences of first-generation young women in New Zealand, shedding light on the challenges they face, their identity formation, cultural negotiation strategies and factors that influence their sense of belonging.

Furthermore, the chosen qualitative method of in-depth interviews for data collection allowed intricate insights into the cultural challenges that young African women face while navigating between their culture of origins expectations and New Zealand society expectations. This chapter will therefore provide a detailed understanding of the insightful findings gathered from the research alongside some crucial conclusions drawn from these findings. The research participants were requested to provide answers to the below listed questions for the purpose of gathering knowledge on their lived experiences of growing up and integrating into New Zealand society while still expected to uphold their country of origins culture, and how this has influenced their identity.

Interview Questions

Q1. Can you tell me about your family's decision to move to New Zealand?

Q2. How did this transition impact your identity?

Q3. Describe the process of settling into New Zealand society?

Q4. As a woman, were there any rules and expectations from family members and your community that you had to conform to? How did this make you feel?

Q5. While growing up in New Zealand society did you experience any difficulties related to your background, such as discrimination, stereotyping, or being misunderstood? How did this make you feel? What did you do about it?

Q6. Are there any activities or practices that you partake in New Zealand society that culturally would not be seen as acceptable for woman in your country of origin?

Q7. What are some of the similarities and differences you see between your country of origin and New Zealand?

Q8. In terms of your background, how do you usually describe yourself to people outside your community?

Q9. Was there ever a moment when you felt extremely ashamed or extremely proud to be from your country of origin?

Q10. How strongly do you identify with your culture of origin?

Q11. How strongly do you identify with New Zealand culture?

Q12. How has growing up in New Zealand shaped your identity?

Q13. How has growing up in an Africa home/ African culture shaped your identity?

Q14. In what ways do you think your identity has changed over the years?

Q15. How would you define your identity today?

Q16. Can you describe the key influences and factors of your upbringings that have shaped your definition of your identity today?

Q17. What impact did societal structures have on your identity?

Q18. Do you feel that you have a sense of belonging?

Q19. Were there any demands or expectations that you had to abide?

Q20. What are some perceived opinions that others have about you? (appearance, personality etc)

Summary of the experience

Responses from participants on the above-mentioned questions grant the researcher the ability to get a full picture of the cross-cultural challenges that young African women face while growing up in New Zealand and how this affects their identity and sense of belonging. By delving into these personal experiences, the research becomes focused on the areas of impact in an individuals' lives, while also fostering a broader understanding of human behaviour, promoting acceptance of minority groups, celebrating diversity and much more. Given the continuous influx of young African women relocating

to New Zealand with their families, it is imperative to comprehend and acknowledge the various cultural stresses and expectations from both their culture of origin and New Zealand society. Examining the long-term effects of these stressors on their identity and sense of belonging is crucial for their overall well-being. How individuals navigate between these contrasting cultures ultimately plays a big role in shaping their identity and self-concept.

The insights gathered from these in-depth interviews will be presented in a block style approach in the subsequent sections. This chosen approach will provide a concise overview of participant responses for each of the twenty individual interview questions, followed by a comprehensive conclusion highlighting the key findings of this study.

Findings

This section aims to discuss in detail the personal experiences, preferences and opinions shared by the participants of the study, classified under their appropriate research question. The section will start off by providing insight into the data collected for RQ1 and will follow the order of research questions as listed above.

Q1. Can you tell me about your family's decision to move to New Zealand?

The very first question aims to analyse and identify the different factors that have led the participants and their families to migrate to New Zealand. The findings established from the in-depth interviews show a significant emphasis on safety, education, economic struggles and better opportunities. An example of 'safety' is when participant one states that *"There was a civil war going on. My family thought that it would be better if we come to New Zealand for our safety and for us kids to have a better future and better opportunities."* This response shows that events such as war, can force people out of their home countries to resettle across the world to safer countries to start a new life in peace and harmony. In contrast, participant three emphasised on the downfall of her country of origin's economy as she states, *"My dad came by himself in 2001, he had a good job and life in Zimbabwe, but he wanted something better because he heard the economy was going to go down."* This response shows that the overall health of a country's economy can also push people to relocate to other countries which provide higher wages, employment opportunities, and a higher standard of living. Whereas participant four states that *"We were brought here for a better life and better education"* which shows that a lack of access to quality education can be a root cause to poverty and economic hardship which in turn can push families and individuals to migrate to other countries in hopes of receiving better education, opportunities and improving their lives. These findings are particularly

essential in understanding the diverse factors that influence the decision for African families to migrate to first-world countries such as New Zealand.

Another noticeable insight from question one was that four out of the five participants arrived as refugees through the quota or were brought by family members through family reunification who had already resettled in New Zealand. For example, participant three states that *“Basically, we joined a refugee camp in Kenya before moving to New Zealand, so we had no choice as to which country we would be sent to.”* Similarly, participant four states *“We came here in 2007, one of my uncles already lived here for a couple of years. He was trying to bring us over through the family reunification process which took 7 years.”*

Q2. How did this transition impact your identity?

The goal of the second interview question is to provide additional context into the participants transition journey from their country of origin into New Zealand society and how this transition impacted their identity. The overall response from this question was the sense of a having a ‘mixed identity.’ When arriving in New Zealand the participants could only identify with their country of origin because this was all they knew. Participant three highlights this by saying *“When I came to NZ, I could not speak English I could only speak in Shona. The only thing I knew was Zimbabwe.”* However, overtime as they integrated into New Zealand society, they became influenced by their new surroundings. The concept of a “mixed identity” aligns with the principles of intercultural theory. According to this theory, when individuals are exposed to different cultural influences, they may adopt and incorporate aspects of those cultures into their own identity. In the case of the participants, their interactions with New Zealand society, including learning the English language and engaging with the local community, gradually shaped their sense of self. Overtime, their identity became a blend of their cultural heritage from their country of origin and the cultural experiences they encountered in New Zealand.

The participants now recognise that they have a mixed identity. Participant four mentioned that *“We were juggling different languages, different cultures all into one. It’s a mixed identity.”* Likewise, participant three says *“I identify as being a Zimbabwean, but I have certain aspects of NZ that are within.”* This shows that factors such as communities, physical environments, friendship groups and families can all impact one’s identity. Participant one had a lot of anger and frustration in her answer to question two. She talked about *“feeling like an outsider”* and having an *“identity crisis.”* This stemmed from the different experiences she was facing at home and at school *“For*

me, my identity crisis hit a lot because at home your completely yourself but when you're at school you feel like an outsider."

Q3. Describe the process of settling into New Zealand society?

The objective of the third interview question was to gain an insight into the type of challenges that were faced during the early stages of settling into New Zealand society. Most of the participants stated that they struggled to fit in, language was a barrier and they experienced culture shock. Most interviewees stated that language was a barrier for them because they didn't know how to speak English or the English, they had been taught in their country of origin was different. Participant four shares a memory – *"When we were in Malawi, my parents put us in private school where they taught English, but the English was different from the English in New Zealand."* However, the participants expressed their appreciation for moving to New Zealand when they were still young because this allowed them to pick up the language quickly.

Participant two also discussed her struggle of trying to fit into New Zealand society. She saw herself as not having an identity when she first moved to New Zealand because she was very young. Therefore, she tried to fit in with others around her so that she could find her identity. But during this process she lost herself and became who others wanted her to be. Participant two summarises this by saying *"I tried to copy what other students would to fit in, like what they would wear, what music they would listen to. I would use this as a guide to form my own identity."*

Culture shock was another topic that was discussed by participant four that made settling into New Zealand society difficult. Culture shock can be defined as the feeling of anxiety when placed in an unfamiliar culture or way of life (Ward et al., 2020). Oberg (1954) describes culture shock signs or cues as ways people orient themselves to everyday situations such as greeting someone, making a purchase, perceptions of situations, dressing, and food. At times when people move from one country to another with a completely different culture, they may experience confusion and anxiety because of the different cultural practices. Participant four illustrates this by reminiscing on her first day of starting school in New Zealand *"When I first started school in New Zealand, I still used to kneel, and my teachers would tell me that I didn't have to do that. But I was just so accustomed to this practice."* This interaction shows that individuals must learn to reshape their identity and what they know to be the norm so they can learn to adapt to their new environment.

Q4. As a woman, were there any rules and expectations from family members and your community that you had to conform to? How did this make you feel?

Interview question four gives us insight into the rules and expectations that African young women face while growing up within their communities and their emotions towards these rules and expectations. When this question was first asked, near all the participants had similar facial expressions as they rolled their eyes and started giggling and laughing. Participant four jokingly said *“where do I start?”* to indicate that there was many rules and expectations from her family and community that she was expected to conform to while growing up in New Zealand society.

A key expectation that was discussed was the pressure from families and communities to succeed academically. Participant five demonstrates this by saying *“I was Expected by my family to well in school, failing wasn’t an option.”* Emotionally, this had both positive and negative effects on the participants. There were mixed emotions of gratefulness and frustration on this expectation. For instance, participant four says *“All these rules and expectations were definitely frustrating when I was younger,”* while in contrast participant five says *“I didn’t mind the pressure that was expected of me to not fail back then because my siblings had gone through the same thing.”* Another interesting emotion that was brought up through participant three’s response was ‘fear’, where she stated *“My parents always emphasised the importance of education and doing well in school. Education came first and everything else was a distraction. I always had a fear of disappointing my family if I didn’t do well in school.”*

Additionally, participants (3 and 4) also discussed the unfairness of double standards within their communities. One participant expressed how being an African woman there is always cultural differences in terms of how the boys are treated compared to the girls. The girls are expected to stay home and serve while the men get to experience life and do as they wish.

“At community gatherings, women have to serve the men and elders, while the boys can just be outside doing their own things. I feel like it was easier for the men and boys to integrate into society because they can just go out and play as normal, whether their doing sports or hanging out with their friends whereas with girls, after school you come home, clean, you can’t stay out too late. There is more of an eye or focus on the girls. If school was finished. You should be home too.” (Participant 4)

The enforcement of double standards within the communities showed that what is okay for men to do, is not acceptable when done by women. This can also be seen through the 6:00 PM which was also discussed by participant five and two. This was a specific time that the girls were expected by their

parents to be home which was also not enforced on the men. The girls expressed how this rule did not make any sense to them because they saw many of their friends staying out past 6:00pm.

The latest I could ever be home was 6pm. I think 6pm was the time I was expected to be home because my parents' minds wouldn't be at ease, plus they just didn't want me in the streets. This time was not reinforced on my brothers. This was annoying because I felt like they experienced life more.”
(Participant 5)

Furthermore, domestic expectations were also required by families and communities. Many of the participants from a young age had to learn how to cook and clean as can be seen in participant one's response *“I had to learn how to cook since I was in primary school. I had to learn how to clean. Keep the house organised.”* Again, there were mixed emotions towards this expectation. For example, participant one expressed her gratitude towards her parents forcing her while she was in primary school how to take care of the home, cook and clean, while participant two expressed her frustration at being expected to know how to do domestic work at young age and being judged for it you don't know.

“Having the mindset that at a certain age you must know how to cook and clean. If you don't know how to do this than your called 'lazy'. This really annoyed me.” – participant 2

A couple of the participants expressed how they were compared to other girls in their communities if they did not know how to do domestic chores. The participants explained how their parents would use this as a 'teaching mechanism' for them, so that they were encouraged to do better. However, this had the opposite effect, and would instead lower the participants self-esteem. Participant two says *“I hated being constantly compared to others. African parents think that that's what teaches you but it's not. It just makes me hate the person that I'm being compared to.”*

Q5. While growing up in New Zealand society did you experience any difficulties related to your background, such as discrimination, stereotyping, or being misunderstood? How did this make you feel? What did you do about it?

The objective of the fifth interview question was to gain insight into the different challenges that the participants faced while growing up in New Zealand due to their background. This question also focused on the emotions that were felt and the actions that were taken during these encounters. A common experience in the responses across participants was facing racism and discrimination. Growing up in their country of origin the participants were constantly surrounded by people who looked like them therefore, they did not encounter racism. However, relocating to a country like New

Zealand where black people are part of the minority was a catalyst in their introduction to racism and discrimination.

“I didn’t understand racism until intermediate and high school. When people are making racist comments and people are treating you differently, that’s when I started to notice that I was different. Also, when you’re the only black girl in your class, everyone knows your away. It’s hard to be invisible.”

Participant 2

Despite being called names and being bullied for having African features such as big lips, a big nose, and a big bum the participants acknowledged that they did not do anything to defend themselves because they were afraid or confused as they were unaware of such confrontation. Instead, they felt the need to prove themselves to others, by being better and doing better so that there was no room for racism and discrimination. Constant racism and discrimination made participant one feel sad and like she did not belong. This shows that persistent exposure to discrimination can lead individuals to internalise the prejudice or stigma that is directed against them or become desensitised to racism and discrimination. Participant three supports this by saying *“I feel like I have become desensitised to racism and discrimination. Ever since we moved here it has become a part of my life.”* There was a further interesting point that was raised by participant three who made a comment about not experiencing discrimination from those outside her community but instead it was her own community that would discriminate against her. Participant three summarises this by saying - *“Being fairer skinned, most of the time, the discrimination that I would get would be from my own community, not necessarily people from outside my community.”* This shows that racism and discrimination is not only prominent within differentiating racial communities but is also present within the same racial communities.

Q6. Are there any activities or practices that you partake in New Zealand society that culturally would not be seen as acceptable for women in your country of origin?

The sixth interview question looks at how the identity of the participants have changed over the years through the different activities or practices that they partake in that would not be allowed to do if they were in their country of origin. The participants listed activities such as making music, hosting parties, and drinking alcohol as activities that they now take part in that would not be seen as acceptable for women in their country of origin. Practices such as having male friends, wearing clothes that are revealing, dating, and leaving the house at night-time were also discussed. Through the responses received by the participants, it can be understood that they have adapted to New Zealand’s way of living which has shaped part of their identity. Participant five explains how clothing became part of her

identification tool despite going against cultural and religious expectations. *“Coming from a Muslim family I was expected to cover up from head to toe. Now I wear what I want. Fashion is one of my passions.”* Participant five’s newfound love for fashion, shows that society can influence and re-shape a person’s morals and values to help them discover their true passion which becomes part of their new identity.

Q7. What are some of the similarities and differences you see between your country of origin and New Zealand?

The seventh interview question aims to recognise the differences and similarities in cultural practices, social norms and societal standards between the participants country of origin and New Zealand society. When the similarities question, was first asked, all the participants struggled to identify any similarities straight away. They then asked if they could refer to Māori culture instead of Pakeha culture. All the participants instinctively referred to Māori culture instead of Pakeha culture with participant three stating *“I can only relate the Māori culture, I’m not sure about the European side.”* Participant 2 adds to this by saying *“I can’t really see any similarities with the European Kiwi’s, but a similarity would be with the Māori, they do things together as a community just like my culture.”* The similarities identified included respect for elders, communal approach to living and having a spiritual connection. This shows that, Māori and African cultures might seem different from face value but looking deeper both ethnic cultures share very similar practices, values and identities.

On the other hand, the most common theme when discussing the differences between the participants country of origin and New Zealand was women’s rights. Participants compared how in their country of origin, women’s voices were not encouraged, whereas in New Zealand women have a respected voice and are able to freely express themselves without judgement. To illustrate this, participant four says *“You can be completely right in a situation but it’s not something that you can say. In a lot of African cultures, it’s not about speaking out, it’s about conforming to a certain belief.”* This insight shines light on the importance of living in an environment where women’s voices are respected and encouraged.

Q8. In terms of your background, how do you usually describe yourself to people outside your community?

The eighth interview question looks at how the participants choose to identify their background to those outside of their community. The response by participant two was the only one who confidently acknowledged her country of origin when describing herself to people outside of her

community. For instance, she says *“It’s a flex for me! I genuinely love where I’m from.... If someone asks me where I’m from I always say DRC without hesitation because that’s my identity.”* In contrast other participants explained that they reluctantly answer the *“where are you from?”* question because most of the time people outside of their community do not know where their country of origin is on the map. Therefore, at times they avoid answering the question all together and say that they are from a city in New Zealand. This shows that place can reinforce a sense of identity as places represent personal and social memories. Another example of place is represented in participant four’s explanation as to how the question *“where are you from?”* confuses her because she’s legally from New Zealand, but to people outside of her community she looks like an outsider.

“If someone asks me where I’m from I just say Wellington. Where are you from? That question confuses me. I’ve lived more of my life in New Zealand than I have in any other country. I also don’t have any Malawian or Rwandan documents. The only documents I have are from New Zealand. So, when people ask me where I’m from, legally I’m a new Zealander and I don’t really have any other identification for any other country. When I go to Rwanda, I can’t technically say I’m from there too because I wasn’t born there, nor did I live there. With Malawi I only lived there for a few years.” – Participant 4

The quote from participant 4 illustrates the complexities of identity and the challenges individuals face when asked about their origins. The participant expresses that when asked where they are from, they simply respond with “Wellington” emphasizing their connection to their current place of residence in New Zealand. This signifies a sense of belonging and identification with their present environment. The participant further explains their confusion when faced with the question of where they are from. They highlight that they have lived more of their life in New Zealand than in any other country. Additionally, they mention not having any Malawian or Rwandan documents and only possessing documents from New Zealand. Legally, they identify as a New Zealander, and their lack of identification or ties to other countries complicates the question of their origin.

This quote sheds light on the challenges faced by individuals with multicultural backgrounds or those who have migrated. It reveals the complexities of their identity and how they navigate the question of their origins. The participant's response highlights the limited options they have in defining their identity, as they cannot claim the countries they were born in or lived in for a few years, nor can they fully identify with New Zealand due to external perceptions and preconceived notions.

The quote also suggests that the question *“where are you from?”* can be loaded with assumptions and biases. The participant implies that this question is not always asked out of genuine curiosity but may

stem from preconceived ideas about race, nationality, or ethnicity. For black individuals in a predominantly white society, this question can amplify feelings of alienation and emphasize their status as an outsider or perpetual foreigner. This quote also emphasises the need for sensitivity and understanding when engaging in discussions about origins, as it can evoke deep-seated emotions and feelings of marginalisation.

Q9. Was there ever a moment when you felt extremely ashamed or extremely proud to be from your country of origin?

Question nine aims to understand the moments where the participants felt most ashamed and proud to be from their country of origin. Participants three and one identified being most ashamed when being associated with negative stories from Africa such as the 2013 to 2016 West African Ebola epidemic (Coltart et al., 2017) and negative news stories of people from their country of origin such as crime and war. For example, when the Ebola outbreak occurred in west Africa (Coltart et al., 2017), participant one was made fun of at school even though she's from east Africa and had not stepped foot in Africa for so many years. This made her feel like an outcast and ashamed.

Another essential point that participant two made, was that she was only ashamed of being black and never ashamed of being Congolese. To support this statement, she says *"I remember there was a time when I didn't want to be black because all the cute white boys wanted white girls."*

Furthermore, participants four and five also reflect on their experience of being shamed of being the only black child in school either than their siblings and being judged by the colour of their skin during job interviews.

During the second half of this question about being extremely proud, the participant showed a strong sense of nationalism within their responses. The participants all had a similar response as to when they felt most proud to be from their country of origin, such as during multicultural day at school, when there were international sporting events that their country of origin's team won and going back to the motherland and experiencing life there. Furthermore, participant two describes the importance of participating in cultural activities in New Zealand within their communities such as *"teaching the younger generation the language, wearing cultural clothes, and listening to our music. It's a vibe."* This reinforces the importance's of practicing and keeping the country of origins culture alive so that the next generation who are also raised in New Zealand can learn and connect with that part of their identity.

Q10. How strongly do you identify with your culture of origin?

The 10th interview question aims to identify the level of connection the participants have with their culture of origin. Despite living in New Zealand for most of their lives, there was a common theme of nationalism between the participants (one, two, three and five) who have a 'very strong' sense of identity to their culture of origin. This can be seen in participant two's response, *"I identify strongly with being Congolese, from the culture to the music, language to the food."* Participant three continues to reinforce this by saying *"10 out of 10. I just love being Zim. When we're together it's a vibe."* On the other hand, participant four showed confusion in her response to this question, as legally before moving to New Zealand she was stateless and lived in Malawi as a refugee with her family though they were originally from Rwanda. However, moving to New Zealand allowed her to connect with her Rwandan culture, which she now identifies more with. *"I identify more with the Rwandan culture, language and food because this is what I grew up with in New Zealand. I also identify being a New Zealander because when you go back home, people don't see you fully as a Rwandan. I take a little from each culture. However, I think the Rwandan side out weights the New Zealand culture."* – Participant 4. This is an important indicator that shows the power of identity and connection to one's country of origin despite physically being present.

Q11. How strongly do you identify with New Zealand culture?

Interview question 11 aims to understand the level at which the participants identify with New Zealand culture. In their responses, participants one and three expressed their gratitude for being able to grow up in New Zealand, however they also expressed that they do not identify strongly to New Zealand culture because New Zealand does not feel like home to them. Participant one describes 'home' as where the 'roots' are, referring to her ancestors and origins. This shows that despite being in New Zealand for many years, participant one still felt a strong connection to her country of origin, showing the importance of knowing one's origins which can help to provide a sense of identity. Furthermore, participants two and five identify New Zealand culture as Māori culture, and therefore have a strong connection to the Māori people and culture because of the similarities in cultural practices outlined in question seven. Equally important, participant four shares that she identifies strongly with New Zealand culture because *"if I didn't identify as a kiwi, then I'd be stateless,"* indicating that New Zealand has provided her with a place to legally call home and therefore an identity.

Q12. How has growing up in New Zealand shaped your identity?

Question 12 looks at gaining a deeper insight into the participants upbringing in New Zealand and how this has shaped their identity. Participant four again acknowledges that growing up in New Zealand shaped her identity by giving her “a place to call home. I can legally say that I’m from New Zealand.” Participant one shares that being given opportunities and a voice has “built me stronger as a person knowing that I can freely speak about matters.” A common theme in the responses between participants two, three and five, was being able to take morals and values from both New Zealand culture and their culture of origin (New Zealand and culture of origin) to shape their identity. Participant three explains this further by saying *“Growing up in New Zealand I’ve been exposed to different cultural norms than what I would’ve been exposed to back home. I’ll always identify as being Zimbabwean but because I grew up in New Zealand, I am accustomed to the westernised way of things to a certain degree.”* This shows that one's identity can be fluid as it is constantly changing and evolving.

Q13. How has growing up in an Africa home/ African culture shaped your identity?

Question 13 looks at understanding the different ways growing up in an African home has shaped the participants identity. The responses identified that for some of the participants growing up in an African home taught them morals and values such as being hardworking and the importance of family which has become part of the participants identity today. Participant two elaborates on this by saying *“We get to grow up in New Zealand where we get to see two different sides of things, we get to take morals and values from both cultures to form our own identity.”* The participants were taught life lessons which they still value and practice today and have become an important part of their identity. Another essential point that participant four adds is that *“Growing up in an African home I was constantly reminded that I can’t just work on assimilating into New Zealand society, I have to remember that I have a culture and history to uphold outside of New Zealand society.”* This is an important indicator of the importance of growing up in an African home for the participants, as they were constantly reminded to never forget where they came from, and to keep their culture alive and part of their identity. Aspects of their culture continue to be a part of their identity today.

Q14. In what ways do you think your identity has changed over the years?

Question 14 aims to gain an understanding on ways the participants identities have changed over the years. The participants mentioned that over the years they have taken values, morals and lessons from both New Zealand culture and their culture of origin to now form their own identity. For example, participant one and five talked about how equality within gender roles have become an important

value for them *“gender roles are something that I would like to change when I get married in the future. I want every task to be shared equally.”* In the same way participant four shared how she has become more vocal while still respecting her African culture *“Being here makes you more vocal over time in terms of what you’re willing to accept and not accept. On one side you’re taught to be more reserved and not say much and on the other side you have to say exactly what you want to say. I’ve found the middle ground of saying what I need to say but also while being respectful.”* Additionally participant two talks about finding her true self *“My identity has changed so much to that point where I’m not doing things based on what the crowd is doing, but what I feel like doing. Just because everyone is going to parties or dressing a certain way, I’ve realised that I don’t have to follow the crowd. I’m just unapologetically myself and living life for me.”* These examples are an important indicator on how society, culture and life experiences can change a person’s identity over time.

Q15. How would you define your identity today?

Question 15 aims to understand how the participants define their identity today. The responses were all quite diverse and participants used words and sentences such as finding independence, being free, finding success and being open minded to describe their identity today.

“I would say a strong independent woman who knows her roots. If I was to look 10 years back, I was a lost child and now I have found my belonging and roots.” – Participant 1

Participant 1 emphasises their transformation from a lost child to a strong, independent woman who has found her roots. This response suggests a deep sense of self-discovery and a connection to their cultural heritage. It highlights the importance of understanding one’s roots as a foundation for their present identity.

“I think today I’m freer. I do things for me. If I wake up and I decide I’m doing this...I’m doing it. I just want to live life not on what others think is right but personally what the bible says is right. I’m a bit crazy, I just love life. I’m not living life based on the fear of disappointing my family, but for me.” – Participant 2

Participant 2 emphasises a newfound sense of freedom and living on their own terms. They prioritise personal fulfilment rather than conforming to societal expectations or fear of disappointing their family. This response reflects an individual who has become more self-assured and prioritises their own happiness and personal values.

“Black female, Zimbabwean, On root to success.” – Participant 3

Participant 3 response showcases the significance of their cultural and ethnic background in shaping their identity. It also suggests a sense of ambition and determination to achieve their goals and make a positive impact in their life.

“I am someone who is still trying to figure everything out. I’m a bit more open minded about different things. I’m a mixture of the good and bad of both worlds.” – Participant 4

Participant 4 describes themselves as someone still in the process of figuring things out, highlighting their ongoing journey of self-discovery. They mention being open-minded and embracing a combination of positive aspects from both their original culture and their experiences in New Zealand. This response reflects the complexity of identity and the continuous evolution of one's sense of self.

“I am a very open minded compared to the girl who came to NZ years back ago. I have learnt a lot. 90% of my morals are still the same, however, I have also built my own morals and identity over the years.” – Participant 5

Participant 5 acknowledges personal growth and increased open-mindedness over time. They mention retaining some core values while developing their own set of morals and identity. This response illustrates the capacity for individuals to integrate new perspectives and beliefs while staying grounded in their existing values

The diversity in the responses showcases that despite shared cultural and societal backgrounds, individuals forge their own paths and define their identities in distinct ways. Each person's unique experiences, internal reflections, and external influences contribute to their individual sense of self. The quotes demonstrate the dynamic nature of identity and the ongoing process of self-definition that individuals undergo throughout their lives.

Q16. Can you describe the key influences and factors of your upbringings that have shaped your definition of your identity today?

This interview question aims to understand the key influences and factors in the participants life that has helped to shape their identity over the years. Each participant described their family and environment to be the biggest influences and factors on their identity journey.

“... also, my experiences while growing up, from the ups and down have all shaped who I am today.” – Participant 1

Participant 1 emphasizes the significance of their life experiences in shaping who they are today. The ups and downs they have encountered while growing up have played a crucial role in shaping their character and identity. These experiences likely include various challenges, successes, and lessons learned along the way. This quote suggests that the participant's resilience, adaptability, and personal growth are a result of the diverse experiences they have gone through.

"... I guess my environment, the people that I'm arounds every day. My church family and my family. – Participant 2

Participant 2 highlights the influence of their environment and the people they interact with daily. They specifically mention their church family and their immediate family as sources of influence. The participant's environment encompasses the social and cultural context they are immersed in, which includes their community, religious institution, and familial relationships. These connections and interactions have likely provided them with support, guidance, and a sense of belonging. This quote suggests that these relationships and their surrounding community have played a significant role in shaping their values, beliefs, and overall identity.

"... My parents are major influences; they are both successful in their careers. My friends and interest and hobbies." – Participant 3

Participant 3 identifies various influences on their identity. They mention their parents as major influences, highlighting their parents' success in their careers. This suggests that the participant looks up to their parents as role models and that their parents' achievements have had a significant impact on their own aspirations and sense of self. Additionally, the participant mentions friends, interests, and hobbies as influential factors. These external influences, such as social relationships and personal interests, contribute to the participant's self-discovery, personal growth, and the development of their unique identity.

Overall, these quotes demonstrate that personal experiences, social environments, and influential individuals play crucial roles in shaping one's identity. The participants acknowledge the impact of both internal factors, such as personal experiences and growth, and external factors, such as family, community, and social interactions. By recognising these influences, the participants reveal the complex interplay between personal agency and external forces in the formation of their identities.

Q17. What impact did societal structures have on your identity?

Question 17 aims to understand the effects that the structure of New Zealand society has had on the identity of the participants. All the participants expressed how New Zealand society allows women to have a voice which has led them to use their voice, though they have come from a culture that does not acknowledge a woman's voice as being important. see women and men as equals, therefore only respecting male voices.

"I think being vocal has allowed me to express how I'm feeling. In an African home you know not to say anything. I express how I'm feeling all the time and I won't stop until you understand how I'm feeling. Seeing women in New Zealand being vocal has allowed me to express myself too, I don't have to be afraid of disagreeing with something, I can voice it out."

In the same way, participants also talked about how New Zealand society has taught them the importance of equality between men and women.

"Even though my culture preaches about men being dominant and the woman submitting, I guess if I'm to find someone, I don't want them to be like that, I want to break barriers."

After analysing these comments, it is apparent to see that these participants value gender equality and are grateful for being in a country like New Zealand who allows them to discover and express their true selves. This analysis also shows that societal structures play a big role in one's identity as you become accustomed to your society's way of life. your society is.

Q18. Do you feel that you have a sense of belonging?

The 18th question aims to understand whether participants have found a sense of belonging within New Zealand society. Some of the participants (two and four) expressed that they have found a sense of belonging as New Zealand has given them opportunities to develop into who they are, and they have found groups that they can relate to which gives a sense of belonging. Furthermore, participant one and five express that their sense of belonging depends on their location and surroundings such as work, university, and social environments, as people treat them differently in different scenarios. Some people make them feel like they belong while others don't. For example, participant one says *"It depends on where I am. For me certain places I feel like I belong like clubhouse, because they like me for me, but at uni not so much."* Another participant (three) expressed that she also has mixed emotions about her belonging in New Zealand society, as she is constantly being asked where she's

from, making her feel like an outsider, even though she has lived in New Zealand for nearly her whole life.

Q19. Were there any demands or expectations that you had to abide?

Similar to question four, interview question 19 aims to assess the demands and expectations that the participants had to uphold due to family, community and societal pressures. Common themes that were present through the responses were similar to question four's responses such as, the expectation for participants to do well in school and learning how to take care of the home, cook and clean. In saying this, an interesting comment by participant five discussed her father's expectation around marriage, indicating family pressures and traditional expectations for her to be married by her current age. *"Another big expectation was marriage. When it comes to marriage I do not agree with my dad's ideologies of marriage. I was expected to be married and have kids by my current age or younger. As I'm not married right now, this makes me feel a bit sad and like I have disappointed my dad."* This example shows that expectations such as these can put a lot of pressure on an individual who lives in a society where marriage is not seen as a priority.

Q20. What are some perceived opinions that others have about you? (Appearance, personality etc)

The final interview research question focuses on gaining insight into how New Zealand society perceives black women. Stereotypes such as "the angry and loud black woman" was discussed by the participants. These types of stereotypes perpetuate the assumption that black women are aggressive and hostile even in situations when this is not the case. An example of this can be seen through participant three's experience of being called out for having 'Black Girl Energy':

"Obviously, there's a stereotype that black women are loud and aggressive, so you get a lot of people like my guy friends from a while back ... I would say something, and I'm not yelling... but they would be like oooohhh Black Girl Energy, Black Girl Energy. My guy friends used to say that a lot because in their eyes I'm becoming loud and aggressive. I used to encourage this and be like, don't bring out my Black Girl Energy and go along with it. I did it out of ignorance and didn't really think about what black women go through and not knowing myself as a black woman. As I grew up I would hear famous black women like Taraji P. Henson and Jada Pinkett Smith talk about these things. That's when I started to learn that black girls, black women are seen as being aggressive and loud."

This quote highlights the impact of stereotypes on individuals' self-perception and the need for increased awareness and understanding. The participant's experience reflects how societal

stereotypes can influence the way individuals are perceived and can unknowingly perpetuate harmful generalizations. The participant's growth in understanding and learning about the experiences of black women demonstrates the importance of challenging stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of diverse identities.

Participant four also talks about how people will make preconceived judgements that every African is the same. *"If someone has had a negative experience with an African before, they will judge another African based on that experience."* Participant four also pinpoints that African female do not receive many negative stereotypes from New Zealand society compared to the African men. Perhaps this is because, while growing up there has been a key focus on protecting the girls and making sure that they succeed. Whereas the boys are left to be free without much guidance.

Another negative racial perceived opinion was identified by participant five who shared that she was always judged by the way she dressed. *"I love to dress up. However, I've realised that if your black and look presentable people think that you have your life together. Based on the colour of my skin they'll make assumptions like I can't have that? Why do you have nice things?"* Negative racial perception such as this sheds a negative light on others and can negatively impact how different group's view and generalise each other.

The findings of this study recognise the cultural challenges that young African women face while navigating between their culture of origins expectations and New Zealand society such as racism and discrimination, double standards, cultural demands as a woman, cultural norms and societal values. The cultural challenges identified in the findings proved to be key factors in shaping one's identity and sense of belonging. These findings also show that the difference between collectivistic and individualistic cultures can also affect a person's identity. With African culture, the participants put emphasis on the group as opposed to the individual. Whereas, once they started integrating into the western New Zealand society, their identity becomes more individualised, placing their interest above that of their families and cultural expectations. Overall, these findings provide a greater insight into the cultural challenges that young African women face while growing up in New Zealand, and the affects this has on their identity.

Themes

The below sections will summarise the three key themes drawn from the major findings of this study gained through the above-mentioned set of structured interview questions. By revisiting literature in

areas of identity construction and belonging, these themes address the research questions that this study posed in more detail.

Theme 1: Struggles

Three key themes emerged during this study, surrounding the two research questions on (1) how young African women construct their identity and sense of belonging in New Zealand society and identifying (2) the challenges that young African women come across their identity journey: encountering struggle and beautiful struggle; romanticising black women; and hitting a crisis point. These themes were identified based on the repeated patterns of concepts presented in the participants responses to the interview questions in the previous chapter.

Struggle: "The struggle is real"

A key theme that surfaced across the participants responses was the idea of 'struggle'. Struggle is defined by Jacobs (2009) as "encountering a number of difficulties and misconceptions" p.99. For most of the female participants, they described their struggle to construct their identity and sense of belonging due to experiences such as racism and discrimination, family and community expectations, culture shock, language barriers and not being able to fit in. Struggles such as racism and discrimination (Ayón, 2015; Szaflarski & Bauldry, 2019) seem to of had the most effect on the participants' identity development and sense of belonging while growing up in New Zealand society, therefore indicating that these are factors of integration into society. This can be seen through the anger and frustration of the participants responses to question 5. These findings may be indicative of visible discrimination, such as darker skin (Ayón, 2015; Szaflarski & Bauldry, 2019), especially for African background people as it is likely that such experiences would create an unfortunate barrier to incorporating feelings of "belonging" in New Zealand society. Despite positive outcomes, integrating into New Zealand society, continuing to encounter questions like "where are you from?" described by participants in question 8 are likely to have negative connotations for immigrants who in some cases have already experienced rejection throughout their lives.

Rules and Expectations Struggles

Balancing rules and expectations from family members, communities, New Zealand society and own individual expectations was identified by female participants as crucial to their conceptualisation of their identity. For young African women growing up in New Zealand and experiencing the process of acculturation, these points of differences can be seen as complex, as young African women are balancing intercultural differences regarding expectations that can influence the different

relationships (Deng, 2016). For example, participant three described her challenge of growing up in a strict Muslim family whose expectation of her as a woman was to wear modest clothing that covered her from head to toe, which challenged her passion to express herself through fashion. "Coming from a Muslim family I was expected to cover up from head to toe." The frustrations between wanting to wear the clothes she desired and being expected by her family and community to "cover up" lead participant four to become tired of all the rules and expectations and she instead started living for herself. Therefore, young African women growing up in New Zealand are balancing a variety of social norms related to forming their identity. The female participants also mentioned that there is tension between balancing individual wants and needs with their culture of origin and communities' collective wants and needs. For example, the female participants discussed that they wanted to stay out late, interact with friends outside of school and play sports. But since these wants went against their cultural expectations for women, they were gossiped about in their communities and called "lazy" as participant two describes. As highlighted by the participants experiences, these collective experiences appear to be a challenge that young African women being raised in New Zealand come across in their identity journey. The collective cultural and community pressure regarding rules and expectations may influence the conceptualisation of their transition into New Zealand society, as well as influence the formation of their collective and individual identity.

Gender and Freedom Struggles

Throughout their identity journey, the young female participants reported balancing their parents/ cultural expectations and practices, with an emphasis on gender and freedom which were often linked to cultural norms. For example, the role of gender was identified by participants as a way of identifying ones identify within their culture of origin, which can influence experiences of one's identity journey. As highlighted by Litchmore and Safdar (2014) gender is an important variable in the acculturation process of immigrants, as culture is a key determiner of gender norms which can challenge the process of acculturation. Previous research from different global contexts indicates that young women from migrant communities who are experiencing the process of acculturation in a new cultural context, face challenges within integrating into society and forming an identity because of traditional and new gender norms (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012; Suárez-Orozco & Qin, 2006). Like many other immigrant cultures, African cultures practice traditional cultural norms (Hatoss & Huijser, 2010) which therefore can influence how young African women experience and construct their identity and sense of belonging in new environments such as New Zealand. During the interviews, participants highlighted some of the gender-based differences that they experienced within their communities and families compared to their brothers:

I feel like it was easier for the men and boys to integrate into society because they can just go out and play as normal, whether their doing sports or hanging out with their friends whereas with girls, after school you come home, clean, you can't stay out too late. – (Participant 4)

The latest I could ever be home was 6pm. I think 6pm was the time I was expected to be home because my parents' minds wouldn't be at ease, plus they just didn't want me in the streets. This time was not reinforced on my brothers. This was annoying because I felt like they experienced life more."- (Participant 5)

In both quotes, participants four and five, express the restrictions that were placed on them from their family and communities because they were young women. Feelings of frustration, anger and confusion were also expressed while sharing these restrictions, showing how gender differenced had a negative effect on the participants emotions. A study by Lorenzo-Blanco et al., (2012) shows that girls experience stress and depression more than boys as a result to of gender constraints within families. This is highlighted by the detail of what participant five's brothers and males from participant four's communities did and did not experience such restrictions. Such restraints can be seen as a hindering factor for participants four and five and the other young women who participated in this research, to transition and integrate into New Zealand society as well as exploration of their identity. It is important to also elaborate on how participant five uses her voice more broadly to elaborate on the pressure she experienced from her family because of her gender, which is something that was not reinforced on her brothers. Participant five indicates that "The latest I could ever be home was 6pm. I think 6pm was the time I was expected to be home because my parents' minds wouldn't be at ease, plus they just didn't want me in the streets. This time was not reinforced on my brothers. This was annoying because I felt like they experienced life more." These types of pressures show that, although her parents state that the lack of freedom outside of the house during the evening is because of safety, this can also be influenced by her communities' opinions, as it may not be seen as appropriate for a young woman to stay out of home after sundown. Therefore, it is apparent that families and communities have certain cultural views as to what is expected of young women, which is highlighted negatively to influence a young African women's identity journey and sense of belonging within New Zealand society.

A Beautiful Struggle

Despite the struggles that the participants faced, they also discussed the positives that came out of the struggle which can be referred to as a 'beautiful struggle.' This can be seen through the

participants responses which reflects the appreciation and gratitude they felt for the opportunities received through migration to New Zealand such better education, freedom, opportunities and having their voices heard as women. An example of this can be seen through participant one's response "New Zealand allows women to be vocal and women's rights are greatly celebrated, so this provides me with a space and a society to be able to express my voice, express my opinions and express my thoughts." The young women's insight of a beautiful struggle contributes to understanding how African women overcome the struggles they face within New Zealand society to define their identity and find a sense of belonging. There was also an emphasis from participants who identified with both New Zealand culture and their culture of origin. Participant two says that "We get to grow up in New Zealand and take morals and values from both sides of the different cultures." New Zealand identity was perceived through better opportunities, education, women's rights and equality. These are important determinants that facilitates integration into society and a sense of identity and belonging. An interesting point to raised was that participant four associated obtaining New Zealand citizenship with finally having a sense of identity and belonging "I still identify as a Rwandan but I'm also grateful for being here in New Zealand and have documents that say I'm from somewhere. If I didn't identify as a kiwi, then I'd be stateless". This indicates that one's identity can be determined by finding a place that they can call home.

Theme 2: Romanticised view of ethnic young women

Another theme that surfaced throughout the participants responses was the romanticised view of ethnic women. Makkar and Yap (2020) describe romanticism as the desire of an unrealistic expectation of a person or lifestyle and making it seem more appealing than it really is. Young African women face pressures from families and communities to present themselves in a way that does not represent their true individual identity by the identity that best suits their culture of origin's expectations. This can be seen through being romanticised as 'the perfect young African woman' or as participant four describes "being a good Rwandese girl." The participants expressed their frustration towards always being compared by their parents to other young women in their communities as a way of teaching them to be the perfect young women. Many parents tend to compare their children to other children with the intention of motivating theme to excel. Participant four describes her experience "If you didn't do well or did something wrong, you would be compared to others who are doing better than you. When your young its very detrimental. It's not fair to be compared to anybody else. People have different capabilities and talents. The only person they should compare you to is yourself. I've seen it derail a lot of people. If I'm always going to be compared, why should I even try? This is something I wish African parents, aunties and elders would

stop doing.” However, comparing a child to other children can have an opposite affect and the child that is being compared may feel low as it may hurt their self-esteem. Participant two reinforces this point by saying “I hated being constantly compared to others. African parents think that that’s what teaches you but it’s not. It just makes me hate the person that I’m being compared to.” These types of expectations and pressures from parents on young African women proves to have a negative effect on their identity as it does not allow them to be their true selves, instead it pressures young women into conforming into a cultural collective identity instead of an individual identity. This can negatively influence one's identity journey and sense of belonging.

Seeds of Confusion

Equally important, the participants highlighted the lack of mental health support from family and their communities. It is important to acknowledge the effect that being stuck in between two different cultures can have on young African women of immigrant background’s mental health. Throughout the interviews with the participants there was a common theme of mental health that was presented. The challenges of integrating into society can undermine psychological wellbeing (Nayar et al., 2007). Three of the participants who discussed their identity issues acknowledges that these feelings influenced their mental health. According to Perez (2016) the stress of being bicultural and trying to acculturate into a new dominant culture, while trying to maintain one's original identity can affect one's mental health and challenge one's identity. This stress can present itself as depression, anxiety and poor mental health in general. Perceived discrimination Participant two describes how her mental health affected her self-esteem as she constantly found herself wanting to fit in, so she would “copy what the other students would do to fit in, like what they would wear, what music they would listen to” because of insecurities of not fitting into the dominant group. Consequently, the exclusion from groups and society may lead young women to engage in activities and peer pressure to engage in activities that conflict with their upbringing, beliefs and values. Therefore, this can have a negative effect on one's identity construction and sense of belonging.

Equally important, mental health is a taboo topic of subject that attracts stigma in many African societies. Participant one says “In the African society or even culturally we didn’t, and we still don’t really talk about mental health. It’s not considered as important. Whereas in New Zealand society, the importance of mental health is constantly talked about.” A study by Gordon (2013) in Uganda revealed that the word ‘depression’ is not culturally acceptable within communities, while another study in Nigeria, showed that people responded with fear, anger and avoidance to those who were mentally ill. The stigma towards mental health can be linked to lack of education, religion, fear and

general prejudice (Arboleda-Flórez, 2002). For example, participant three shares her experience with mental health in her Zimbabwean community “There wasn’t necessarily a safe space to talk to my parents about my emotions, because you think that you would get in trouble. I was taught to uphold a certain standard as a woman. Especially with mental health you would hear stories and aunties gossiping... This also discouraged me to talk to anyone in the community if I was going through mental health issues because I didn’t want my problems talked about by the whole community and I had the fear of disappointing my family.” She also continues to describe how culture and religion played a big role in the way her parents would explain and acknowledge her emotions “Culture and religion were a major thing. Let’s say if you were upset, they would say “you can’t be upset otherwise it means the devil is winning.” As a result, the lack of awareness and acknowledgement of mental health can negatively distort one’s identity. This indicates for action to be taken for African communities in New Zealand to be educated on the importance of mental health and creating a safe space to talk about mental health.

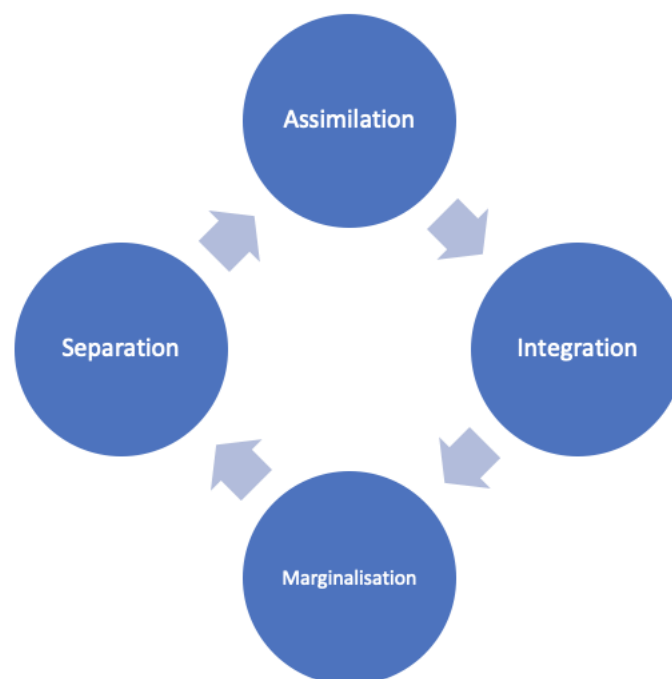
Theme 3: Identity Crisis

All the participants interviewed, arrived in New Zealand between the ages of three to eight years old, meaning they were first generation immigrants on arrival. Because they arrived at a very young age; the participants acknowledged that over the years they had developed a ‘mixed identity’ of both their culture of origin and the New Zealand culture. Participant 4 states “We were juggling different languages, different cultures all into one. It’s a mixed identity.” The young female participants also admitted that their identity journey was not easy because of having to balance two different cultures and facing discrimination and racism along the way. This reflected their diverse cultural heritage and bond with both their culture of origin and New Zealand. However, the participants described their journey of claiming both cultures as “not easy” as they experienced an identity crisis along their identity journey in New Zealand society. Participant one says “my identity crisis hit a lot because at home your completely yourself but when you’re at school you feel like an outsider. That’s when I realised that I had an identity crisis because I didn’t know where I belonged.” Factors such as racism, discrimination and marginalisation all contributed to the young African female participants experience with identity crisis within New Zealand society which also can affect their mental health and well-being.

Many studies have shown that youths in the context of migration face more challenges in maintaining their mental health and well-being (Belhadj Kouider et al., 2013; Belhadj Kouider et al., 2014; Frankenberg et al., 2013). Acculturation can be seen as a distinct factor that contributes to a

variety of mental health outcomes for migrant youth (Farver et al., 2002; Lo, 2010; Lawton & Gerdes, 2014). Berry (1992) describes acculturation as the process where an individual from a different culture acquires the culture and behaviour of another culture through prolonged interactions with a different cultural group and their own. Acculturation also occurs within countries where people relocate to different areas that practice different beliefs, and behavioural patterns (Berry & Sabatier, 2010). As mentioned earlier, Berry's acculturation process recognises the coexistence of maintain or rejecting ones original culture and adopting or rejecting the host culture which can be shown through four possible patterns: (1) Assimilation - Adopting social norms of the new culture, (2) Integration - adopting the dominant (new) culture whilst maintain the original culture, (3) Marginalisation - When someone rejects both the original culture and the new cultural norms, and Separation - When someone rejects the dominant culture and keeps their culture of origin (Schwartz, 2010).

Figure 5 A diagram showing Berry's acculturation process



Among these four orientations, integration has been associated with positive migrant mental health (Lo, 2010) as it is the most adaptive orientation, whereas marginalisation has been associated with negative migrant mental health because of the negative treatment of immigrants (Berry & Sabatier, 2010). Despite the numerous studies that have acknowledged the impact of acculturation on youth developments (Berry, 2005; Yeh, 2003; Motti-Stefanidi, 2018) it is still not clear as to which pattern

tends to associate with more positive and negative mental health outcomes for migrant youth development and the underlying mechanism as to how acculturation influences mental health. A study by Abbott et al., (1999) suggests that factors such as stress, separation from family and/ or community, inability to speak the language of the host country, negative public attitudes and rejection, being adolescent or of advanced age at the time of migration and being a woman from a culture in which gender roles and values differ from the host country, all contribute to the mental health struggles of immigrants, and in particular young immigrant African women. This suggests that the interaction of African women with situational factors of immigrations in New Zealand has a tremendous effect on their mental health. A study by Winbush and Selby (2015) on South African migration to New Zealand argues that adolescents have a higher level of depression and mental health. This is due to not only migration stress but also the loss of old friends, adjusting to a new school and language. This change forces immigrant youth to find their own identity, and in the process lose their cultural identity and strive to achieve acculturation.

Oppedal et al., (2004) indicates that marginalisation within society encourages identity crisis by lowering one's self-esteem and adding distress. Participant one shares her experience "My identity crisis started at a young age because when kids are constantly telling you that you look different it does affect you in a big way." This shows that identity crisis can affect one's identity by making them feel like an outsider as they are forced to adapt to a society that is not their own. Therefore, leading individuals to feel disconnected to their family, community and society that they live in as they appear to not fit into any. Identity crises hinders the process of identity construction and one's belonging as individuals are forced to live between two worlds but never feeling like they belong to either, making it feel as though you don't have a sense of belonging anywhere. In contrast, experiencing an identity crisis can also offer opportunities and personal growth (Côté, 2018; Erikson, 1968). The young female participants in this research used their identity crisis experiences to develop their identities and sense of belonging in New Zealand society by finding a middle ground through values and morals that allow them to identify with both cultures.

The themes highlighted that identity is an important part of African culture especially, for young African women navigating their way through New Zealand society. Some young African women are strongly attached to their culture of origin while others see themselves as part of their culture of origin and New Zealand society, in which they have gained new forms of belonging and citizenship. However, factors of New Zealand society such as racism and discrimination often impact on the ability of young African women's ability to adapt to their new environment, particularly by the

changes they face, including expectations from families and communities to uphold their cultural expectations as young African women.

Based on the interviews from this study, building an identity is a two-way interplay involving the receiving community (New Zealand) and the community of origin. It is critically important to consider the complexities, nuances and deterrents of identity construction among young African women being raised in New Zealand.

CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION

Introduction

In the research outlined in this thesis, I have applied Berry's theory of acculturation (Sam & Berry, 2006) and Phinney's ethnic identity development approach (Phinney, 1991) to the interviews that were conducted in evaluating the construction of the identity and belonging on young African women in New Zealand society. This research encouraged participants in the interviews to respond to the interview questions through an Afrocentric view (Asante, 1987) instead of a Eurocentric view. One of my purposes in doing so was to explore how young African women construct their identity and sense of belonging in New Zealand society. Another purpose was to identify the challenges that young African women come across in their identity journey.

In this chapter, implications of the research are identified, the limitations of the study are described, and finally the recommendations for future research will be outlined.

Research Question (s)

The questions which framed this research were:

- How do young African women construct their identity and sense of belonging within New Zealand society?
- What are the challenges that young African women come across in their identity journey?

The research questions that guided this study was two folded. Firstly, the inquiry sought to understand how young African women construct their identity and develop a sense of belonging within the context of New Zealand society. This question aimed to explore the multifaceted processes through which these individuals navigate their cultural heritage, societal expectations, and personal experiences to shape their unique identities and foster a sense of belonging in their host country.

Secondly, the study aimed to identify and examined the challenges encountered by young African women in their journey of identity formation. This question aimed to delve into the specific obstacles, pressures, and conflicts that arise as these women navigate between the expectations of

their cultural heritage and those of the New Zealand society in which they reside. Understanding these challenges provided insight into the factors that shape their identity journey and the complex dynamics at play.

The findings of this study align with existing literature on identity construction and sense of belonging among immigrant populations. Studies have highlighted the challenges faced by individuals in navigating their identities within a cultural context (Alba & Nee, 2003; Berry, 2003). The experiences of young African women in New Zealand reflect the broader patterns of identity negotiation and integration observed among immigrant groups. The struggles they face, such as racism and discrimination, have been widely documented in research (Ayón, 2015; Szaflarski & Bauldry, 2019). These challenges can impact their self-perception, sense of belonging, and overall well-being.

The participant's accounts in this study shed light on the specific challenges faced by young African women in constructing their identities. The struggle to balance cultural expectations and societal norms is a common theme among immigrant populations (Litchmore & Safdar, 2014; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012). Cultural norms and gender roles, in particular, can influence the experiences of young women in their identity journey (Deng, 2016; Suárez-Orozco & Qin, 2006). The participants' discussions about the gendered expectations placed on them by their families and communities reflects the broader issues of gender and identity negotiation within immigrant communities. These challenges can shape their sense of self and their perceptions of belonging.

The surprises that emerged from the participants' accounts provided unique insights into the experiences of young African women in New Zealand. The romanticised view of ethnic women and pressure to conform to cultural expectations were expected findings. The participants' discussions about being compared to others and the pressure to fit into the idealised image of the "*perfect young African woman*" highlights the complex dynamics within their families and communities. These findings suggests that the construction of identity for young African women is influenced not only by external factors such as societal norms and discrimination but also by internal pressures within their own cultural contexts. In the case of young African women, this romanticised view reinforces traditional gender roles and expectations within their culture of origin, which can hinder their person growth and exploration (Makkar & Yap, 2020). This adds a layer of complexity to the identity journey and sheds light on the struggles faced by these young women in reconciling cultural expectations with their own individual aspirations.

The literature on immigrant identity and sense of belonging provides a framework to understand and interpret the findings of this study. Studies have shown that the challenges faced by immigrant populations in constructing their identities are not unique to the young African women in New Zealand but are experienced by individuals across various cultural backgrounds (Alba & Nee, 2003; Berry, 2003). The importance of social support, cultural context, and individual agency in identity formation and integration have also been highlighted earlier in previous research (Deng, 2016; Litchmore & Safdar, 2014; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012). These findings confirm the broader theoretical and empirical literature on immigrant identity and sense of belonging, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of identity construction and the impact of sociocultural factors.

Limitations of the research

The study discussed in the provided text focuses on African immigrant women, particularly those who are first generation immigrants and have grown up in New Zealand. This study is significant because it contributes to the limited body of research on African immigrants, specifically highlighting the experiences of African women in New Zealand. By conducting this study, the researchers aim to empower and give a voice to African women within their communities and the broader New Zealand

However, there are several limitations to consider. One limitation is the small sample size of the study, which consisted of only five participants. This small sample size was a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated restrictions that prevented physical interactions and limited recruitment opportunities. Although the participants in the study represented a diverse range of ages and African countries, it is important to acknowledge that the finding cannot be generalised to all young immigrant African women in New Zealand. Future research should aim to include a larger and more representative sample.

Another limitation relates to the recruitment process. Due to the specific criteria set for participant selection, some women may have been excluded from participating in the study. Participants were eligible to participate in the study if they: (i) were of African origin, (ii) were first-generation immigrants who had grown up in New Zealand, and if (iii) they were between the ages of 18 and 24 years old. These criteria could have excluded some women from partaking in this study. While these criteria helped maintain a balanced group size and provided structure to participant selection, they may have introduced subjectivity on the part of the researcher. This could potentially limit the generalisability of the findings.

Additionally, the study's methodology was adapted due to COVID-19 restrictions, resulting in individual interviews rather than communal storytelling, which is a traditional practice within an Afrocentric framework. Storytelling in groups allows for bonding, learning, relating, and validating each other's experiences through audience responses. It also fosters problem solving and support within a communal environment. Conducting individual interviews may have deprived the participants of this collective experience, which could have influenced the depth and richness of their narratives.

Future research

The research mentioned is the first of its kind that focuses on studying the identity construction of young African women living in New Zealand. Its findings serve as a foundational basis for future research endeavours involving African immigrants in New Zealand. Building on this work, it would be interesting to investigate the identity construction of young African men in New Zealand, as well as the experiences of second-generation African individuals, such as children of first-generation immigrants.

The participants in this study shared their encounters with racism and discrimination from both New Zealand society and their own communities. These experiences were identified as significant challenges in their journey of identity formation and seeking a sense of identity. It is crucial to explore the impact of racism and discrimination on the mental health and well-being of African immigrants in New Zealand, as well as its influence on the acculturation process, they undergo.

This study also employed an Afrocentric framework, which presented a positive and fresh perspective on African studies. This framework can further be utilised in subsequent studies to comprehend and engage with African individuals and communities, enabling a better understanding of the issues they face. By incorporating such frameworks, researchers can employ tools like storytelling and oral traditions, to gain deeper insights into African values, beliefs, strengths, and attributes. This approach empowers marginalised individuals and communities, allowing them to shape their own worldview. Moreover, it acknowledges and legitimises African indigenous ideals and values as valid frameworks for conducting research (Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013).

Furthermore, this research has the potential to influence policymaking and interventions aimed at creating inclusive and supportive environments for individuals navigating similar cultural complexities. By uncovering the coping strategies employed by young African women in navigating their multiple cultural identities, this study offers practical guidance and contributes to the development of initiatives that facilitate a harmonious integration of cultural heritage and societal expectations.

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This research aimed to explore the complex process of identity construction and sense of belonging among young African women in New Zealand. By conducting structured interviews with five participants, the study sought to gain insights into their unique experiences and challenges as they navigate their identity journeys. By focusing on this specific group, the research aimed to contribute to the existing literature on multiculturalism, immigration and identity formation.

Highlights of study

One of the notable highlights of this study was the rich and diverse narratives shared by the participants. Through their personal stories, the study gained a deeper understanding of the struggles, pressure, and triumphs these young women encountered. The participants' experiences provided valuable insights into the intersectionality of their identities, considering factors such as race, gender, culture, and nationality. This holistic perspective allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of their experiences and the factors that shape their identities.

Furthermore, the study shed light on the concept of the *"beautiful struggle"* as described by the participants. Despite facing numerous challenges, they also expressed gratitude for the opportunities and freedoms they found in New Zealand. This nuanced perspective highlighted their resilience, determination, and ability to navigate difficult circumstances. It also emphasised the importance of acknowledging the strength and agency of young African women in their identity journeys.

Low points of study

This study faced some challenges along the way. The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the research process, causing disruptions and limitations. The restrictions on face-to-face interactions made it challenging to establish a strong rapport with the participants, potentially affecting the depth and richness of the data collected. The pandemic-related constraints also affected the research timeline, leading to adjustments and delays in data collection and analysis.

Additionally, I as the researcher experienced imposter syndrome, which is a phenomenon characterised by self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy in academic or professional settings. These internal struggles occasionally affected my confidence in data analysis and interpretation. However, efforts were made to overcome these challenges through self-reflection, seeking support from my supervisor, friends, and family, and continuously engaging with the research literature to ensure rigorous analysis and interpretation of data.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis provided valuable insight into the identity construction and sense of belonging among young African women in New Zealand. The findings highlighted the challenges they face, including experiences of racism, cultural expectations, and the pressures of gender norms. It emphasised the importance of understanding the intersectionality of their identities and the need for a supportive and inclusive environment that recognises and celebrates their diverse experiences.

The study's contribution to the existing literature lies in its exploration of the unique experiences of this specific group and its focus on identity construction within New Zealand context. The findings have implications for policymakers, educators, and community organisations, emphasising the importance of creating spaces and opportunities that foster a sense of belonging and empowerment for young African women.

This study opens avenues for future research. Areas that could be further explored include the experiences of other minority groups, the role of educational institutions in supporting the identity journeys of young African women, and the impact of community and family dynamics on their sense of belonging. By continuing to examine these topics, researchers can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape the identities and experiences of young African women in multicultural societies.

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