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**GOOD TO GO? JOURNEYS OF CROSS-CULTURAL PREPAREDNESS, TRANSITIONS AND
TRANSFORMATIONS AMONG NIGERIAN IMMIGRANTS**

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Dedication

To all migrants—which we all have been at one time on the other, in one way or the other.

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Acknowledgements

To God be the glory.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the individuals and institutions whose contributions have been integral to the success of this project. Special thanks to my supervisor, Prof. Monica Fedeli, and the University of Padua, as well as Prof. Lisa M. Baumgartner, Prof. Joellen E. Coryell, and Texas State University.

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Grazie mille!

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Abstract

This multiple-case mixed-methods narrative study explored how Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States prepare for and experience cross-cultural transitions and how their cross-cultural experiences result in transformative learning. The theoretical framework of the study combined critical realism, the aspirations-capacities framework and transformative learning theory. An integrative research design, including case study research, mixed-methods research design, and narrative inquiry, was deployed as the methodological approach of the study. The participants included 27 Nigerian immigrants, 14 from Italy and 13 from the United States, selected using the criterion sampling technique. Data were generated through narrative interviews, which included image elicitation, and the Transformative Learning Survey. Thematic, narrative, and quantitative data analyses were conducted.

First, results showed varied levels of preparation among Nigerian immigrants for their lives in Italy and the United States. In Italy, the emphasis was on overcoming language barriers and cultural integration, while in the United States, it was more about leveraging educational and professional opportunities. Second, the study found high engagement in transformative learning processes, particularly in rational discourse. The transformative experiences showed notable similarities across both countries, despite different cultural contexts. Third, results highlighted how factors such as language skills, educational background, and social networks were crucial in navigating the structural opportunities and constraints in Italy and the United States. Moreover, a comparative analysis revealed commonalities and distinctions in the immigration experiences of Nigerians in Italy and the United States. Both groups emphasised the importance of preparation, resilience, and transformative learning in their journeys.

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The study concluded that the immigration experiences of Nigerians are dynamic, shaped by a combination of personal aspirations, capacities, and the sociocultural contexts of the host countries, underscoring their resilience, adaptability, and transformation. Among others, future research could involve longitudinal studies that track the experiences of Nigerian migrants over an extended period to provide insights into how their cross-cultural and transformative experiences evolve with time.

Keywords: cross-cultural transition, immigration, Italy, Nigeria, the United States, transformative learning, preparation

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This study aims to explore how Nigerian immigrants prepare for cross-cultural transition and how their cross-cultural experiences result into transformative learning or perspective transformation. To achieve the aim, this chapter introduces the fundamentals of the study. It starts by providing a contextual background to the study, explaining key concepts. It proceeds by presenting the problem statement, stating the purpose of the study and the research questions that guided the study. Overviews of the theoretical frameworks and methodology are presented, followed by sections on significance of the study, scope of the study, assumptions of the study, preliminary limitations of the study and operational definition of terms. The chapter concludes with a section on the organisation of the study, describing the order of the subsequent chapters, and then a summary of this chapter.

Background to the Study

When I got to Italy, one of my immediate cultural observations was to often hear people saying “pronto” instead of “ciao” whenever they picked up a call I also observed that “pronto” was used in other contexts. Being a language enthusiast, I was quick to take note of the polysemous nature of “pronto.” For instance, in my apartment, which I shared with five Italian flat mates, we said “pronto” to call others’ attention whenever the strong flavour from the moka pot filled the kitchen, signalling that the coffee was done. I soon enquired why Italians also say “pronto” when answering calls, and I learned it was an expression of readiness to hear from the speaker on the other end. Then, I exclaimed, “Oh, good to go!”

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Above is a fraction of the plethora of experiences that individuals may experience when they have embarked on the journey of living in a different society other than the one that they are familiar with. The expression “Good to go?” is used to inquire about or to exclaim the readiness to take an action. The phrase is used in varied conversations with families, friends, and colleagues to check the interlocutor’s readiness or preparedness to carry out a certain task, often with the aim of receiving an assurance that the task has been completed or that all is set for the task to be done, depending on the context. In formal contexts, especially in (para)military setting—where the idiomatic phrase originated—it is used to request or affirm preparedness to take a procedural action. In the same vein, *Good to Go* (G2G) is used in this study as a metaphor that indicates the necessity of preparedness of migrants for cross-cultural transition and the new level of preparedness for life that migrants gain through intercultural perspective transformation. Preparedness involves anticipating and responding to uncertain future experiences and outcomes (Carroll, 2010). Human beings do not only have the capacity to adapt to changing environment but also to anticipate and respond to challenging demands of transitions that result from international migration.

Migration, “the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, e, either across an international border or within a State” (International Organisation for Migration [IOM], 2019, p. 137), has been a natural phenomenon in human society from time immemorial. However, the dynamics of the postmodern world, principally globalisation, have amplified the benefits and challenges of migration. Normally, migration is understood as emigration from the perspective of the sending/first culture and as immigration from the perspective of the receiving/second culture of the migrant (referred to as emigrant and immigrant respectively). Migration is also often used (as in this study) in the sense of international migration, “the

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movement of persons away from their place of usual residence and across an international border to a country of which they are not nationals” (IOM, 2019, p. 113). International migration or transnational migration entails moving from one’s country (first culture) to another country (second culture). International migrant is “any person who is outside a State of which he or she is a citizen or national, [including] migrants who intend to move permanently or temporarily, and those who move in a regular or documented manner as well as migrants in irregular situations (IOM, 2019, p. 112). Such groups of migrants include refugees—immigrants living under international protection in the receiving country. Thus, the term “immigrants” as used in this study refers to foreign citizens that have moved and living in the host society legally and for different purposes, including as refugees but does *not* include asylum seekers since, technically, not all asylum seekers are ultimately recognised as refugees though all refugees were initially asylum seekers. This study concerns Nigerian nationals, particularly those that grew up in Nigeria and moved to reside abroad, especially in Italy and the United States for various purposes.

Migration and Nigerian Immigrants

The *World Migration Report 2022* estimates that there are 281 million international migrants globally, constituting 3.6% of the world population (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021). The percentage has increased from 2.3% (84 million) and 3.5% (272 million) in 1970 and 2019 respectively (McAuliffe et al., 2019). Also, migration from the so-called Global South to the Global North—especially the increasing movement from Africa to Europe and to North America, particularly to the United States and Canada—has attracted a significant attention (McAuliffe & Khadria, 2019). Estimated to have over 223 million people, Nigeria is not only a significant contributor to Africa’s total population (Galal, 2023) but also can be regarded a major

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actor on the global migration stage. A remarkable aspect of Nigeria's demographic profile is its extensive diaspora. Approximately 17 million Nigerians live abroad (Fedelis, 2017), forming a significant community that reflects the country's socio-economic dynamics and global presence.

The phenomenon known as the "*japa* syndrome" highlights a significant trend among Nigerians seeking better opportunities abroad (Okebudo, 2023). In Nigerian, *japa* is a slang term that is derived from the Yoruba language, and it means to "to run, flee, or escape" (Lasisi, 2023). In the context of Nigerian slang, *japa* refers to leaving a situation quickly and unexpectedly, often to escape from a challenging or undesirable circumstance. This term has gained popularity among young Nigerians and is commonly used to describe the act of emigrating or seeking opportunities abroad (Onuh, 2023). A 2019 Pew Research Center survey found that 45% of Nigerian adults had considered emigration (Connor & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2019). This exodus is driven by various Nigerian immigrants encounter numerous challenges, including over-securitisation, stereotypes, exploitation, and discrimination. Common stereotypes such as the "Nigerian prince" and "prostitute" often marginalise these immigrants, affecting their social and professional integration. Despite these hurdles, Nigerians abroad are acclaimed for contributing to their home and host countries, including Italy and the United States.

Movement from one culture to another that is painted above is a significant event that often has lasting ambivalent effects on the host society and the migrant (Wildemeersch, 2017). In the host society, immigration can produce appreciative feelings about cultural and economic enrichment, also cause some host nationals to have a perception of invasion. On the side of the migrant, transnational migration often ignites mixed feelings of fulfilment of life aspiration, on the one hand, dissatisfaction, disappointment, and frustration, on the other hand. Like most migrants, Nigerians experience significant disorientation as they move from Nigeria to other

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parts of the world that are markedly different from their national, regional, or continental contexts. For instance, in my interactions with compatriots in Italy, I have heard statements like: “I didn’t know this country is like *this*,” “I didn’t know I won’t be able to work while studying in a big country like Italy,” and “How on earth they don’t speak English even in the Post Office!” Also, negative stories perpetuate stereotypes against immigrants and the risk of being treated based on their real and assumed competencies (Morrice, 2014). Hence, it is not uncommon to hear or read about cases of both aspirations and frustrations as well as reports of negativities and challenges that reflect the natural immediate fallout of international/transnational migration due to the inherent cross-cultural transition in such migration.

Cross-cultural Transition and Disorientation

Cross-cultural transition is the psychosocial change process that migrants experience when they move from their habitual sociocultural context to another. It happens across the physical-mental-social domain, during the pre-departure, transit, and post-arrival phases of migration. Transition is “a process-oriented phenomenon that involves people responding to change” (Wilkins & Woodgate, 2006, p. 259). Experiencing significant life events provides an “opportunity” for transition. Migration is a life event that occasions transition often triggers disorientation in immigrants. In line with this assertion, cross-cultural transition linked to the concept of “culture shock” and has been studied within the frameworks of clinical perspectives (focusing on the role and intensity of personality, life events, cultural context and social support), social learning models (emphasising the acquisition of intercultural skills through cross-cultural experience and training), and social cognition approaches (shifting the emphasis away from skills and spotlights the role of expectations, values, attitudes, and perceptions) (Searle & Ward, 1990). Studies have suggested that cross-cultural transition

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involves knowing and acting in manners that transcend one's local culture towards embracing global and multicultural perspectives (Coryell, 2013; Davis et al., 2019).

Cross-cultural transition can be seen as a type of acculturation (Bierwiazzonek & Waldzus, 2016), path that ultimately leads to integration (particularly from the migrant's perspective). The integration is a most desirable model of social inclusion because it emphasises cultural contact and a two-way responsibility shared by immigrants and the host societies (Bauloz, et al., 2019; Kesler & Safi, 2018; Zapata-Barrero, 2017). Therefore, cross-cultural transition is a pre-integration phenomenon. cross-cultural transition can be conceived as a universal phenomenon that is essentially observable among intercultural or international migrants. The implication is that the experiences of immigrants before their immersion into the second culture—their country of origin being their first culture—might have a long-term effect on their integration process. Accordingly, researchers have investigated various aspects of the experiences of migrants, including psychosocial impacts of immigration (Ekwemalor & Ezeobebe, 2019), acculturation and adaptation strategies (Levi Ari & Cohen, 2018), educational and socio-cultural experiences (Bethel et al., 2020; Grzymała-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018; Vandeyar, 2010), and challenges and strategies of integration (Bronstein, 2019; Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2020; Grzymała-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018).

The studies indicate that immigrants experience various forms of destabilising challenges and opportunities that constitute a disorientation bordering on lack of cultural knowledge, lack of host language proficiency, conflicting values, identity, and the complexity and dynamics associated with super-diversity. The disorientation might signal the fact that migrants need to prepare for transitioning into the host cultures and facilitating significant changes within their experienced cross-cultural contexts. For instance, a study has showed that Nigerian immigrants

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in the United States associated negative psychosocial impacts of immigration to their lack of adequate preparation before migration (Ekwemalor & Ezeobele, 2019). This phenomenon of disorientation, also called disorienting dilemma, has been tagged the seed of transformation or transformative learning (Ensign, 2019), whereby individuals are confronted with challenges that undermine their prior certainties (Mezirow, 1991a). Mezirow describes disorienting dilemmas as involving “efforts to understand a different culture with customs that contradict our own previously accepted presuppositions” (Mezirow, 1991a, p. 168). Such efforts often resultantly include learning activities and experiences.

Migration, and Adult Learning, and Transformative Learning

Acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes through formal, non-formal and informal educative engagements has a principal role in all walks of life and universal issues, including migration-related situations. The field of adult education has traditionally been used to facilitate the inclusion of immigrants in their host society, albeit in form of assimilation, because the immigrant’s self-agency is often neglected or negated and learning initiatives often use the deficit and hegemonic models (Guo, 2010; Morrice, 2014; Morrice et al., 2017). However, the nexus of migration and learning appears to be gaining a new momentum within the field of adult education and lifelong learning. Basically, migration-related learning may involve learning about the place and people of destination, process of migration, dynamics of integration and civic processes in the host society. Such learning could gear towards the development of develop capacities to facilitate regular and/or any form of “successful” travel to the destination and have meaningful intercultural interactions with the people in the destination at geographical, economic, social, cultural, and civic-political levels.

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Studies about developing such intercultural competencies have dominated this dimension of migration-learning relationship (E. W. Taylor, 1994; Portera, 2014; Tarchi & Surian, 2022; Van Oudenhoven & Benet-Martínez, 2015). Also, the link between intercultural experience (migration), and perspective transformation has been showed (E. W. Taylor, 1994, 2008), underscoring that learning about and with others (e.g., through intercultural contacts) and learning about oneself (e.g., by exploring one's cultural background) are both important for developing pivotal intercultural skills (Dang et al., 2019; Davies et al., 2015; Hammer, 2011). Meanwhile, it should be noted that these studies and the kind of migration-related learning described above are largely anchored on the cultural immersion and the inclusion that immigrants are subjected to in their host societies rather than on the agency of the immigrants to purposefully prepare for their cross-cultural transition and to anticipate as well as facilitate irreversible changes they might experience because of relocation to and residency in another country. The kind of learning recommended for this higher level is transformative learning, which describes the path to achieving perspective transformation—profound shifts in an individual's understanding and interpretation of their experiences resulting into gaining new worldview, openness, and discernment (Mezirow, 1991a).

Transformative learning involves the process of challenging and critically reviewing the taken-for-granted assumptions that underpin one's habits of mind and consequent points of view (Mezirow, 1991a, 2000). Hoggan (2016) writes that “Transformative learning refers to processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualises, and interacts with the world” (p. 71). Such experiences include cross-cultural and migration experiences in our global times. As Hoggan and Hoggan-Kloubert (2022) declare, “We all are migrants”, underscoring the intrinsic link between adult learning and life experiences in

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cross-cultural settings that characterise our present world, “a migration society” (p. 1). This observation comes with the undeniable need for individuals and communities to acquire certain knowledge, skills, and values. Central to this learning need discourse is the conviction that “the learning required in a migration society is transformational” (Hoggan & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2022, p. 4). This position echoes the description of “a world in crisis”, for which learning for transformation has been prescribed (Nicolaidis & Eschenbacher, 2022, p. 6) and it resonates with the settled argument that migration causes disorientation and disorientation triggers transformation learning.

Statement of the Problem

The process of migration, particularly for Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities that significantly impact their cross-cultural adaptation and learning experiences. The phenomenon of cross-cultural transitions presents a complex and multifaceted issue that remains underexplored in contemporary research. Despite the increasing number of Nigerian immigrants in these countries, there is a dearth of comprehensive research exploring their specific experiences in cross-cultural transitions and perspective transformation. This gap in knowledge is particularly pronounced when considering the transformative learning that may occur because of these experiences. This gap also hinders the development of effective support systems and policies tailored to their unique needs and how they could best be of benefit to their host societies. Questions that are yet to be clearly answered in the literature include: How do Nigerians immigrants prepare for, experience, and navigate the cultural shifts inherent in such transitions? The challenges faced by Nigerian immigrants are multifaceted, encompassing socio-cultural, economic, and psychological aspects. These

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challenges can lead to a transformative learning process, which is pivotal in shaping their integration and overall well-being in the host countries.

Furthermore, the scarcity of multiple-case mixed-methods narrative studies constrains the depth of current understanding of the phenomenon. Qualitative narratives are crucial for capturing the rich, personal experiences of immigrants, while quantitative data provides a broader perspective on common patterns and themes. The mixed-methods approach enabled a more holistic understanding of the cross-cultural transitions of Nigerian immigrants, highlighting not only the challenges and barriers they face but also the strategies they employ and the transformative learning that may occur. This study aims to fill these gaps by employing a multiple-case mixed-methods narrative approach to explore how Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States experience cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning processes and outcomes.

While attention has been paid to the learning opportunities that are dictated by the host society, migrants' (both as emigrants and fresh immigrants) purposeful learning about migration and their learning for cross-cultural transition have hitherto been considerably ignored. Consonant with the emphasis on migratory agency (de Haas, 2021), this study was grounded in the hypothesis that migrants make preparation for cross-cultural transition and that migrants could take responsibility for acquiring certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes during the pre-departure, transit, and post-arrival phases of their migration. Studies have shown that the self-agency of migrants is crucial and central to their migration decisions and experiences (Press, 2017; Trifanescu, 2015; Vandeyar, 2010). The migrant is capable of being the chief decision maker regarding their learning for cross-cultural experiences and for re-conceptualising their realities. Since research has also shown that migration usually triggers the need for

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(transformative) learning (Bethel et al., 2020; E. W. Taylor, 1994; Onosu, 2020), exploring how Nigerians immigrants engage in transformative is a worthy cause. However, the nature and extent of this transformative learning, along with the strategies employed by Nigerian immigrants to navigate the complexities of cultural transitions, have not gained visible research attention. This study seeks to address this critical gap by investigating the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. It aims to understand how they prepare for and navigate the cross-cultural transition, the challenges, and opportunities they encounter, and how these experiences lead to transformative learning.

Purpose Statement

Sequel to the background and the problem highlighted above, the purpose of this multiple-case mixed-methods narrative study is to explore how Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States prepare for and experience cross-cultural transitions and how their cross-cultural experiences result in transformative learning.

Objectives of the Study

Specific objectives of the study were to:

1. describe how Nigerian immigrants prepare or not prepare for cross-cultural transition and life in Italy and the United States;
2. determine the transformative learning processes and outcomes among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States;

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3. relate Nigerian immigrants' cross-cultural transitions to their attainment of perspective transformation (transformative learning outcomes);
4. assess how personal and contextual factors affect Nigerian immigrants' cross-cultural preparedness and transformative learning experiences; and
5. compare the immigration (cross-cultural and transformative) experiences of Nigerians in Italy and the United States.

Research Questions

Based on the foregoing, the research questions that guided the study are presented below.

1. How do Nigerian immigrants prepare or not prepare for cross-cultural transition and life in Italy and the United States?
2. What are the transformative learning processes and outcomes among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States?
3. How do Nigerian immigrants' cross-cultural transitions relate to their attainment of perspective transformation (transformative learning outcomes)?
4. How do personal and contextual factors affect Nigerian immigrants' cross-cultural preparedness and transformative learning experiences?
5. How do the immigration (cross-cultural and transformative) experiences of Nigerians in Italy and the United States compare?

Overview of Theoretical Framework

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This study is hinged on critical realism, as my philosophical paradigm, and other two theories namely, the aspirations-capacities framework, also known as the structure and agency theory, and transformative learning theory. Deploying multiple theoretical orientations does not only enrich the study but also it is a necessity because of the interdisciplinary and intersectoral nature of the study.

Critical Realism

Critical realism is a philosophical paradigm that emerged in the early 20th century (Bhaskar, 1989). It is an ontological stance that maintains that reality is composed of both an objective, tangible world of material objects, and a subjective, intangible world of values and meanings (Bhaskar, 1975, 1989). Critical realism is an attempt to bridge the divide between positivism and post-structuralism, combining the emphasis on empirical evidence of the former with the focus on interpretation of the latter. Critical realism assumes that knowledge is not confined to what can be observed and measured, but instead involves the interpretation of the context, meaning, and implications of the data (Bagley et al., 2016). Critical realism recognizes that the social world is complex and that different perspectives can offer insight into the same phenomenon (Bhaskar, 1975). As such, critical realism seeks to understand reality through the synthesis of different perspectives and techniques (Bagley et al., 2016). Critical realism has been applied to a variety of fields, including economics, sociology, education, and psychology (Archer, 2003). It has been used to explain a range of phenomena, from gender roles and power dynamics to the structure of markets and economic systems (Bhaskar, 1975, 1989). Additionally, critical realism has been used to develop theories of social change (Houston, 2023).

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Critical realism is based on the belief that reality is composed of both physical and social entities and that the social world is shaped by both physical and social forces. Critical realism asserts that there is an objective reality which is independent of our beliefs and interpretations, and that our understanding of this reality is constructed through our interactions with it (Bhaskar, 2020). It further claims that our knowledge of the world is partial and fallible, and that we must be open to revising our beliefs as new evidence and perspectives emerge. Critical realism holds that the material level is the foundation of social life, and that social phenomena are shaped by underlying material conditions (Sims-Schouten et al., 2007). It also maintains that social phenomena are not reducible to material causes, and that there are social structures and processes which have an independent causal effect on social outcomes (Bhaskar, 2020).

Critical realism is a suitable framework for this study because it provides a framework for understanding the broader structural and material conditions that shape the experiences of immigrants. Critical realism can be applied to transformative learning of migrants by examining the ways in which migrants are able to construct new understandings of their identity and of the world around them through their experiences. This form of learning involves engaging with a variety of societal and cultural norms and values, as well as recognizing the limitations of existing systems and structures. Through this process, migrants can gain a deeper understanding of their own identity and perspectives, as well as those of others. This understanding can then be used to inform changes in their own lives as well as to help shape the societies in which they live.

Aspirations-Capacities Framework (Structure and Agency Theory)

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Aspirations-capacities framework or structure and agency theory is a migration theory that explains how societal and personal factors interact and how the interaction leads to migration or non-migration (de Haas, 2021). The theory conceptualises and emphasises migratory agency, which manifests as an outcome of the (potential) migrant's aspirations and capabilities. Although aspirations-capacities framework is not a learning theory, it is a migration theory that clarifies our understanding of the centrality of the adult learners in cross-cultural transition experience from the perspective of migration. Aspirations-capacities framework is suitable for interrogating the pre-departure, transit, and post-arrival phases of immigrants' journey (Borselli & van Meijl, 2021). How the migrant experiences a cross-cultural transition is determined by both personal and contextual factors. According to the aspirations-capacities framework, these factors constitute the agency and structure that influence migration decisions (de Haas, 2021). Both dimensions have implications for the nexus between migration and adult/lifelong learning. The dimension of structure refers to "patterns of social relations, beliefs and behaviour" (de Haas, 2021, p. 14) including human rights, migration policies as well as economic, sociocultural, educational, and political situations. The dimension of the agency spotlights the migrant's preparedness. The term "migration aspirations" has been used to describe a person's psychological appraisal of considering emigration as a viable option (Carling & Schewel, 2018).

In the meantime, migration intentions relate to aspiring migrants' specific plans to relocate. In both origin and destination locations, aspiration has been defined as "a function of people's general life aspirations and perceived spatial opportunity structures" (de Haas, 2014, p. 23). As a result, the concept of aspiration places a greater emphasis on factors influencing decisions and wishes (not) to leave, such as social, cultural, and economic capital, as well as

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social norms and expectations (Carling & Collins, 2018; Schewel, 2020). Migration ability is the “capacity to convert [migration aspirations] into reality, given context-specific obstacles and opportunities” (Carling & Schewel, 2018, p. 955). They pointed out that different socioeconomic levels face different types of migratory restrictions. Restrictive immigration regulations make it difficult for low-skilled workers to gain access to legal migration pathways. This may cause people to experience involuntary immobility or seek out alternate migration modes, such as irregular migration.

Thus, the concept of capability in human mobility is the “people’s capability (freedom) to choose where to live, including the option to stay” (de Haas, 2014, p. 2 [Abstract]). Personal and structural factors respectively constitute the agency and structure that influence migration decisions. These factors influence how the migrant experiences a cross-cultural transition. The dimension of structure refers to ‘patterns of social relations, beliefs and behaviour’ including human rights, migration policies as well as economic, sociocultural, educational, and political situations (de Haas, 2021, p. 14). The dimension of agency includes skills, self-consciousness, educational qualification, resources, intrinsic motivations, among others. It is deployed in this study because it is suitable for understanding the role of the migrant regarding their preparedness and navigation of cross-cultural experiences at the pre-departure, transit, and (post)arrival phases.

Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning leads to perspective transformation by challenging and critically reviewing the taken-for-granted assumptions that underpins one’s habits of mind and points of views (Mezirow, 1991a, 2000). Transformative learning theory explains how an individual

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significantly learns from a fundamental change or disorientation resulting from their “lived, felt experience” (Hoggan, 2016, p. 71). Transcultural experiences are often strong enough to cause a disorienting dilemma, which may become their basis for intercultural transformation. The theory of transformative learning explains how the immigrant critically challenges their first culture’s assumptions as well as the second culture’s assumptions regarding what the host society mandates immigrants to learn to. The starting point of relating transformative learning to migration or cross-cultural transition borders on the potency of transcultural experiences to cause a disorienting dilemma, which may become the migrant’s basis for intercultural transformation (E. W. Taylor, 2017a).

From its classic 10-phase model (Mezirow, 2000), Transformative learning theory has evolved to a multi-strand theory or even a metatheory (Hoggan, 2016; Stuckey et al., 2013). For instance, three dominant strands of transformative learning are the rational/cognitive, the extrarational, and the social/emancipatory perspectives (Stuckey et al., 2013). The categorisation recognises multiple ways of knowing, taking transformative learning beyond the emphasis on rationality to the expansion of critical reflection and the acknowledgment of relationships in the process of perspective transformation (Baumgartner, 2012). In line with this trend, Baumgartner (2019) has highlighted six elements that foster transformative learning-individual experience, critical reflection, dialogue, seeing transformative learning as a holistic experience, the importance of sociocultural and personal factors, and authenticity. These elements appear to be foundational to fostering community-based/collective transformative learning (Coryell, 2013; Mejiuni, 2012, 2017).

Hence, approaching an exploration of perspective transformation with eclectic perspectives and components offers a strategy to leave no stone unturned regarding the personal

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and societal dynamics of transformative learning in a non-Western, African community. Multiple perspectives are potentially suitable for complementarily exploring the pain and gain of a heterogeneous (e.g., multi-ethnic) group of Nigerians in Western countries because multiple models provide an opportunity for triangulating the migrants' transformative experiences. Moreover, approaching an inquiry into how Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States have experienced transformation with multiple lens is necessary for the cross-cultural and intercultural nature of their experiences and the structures that have influenced their migratory and learning experiences.

Overview of Methodology

The study employed an integrative research design, combining case study research case study research, mixed-methods research design, and narrative inquiry, each contributing unique insights into the study's subject matter. The criterion sampling technique was used to select the 27 participants, with whom narrative interviews were conducted and they also completed the TLS questionnaire.

Integrative Research Design

The study adopted a comprehensive and intricate methodology, intertwining multiple research designs: case study research, mixed-methods research design, and narrative inquiry. The integrative research design leveraged on the strengths of each research design to explore complex, interconnected phenomena within authentic settings. Yin (2018) provides a dual definition of case study research, emphasising its scope in investigating contemporary phenomena and its features, such as reliance on multiple evidence sources and the importance of theoretical propositions in guiding research. Case study research is central to this study, offering

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an in-depth exploration of individual cases within their real-life contexts. It facilitates a comprehensive analysis of immigrants' experiences, focusing on detailed, contextual examination rather than broad generalisations.

Specifically, the study employed a holistic multiple-case study design to facilitate cross-case analysis and deeper understanding of the immigrant experiences across the Italian and American contexts. The multiple case study was anchored on the replication rationale, not the sampling rationale (Yin, 2018). That is, the United States case study was initiated after a considerable data generation and preliminary data analysis had been conducted in Italy. Through a cross-case analysis of the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in different contexts, a deeper comprehension of the challenges and opportunities was attained. Adopting a mixed-methods approach as defined by (Creswell et al., 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), the holistic multiple case study involved both qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis, and integration. The study is a mixed-methods narrative inquiry research involving the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, integrating the two databases before final interpretation.

Particularly, a core mixed-methods research design that is called convergent design was deployed. It involves the generation of qualitative and quantitative data relatively at the same time and the combination and comparison of the qualitative and quantitative data to provide a complete understanding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). It provides opportunities for a more complete and nuanced understanding of complex phenomena by providing opportunities to validate findings through triangulation, achieve depth and breadth in analysis, address research questions from multiple perspectives, and provide richer practical implications and policy recommendations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Convergent mixed-methods research design is an approach that combines the strengths of both qualitative

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and quantitative research methods and gave this study the benefit of exploring how Nigerian immigrants prepare for cross-cultural transitions and their transformative learning experiences.

Moreover, this study is primarily a narrative inquiry, involving gathering stories from individuals and providing insights into their experiences in the context of time connected with change and learning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). This method allows for a deeper understanding of how institutions and cultural contexts shape human lives. The narrative research approach formed the qualitative (*QUAL*) component of this convergent mixed-methods case study and the participants' stories methodically were the primary data. The quantitative (*quan*) component in each of the case studies was realised through an online survey called Transformative Learning Survey. The survey instantly generates bar graphs that indicate which outcomes and processes most clearly describe a participant's transformative learning experience. In this study, the qualitative data received greater emphasis in line with the primary approach (narrative inquiry) while the quantitative data was embedded; thus, the notation: *QUAL + quan = converged results* (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Population, Participants, and Contexts

The study's population were Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. The study focused on reflecting the diversity and complexity of Nigerian immigrants' experiences. The criterion sampling technique was used to select adult Nigerian immigrants based on criteria like year of arrival, current immigration status, occupation, ethnicity, and gender. This selection approach ensured the capture of varied perspectives, enriching the study's depth and relevance. In total, 27 Nigerians were selected in the study, 14 in Italy and 13 in the United States. These participants provided rich, contextualised insights into the immigrant experience (Reichel &

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Morales, 2017). The implementation of a holistic multiple-case study design provided a valuable perspective on the immigrants' cross-cultural transition and transformative experiences across the various study contexts, an Italian language society and an English language society.

Research Instruments, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

The study employed a range of instruments to gather comprehensive data. In total, four research instruments were deployed for data collection. In Italy, three instruments were used, including the G2G Semi-Structured Interview Guide, the Transformative Learning Survey, and the G2G In-depth Interview Guide, used in that order. In the United States, the study used a modified combination of the Italian interview guides and the Transformative Learning Survey, ensuring consistency while respecting contextual differences. These instruments were designed to capture detailed cross-cultural experiences and narratives of transformative learning among Nigerian immigrants. The data collection procedure involved narrative interviews and surveys with the participants from both Italy and the United States. Based on the instruments, data collection was conducted primarily online, using Zoom, and involved a series of interviews and the completion of the TLS questionnaire. Data collection for the *QUAL* component involved the use of the interview guides for narrative interviews. The interviews also involved image elicitation by presenting 12 images each participant at the end of the interview and asking them to select the one that most represented their immigration experience. The *quan* data were mainly collected by requesting and helping each participant to take the online survey.

The interviews were transcribed and were analysed, employing thematic and narrative analysis techniques (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017), with tools like Atlas.ti aiding in identifying patterns and themes. The thematic analysis technique is useful for

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highlighting commonalities and differences across a dataset while narrative analysis is helpful in the interpretive analysis of particularity and setting it in more general contexts (Shukla et al., 2014). The individual TLS results that were generated for the participants were collated and analysed with descriptive and inferential statistics using software applications such as Microsoft Excel and SPSS. Quantitative and qualitative findings were merged/triangulated towards providing the final interpretations.

The choice of the foregoing methodologies was driven by the need to understand complex social phenomena in depth. This study's effective and rigorous integration of case study, mixed-methods, and narrative inquiry offers a nuanced, in-depth exploration of Nigerian immigrants' cross-cultural and transformative experiences. It underscores the value of employing diverse methodologies to capture the multifaceted nature of human experiences in migratory contexts. The case study approach was suitable for a detailed examination of specific subject matter, offering insights into the nuances of the situation. Mixed methods combine the strengths of qualitative and quantitative research, aligning with both interpretivist and realist epistemologies. This approach is particularly suited for exploring complex social phenomena, such as the transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants in the context of cross-cultural transition. Narrative inquiry added depth to the data, enabling an exploration of personal stories and experiences.

Significance of the Study

Significance of this study is multifaceted, with its potential to provide valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of cross-cultural transitions for Nigerian immigrants, shedding light on the nuances of their experiences and the transformative learning that may result. One, it is

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established that cross-cultural experiences are a catalyst of perspective transformation and many studies have documented transformative learning among immigrants after their cultural immersion. By delving into these aspects, the research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges, coping mechanisms, and transformative processes that characterise the cross-cultural experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. However, there is a scarcity of literature that explores the processes and outcomes of transformative learning through cross-cultural transition with regards to the migrant's preparation during the three phases of migration—pre-departure, transit, and post-arrival. This study is a provision of such needed empirical documentation. By focusing on the transformative learning outcomes of these experiences, the research aims to contribute valuable insights to the fields of immigration studies, cross-cultural psychology, and adult education, thereby informing policies and practices that can better support immigrants during their transition and integration into new cultural contexts.

Two, it is important to pay attention to the preparedness that the migrant brings to their life in the host society prior to integration because it helps us regard adult immigrants as agents, who has capacities and aspirations as well as beneficial experiences that enrich their life and learning rather than as deficit subjects that need to be filled up. Three, the findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations that emanated from this study is a significant contribution to the databases of adult and lifelong learning, transformative learning, migration studies and cross-cultural psychology. The findings of this study do not only contribute to the academic discourse on cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning but also inform policymakers and stakeholders in creating more inclusive and effective integration strategies for Nigerian immigrants in these multicultural societies. Consequently, this study provides data-based

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resources for adult educators and migration advocates. The results of the study could be beneficial to practitioners and in the sector of migration/emigration/immigration and inclusion/integration projects and management. Thus, the findings of this study have the potential to inform the development of more effective support systems, interventions, and policies aimed at facilitating successful cross-cultural transitions and promoting the well-being of Nigerian immigrants in these host countries.

Furthermore, the combination of the structure and agency theory and transformative learning theory is significant for the fields of migration studies and adult learning and education. Structure and agency theory is a relatively new theory of migration and has not been widely researched like other theories of migration such as the push-and-pull theory, functionalist theory, and networking theory. Transformative learning theory has been widely researched in the last decades, but it is still considered an evolving theory of adult learning. For instance, the deployment of transformative learning theory in cross-cultural or intercultural studies usually portrays a selective use of critical reflection only in connection with the first/primary culture of the research subjects. This study attempts to bridge this gap. Thus, this study is a major contribution to the development of each of these theories and to a possible evolution of a transformative migration theory. Moreover, Transformative learning theory originated in the United States of America and has been widely deployed and studied mostly with non-African subjects. Since this study's subjects are Nigerians, this study offers a peculiar opportunity for confirming the validity and usability of transformative learning theory as a universal adult learning theory or a metatheory. This explains why an integrative research design was deployed and transformative learning theory was used eclectically, being open to all possible strands and

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perspectives. Also, the quantitative component of the study is a vital contribution to the on-going research on the quantification of transformative learning.

Finally, this study has personal significance for me. As a Nigerian who has lived in Germany for 6 months and lived in Italy for 2 years, I have heard and witnessed stories of cross-cultural experiences leading to both transformation and deformation among Nigerian diasporas. Also, I have personally experienced a traumatic event connected to my migration decisions. I believe that there is a gap between an (Nigerian) immigrant's capacities and aspiration to reside abroad and the challenges as well as the possibilities that their migration presents for learning and living successfully in the host culture. Thus, this study holds for me a great deal of personal value in terms of a learning opportunity and an opportunity to contribute to a better awareness (among Nigeria immigrants themselves and among their host societies) and understanding of migration experiences among Nigerians and the impact of these experiences vis-à-vis cross-cultural transition and perspective transformation.

Scope of the Study

This transdisciplinary research work cuts across the fields of adult learning and transnational migration. The aim of the study was to explore preparedness for cross-cultural transition and how cross-cultural transition results in transformative learning among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. While inclusion or integration might be the desirable endpoint of cross-cultural transition, this study did not investigate the effects of cross-cultural transition or transformative learning on the immigrants' integration in the host society and it did not measure specific intercultural competencies of the immigrants. Even though "immigrants" (unlike "emigrants" or "migrants") are viewed from the lens of their presence in their host

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society and the influence of culture and structure of the host society, this study did not collect data that particularly reflect the perspectives of the host nationals. The participants of the study were restricted to Nigerians who moved from Nigeria to Italy to the United States when they were regarded (as self-reported) as adults, biologically, sociologically, or legally (documented as 18 years or older). Also, they were living in the host countries legally (documented). Also, the participants for the study at least had residence status in their host countries for studies, work, family, research, or international protection purposes.

However, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants were excluded from this study. This rationale for this decision is the fact that these groups of persons might be required to vacate their host countries at any moment, even while the study was going on. For instance, an asylum seeker is “an individual who is seeking international protection...whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it,” and not all asylum seekers ultimately become refugees (IOM, 2019, p. 14). Undocumented migrants (otherwise called illegal aliens or irregular migrants) might include individuals who are not authorised to reside in the “host” country by means of entry or because they are out of status (for instance, if their visa/permit has expired) (IOM, 2019). I assumed that the uncertain status of these groups of international migrants would necessarily confine them to the transition phase of immigration since they probably had no control over their residency in the host countries.

Positionality and Reflexivity Statement

Positionality and reflexivity are pivotal concepts in qualitative research, particularly within the fields of social and educational sciences. Positionality pertains to the recognition and critical reflection of the researcher’s social and political context, including aspects like race,

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class, gender, sexuality, and cultural background, and how these aspects influence the research process (Johnson-Bailey, 2012; Merriam et al., 2007). Understanding one's positionality is crucial in qualitative research as it impacts the relationship between the researcher and the participants, the data collection methods chosen, and the interpretation of the data. Related to positionality, reflexivity refers to the ongoing process where researchers critically examine their own role, biases, and impact throughout the research process. It is a self-awareness practice that acknowledges the researcher's influence on the research setting, data collection, and interpretation (Berger, 2015). Reflexivity requires researchers to be conscious of their own beliefs, values, and experiences, and how these may affect the research process, from framing the research questions to data analysis and reporting. This introspective approach ensures that the research findings are not merely a reflection of the researcher's personal biases or preconceptions.

Meanwhile, Savolainen et al. (2023) question the value of reflexivity statements in scientific research and argue that such statements can be problematic and may not necessarily lead to better research outcomes. However, both reflexivity and positionality can help in achieving a more balanced and authentic understanding of the studied phenomenon, reducing the risk of skewed or biased interpretations. These concepts are especially relevant in fields like adult education, transformative learning, and higher education, where the researcher's perspective can significantly influence the study's direction and findings. Acknowledging positionality is particularly important in cross-cultural studies and migration studies, where cultural contexts and social dynamics play a significant role in shaping the research process and outcomes. In summary, positionality focuses on understanding how the researcher's identity and experiences may influence the research, whereas reflexivity involves critically examining one's

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own beliefs and practices throughout the research process. In the paragraphs below, I reflect on my background in relation to the current study.

Born and raised in Nigeria, I embarked on a transformative journey by migrating to Italy for doctoral studies in Pedagogical, Educational and Training Sciences at the University of Padua. This transition was not merely geographical but also involved a profound personal challenge. During my initial months in Italy, I encountered a significant emotional setback when my partner, whom I had planned to bring from Nigeria (as we both agreed), decided to end our relationship. This experience of loss and adaptation in a new cultural context directly informs my understanding of the complexities faced by immigrants. The support I received from my colleagues, supervisor, and compatriots proved very helpful in keeping me determined and focused on my primary assignment in my host country. Indeed, I have become mentally and socially stronger and more refined. Meanwhile, having studied in diverse cultural settings, including Nigeria, Germany, Italy, and the United States, I have developed a nuanced understanding of cross-cultural dynamics. These experiences were invaluable in understanding the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrants, the focus of my doctoral research.

The focus of my doctoral research, exploring the cross-cultural preparedness, transitions, and transformations among Nigerian immigrants, is intrinsically linked to my personal journey. My experiences as an immigrant in Italy, navigating cultural differences, and undergoing personal transformations, provided a unique lens through which I viewed my research subjects. This personal connection to the research topic enhanced my empathy and understanding of the participants' experiences. In practicing reflexivity, I continuously examined how my background, experiences, and biases might shape the research process. My positionality as an immigrant, educator, and researcher shaped my interactions with participants, the questions I asked, and my

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interpretation of their narratives. My position as a Nigerian immigrant in Italy and a visiting research scholar in the United States offered me both insider and outsider perspectives in relation to the research topic. While I share a common heritage with my research participants, our experiences and interpretations of migration and adaptation may differ. Acknowledging these differences was crucial in ensuring that the research findings are a reflection of the participants' realities rather than my own.

Furthermore, the decision to adopt a critical realist research paradigm for this multiple-case mixed-methods narrative study aligns with the complex nature of the research focus. Epistemologically, critical realism allows for the exploration of the underlying causal mechanisms and structures that shape the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States as they undergo cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning. This paradigm acknowledges the limitations of direct empirical observation while seeking to uncover the deeper, often hidden, generative mechanisms that influence individuals' experiences within specific social contexts (Bhaskar, 2008). Ontologically, critical realism recognizes the existence of an external reality that is independent of human perception, while also acknowledging the influence of social and cultural factors on individuals' experiences (Archer, 1995). By adopting critical realism, I aimed to move beyond mere descriptions of the surface-level experiences of Nigerian immigrants and delve into the underlying social structures and mechanisms that shape their cross-cultural transitions.

In conclusion, my reflexivity and positionality as a researcher are shaped by a complex interplay of personal experiences, academic pursuits, and professional engagements. These elements brought depth to my understanding of the phenomena under study and guided me in conducting research that is not only rigorous but also empathetic and culturally sensitive. Also,

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the critical realist orientation was particularly relevant as it afforded me the opportunity to investigate the interplay of personal experiences, cultural dynamics, and societal structures inherent in the research focus. Connected with the following the assumption of the study are heightened in the next paragraph.

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions informed the conception and design of this study:

1. Adult immigrants acquire knowledge, skills, and values (in the pre-departure, transit, and post arrival phases of migration) in preparation for and for the purpose of easing their cross-cultural transition.
2. Challenges of cross-cultural transition are pervasive among immigrants in respect of their level of preparedness to live in another country.
3. While cross-cultural transition and transformative learning could be mutually inclusive, occur simultaneously, or occur successively, this study assumes that transformative learning transcends and outlasts cross-cultural transition.
4. Apart from having the capacity to trigger transformative learning, cross-cultural experiences of immigrants can be ingredients of transformative learning if the immigrants interact with the experiences in certain way vis-à-vis other factors.
5. Immigrants attain perspective transformation not only by questioning the assumptions that underly their primary culture but also by interrogating the assumptions or manifestations of their host culture.
6. Race or interracial context, particularly the African-Caucasian context, is a peculiar setting for cross-cultural transition and transformative learning processes and outcomes.

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7. Immigrants may honestly and accurately recollect and narrative their migration experiences can identify how the experiences led to a fundamental change in certain ways in some aspects of their lives.
8. Integrating qualitative and quantitative data is an effective strategy for adequately examining how immigrants make meaning of their experiences, interpreting the immigrants' experiences and the meanings they attached to them as well as explaining agential and structural factors that underly the experiences.

Preliminary Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations to this study. They include the following:

1. I was a member of the Nigerian immigrant community from among which the data were collected. While this status enabled me to grasp sufficient understanding of my participants and how the research should be designed, my affiliation with the community and the fact that some of the participants knew me personally possibly influenced their responses. For instance, a participant might have withheld information what they would confide in a stranger. This limitation was mitigated with a rich, explicative, and literature-informed methodology chapter that provide the reader with information to made decisions on the applicability of the study's emergent results.
2. Considering the centrality of language in culture, the tangibility of migration issues in Italy, and the fact that Italian lingua franca in one of the case studies, I was conscious that there would be some vital and relevant literature written in Italian. My lack of proficiency in Italian language limited my accessibility and utilisation of such pieces of literature. However, efforts were made to search and use literature written Italian. In some cases, I

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relied on the assistance of my Italian colleagues as well as the use of software-assisted translation of documents and databases written in Italian.

3. The study was limited in terms of time and fund availability. To ensure that these limitations did not compromise the quality of the study, the study was delimited to a manageable scope in terms of objectives and geographical coverage of the participants recruitment.

Operational Definition of Terms

The following definitions are deployed for this study.

- i. Good to Go (G2G) is a figurative phrase that refers to a migrant's aspirations, capacities, learning, and preparedness to manage transcultural experiences, engage in cross-cultural transition, and appropriate the resultant significant changes in their life.
- ii. Preparedness refers to a migrant's quality or state of being ready to anticipate and respond to uncertain or novel cross-cultural experiences and outcomes with a view to maximising the experiences for learning and realisation of their aspirations.
- iii. Cross-cultural transition is the psychosocial change process that migrants experience when they move from their habitual sociocultural context to another, thereby promoting the need for adaptation, adjustment, acculturation, and ultimately, integration.
- iv. Transformative learning "refers to processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualises, and interacts with the world" (Hoggan, 2016, p. 71).
- v. Migration refers to the movement of persons from their country of birth or of usual residence to another country of which they are not nationals.

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- vi. Emigration constitutes the process of moving from one's country of birth or of usual residence with the intent or action of crossing an international border.
- vii. Immigration constitutes the process of entering and residing in a country of which a person is not a citizen or national.
- viii. Migrant is a person who is outside a country of which they are a citizen or national and has moved, intends to move or in the process of moving to another country of which they are not a citizen or national.
- ix. Emigrant is a person leaving their country of citizenship or nationality with the intent or action to cross an international border and reside in another country of which they are not a citizen or national.
- x. Immigrant is a foreign citizen that has moved into another country regularly or irregularly and now living in the host society legally and for different purposes and may possess an immigration status such as resident, permanent resident, naturalized citizen or refugee/asylee (but not asylum seeker).
- xi. Adult is a person who is 18 years or older as recorded in their identity document or as they self-report.
- xii. Integrative research design refers to the use of multiple research designs in a study for the purpose of methodologically handling various aspects of the study.
- xiii. Multiple-case describes the aspect of this study's research design as involving more than a single case, and maybe used interchangeably with "dual-case" or "two-case."
- xiv. Mixed-methods describes this study's research design as involving qualitative approaches—including narrative interviews and the use of visual metaphors—with an embedded survey questionnaire.

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- xv. Narrative study refers to the broader process of examining and interpreting individual or collective stories and it involves multiple research design.
- xvi. Narrative inquiry specifically emphasises the methodological approach, the research design, used to investigate and make sense of personal or collective stories.
- xvii. Multiple-case mixed-methods narrative study refers to this study as conceived and implemented by integratively using the multiple case research design, the convergent mixed-methods research design, and the narrative inquiry research design.

Organisation of the Study

The study is presented in seven chapters. This chapter, Chapter One, has introduced the study by providing the background information, the purpose and questions that guided the study, overview of the theoretical and methodological approaches used, among others. Chapter Two, provides a detailed literature review of writings and studies in the major areas underpinning this study, including transformative learning, migration, and cross-cultural experiences. Chapter Three describes and details the research design and methodology of this study. Results and findings are presented in Chapter Four while Chapter Five contains the discussion of the research findings. The final chapter, Chapter Six, concludes with a summary of major findings, the implications of the findings, conclusions from the study, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and social impacts of the study.

Chapter Summary

This study aimed to explore how Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States prepare for cross-cultural transition and how their cross-cultural experiences result (or not) into perspective transformation. To achieve the aim, Chapter One introduced the fundamentals of the

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study. It started by providing a contextual background to the study, explaining key concepts. Good to Go (G2G) is used in this study as a metaphor that indicates the necessity of preparedness of migrants for cross-cultural transition and intercultural perspective transformation. It proceeded by presenting the problem statement, before highlighting the purpose and the research questions that guided the study. This was followed by an overview of the theoretical pivots of the study and then an overview of the mixed-methods approach deployed for the study. The chapter presented a discussion of the study's significance, scope, assumptions, limitations, as well as a list of operation definitions, before indicating how the study text is organised in chapters. Meanwhile, I also reflected on my background and my philosophical stance as a Nigerian studying Nigerian immigrants experiences. The next chapter provides a detailed review of the main bodies of literature that informed this study.

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CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The purpose of this mixed-methods narrative study is to explore how Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States prepared for cross-cultural transition and how the cross-cultural experiences resulted in transformative learning. This chapter sheds light on the understanding of various aspects of the topic, including immigrants' preparedness for cross-cultural transition, transformative learning processes and outcomes, the connection between cross-cultural transition and perspective transformation, personal and contextual factors affecting immigrants, and various models of transformative learning. Therefore, in the form of this chapter presents, analyses, evaluates, and synthesises existing bodies of work. The multi-lens theoretical framework for the study is also discussed. The chapter ends with an appraisal of the literature review and the chapter summary.

Migration and Migration Theories

The phenomenon of migration has been defined in various ways. Some have defined migration as involving persons moving from their usual place of residence to another place (IOM, 2019), whereas others have argued that it is "the crossing of the boundary of a predefined spatial unit by one or more persons involved in a change of residence" but not necessarily involving a change in the usual place of residence (Kok, 1999, p. 1). Other definitions have focused on the motivations, circumstances, or trajectories of migration, especially with a focus on economic reasons. According to Busse and Krause (2015), migration is the movement of some group or population from one territory to another, instigated by economic, socio-cultural, and natural factors. Similarly, migration occurs when people leave their geographical location to

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live in another area or country in order to look for a livelihood (Morrice, 2014). Meanwhile, with a focus on individuals or groups or persons that were forced to relocate from their residence, migration is defined the movement of people, and this movement includes situations where people are forced to move (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2017).

Definitions above entails that migration could be internal or external; that is, within a country or beyond. It involves people moving from one place to another in whatever circumstances and by whatever means. In any case, migration is commonly understood, as in this study, as involving crossing one country's border to another country with an intent to live in the new country for a pre-defined period or indefinitely. This definition aligns with the International Organisation for Migration's definition of "international migration"— "the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence and across an international border to a country of which they are not nationals" (IOM, 2019, p. 113). Moreover, the events of migration in a country are generally defined with respect to place of birth, residency, or duration of stay. Thus, in this study, migration is defined as the process where an individual moves away from their country of origin to reside in another country for various reasons.

Migrant is a general term that can describe people moving from one country to another in order to improve their socio-economic conditions. Migrants are any individual who is moving or has moved across an international border, away from their place of origin (Morrice et al., 2017). Migrants is a term used in a neutral sense as it disregards the direction of movement and includes movement within or across borders (S. Webb, 2017); as such, they are a heterogeneous group without any international consensus (King de Ramírez, 2021). Migrants may include economic migrants, asylees, asylum seekers, refugees, and international students (Fejes & Dahlstedt,

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2017). From the perspective of the sending country, migrants are called “emigrants” and from the perspective of their host countries, they are called “immigrants.”

Factors influencing migration are often categorized into two categories, which include push factors and pull factors. Push factors that instigate people’s attraction towards a particular country or place. These are the factors in other countries that attract people to make the choice of emigrating to the country. Morrice et al. (2017) stressed that push factors are the negative factors in a country that instigate people to migrate in search of a better, safe, and improved quality of life. Push factors include poor quality of life, high poverty, war, hunger, unemployment, terrorism, etc. These conditions sometimes lead to forced migration. People prefer to move from unfavourable conditions to a place where they can find abundance and thrive well (S. Webb, 2017). Using Nigeria as an example, people are pushed to migrate from the country due to poor political conditions, unemployment, poverty, high cost of living, etc. and search for a greener pasture in overseas countries.

Pull factors are the factors that attract migrants to the receiving country. These are the factors that are present in a country that encourage people to migrate there. These factors include a conducive environment, a good standard of living, the availability of employment opportunities, and improved quality of life that instigate the migrant’s intention to move into the country (Vandeyar, 2010). Zapata-Barrero (2017) noted that migrants are more inclined to migrate to more developed states due to the presence of cultural tolerance, employment opportunities, and quality of life in order to escape the internal social and economic situation in their country. These factors are more applicable to migrants coming from low-income or

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developing countries, where the people have greater interest in development. However, both push factors and pull factors necessitate preparation for cross-cultural experiences.

Migration theories help provide theoretical guidance for understanding people's movement across a defined border, which may be related to socio-economic, political, cultural, and ethnic factors. Authors and researchers from different fields have propounded theories and perspectives for explaining migration. Some of these theories are discussed below.

The Neoclassical Theories

The neoclassical theory is the oldest known theory explaining migration. The theory explains how migration impacts the social and economic development of a nation. According to neoclassical theory, the imbalance and inequalities between labour demand and supply among regions are the major causes of international migration. This perspective assumes that migration is influenced by distance, population densities, job opportunities available to migrants, and expected income differences (Brettell & Hollifield, 2023). That is, people moved from regions with low income and wage rates to countries with higher wage rates; they moved from densely populated environments to a more sparsely populated region (Arnold, 2012). The neo-classical migration theory has micro- and macro-level application to migration; the macro-level view of the neo-classical theory explains that the regional differences in labour demand and supply instigated the need for migration. The movement is instigated by the perceived imbalance in the wages received by labour in a particular country compared to another; this is termed factor-price inequality.

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Also, neo-classical theory at the micro level explained migration from the point of view of migrants. It sees migrants as rational individuals who make the decision to migrate after consciously calculating the cost and benefits involved (Davin, 1999). People have access to information, and as such, they are expected to go where they can earn high wages, depending on the individual's skills and the structure of the labour market. According to King (2012), neo-classical migration theory explains rural-urban movement as a developmental process where surplus labour supplies in the rural region are transferred to the urban and industrialised regions. Todaro (1969) elaborated by arguing that it is not sufficient to only look at the prevailing income differentials in the urban region but also the potential probability of finding an urban job. Every individual possesses different skills, knowledge, potential, etc.; as such, there would be differences in the gains expected from the migration process. That is, the expected returns on their migration investment. The selection of migrants by the receiving areas is mostly determined by the type of labour demanded, which is dependent on the skills possessed and educational attainment (de Haas, 2021).

Historical-Structural Theories

Historical-structural theory has its roots in Marxist political economy and world system theory (Brettell & Hollifield, 2023). It provides a different interpretation of migration and a critical view of the neo-classical theory. These theories linked the causes of migration to macro-structural forces and the disequilibrium in the economic power shaping global capitalism (Card, 2009). This theory states that people have unequal access to resources due to the unequal distribution of economic and political powers among countries, and these inequalities can be intensified with capitalist expansion. The historical structuralists have criticised the neo-classical

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theory by stating that individuals' decisions to migrate are not out of free will but are due to structural inequalities. People are forced to migrate because of the economic situation they experienced due to the inequalities in the political and economic systems. These theorists perceive migration as a result of capitalist manipulation and the inequalities in terms of trade between developed and developing nations (Borjas, 1989).

The structural inequalities have placed the underdeveloped countries in a disadvantaged position within the global economic structure; as such, people in the rural regions have become increasingly deprived of their livelihood, which instigates their migration intention to search for livelihood in the urban region (Hnatkowska & Lahiri, 2013). Thus, economic crises, such as those in agriculture, and the lure of industrial jobs in urban areas are key push and pull factors. According to Arnold (2012), the basis of migration lies in the search for a livelihood that they are deprived of due to their positioning in the global political and economic structure.

System and Network Theories

One of the most prominent theories of migration is the network and system theories. These theories provide a constructive way of explaining the reasons for migration. Network migration can also be referred to as chain migration. It is the interpersonal relationship established through kinship, friendship, and shared community ties that connects former migrants in destination areas to migrants in their origins (de Haas, 2021). The network theory explains migration as a network process, where the decision to migrate is influenced by the information from the pioneer migrants who have settled at the destination. The information flow between the destination and the origin instigates the migration intention in the potential migrants

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(King, 2012). As such, the evidence of settled migrants serves as a facilitator for migrants as it helps to reduce the risks and costs of subsequent migration.

According to Skeldon (1997), friends and relatives who have settled at a destination can easily provide information to the new migrants and assist in finding employment, accommodation, residence papers, and partners. Therefore, it is most likely that the existence of an established community for migrants in an overseas destination will increase the further movement of people to that particular place. As de Haas (2009) presented, once a sustainable social structure is created by established migrants, migration becomes self-perpetuating. People draw on network connections as a form of social capital to gain overseas' employment.

The system theory is closely related to the network migration theory. It can be seen as an extension of the network migration theory. The network theory focuses on the roles played by interpersonal relationships between migrants and non-migrants that facilitate migration processes. The social theory of migration stressed that migration affects the migrants' social environments and restructures the context in which migration takes place, both at the receiving destination and the origin (Mabogunje, 1970). The system theory assumes that migration affects the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional conditions of both the receiving and originating regions. The system theory focuses on the role of the feedback mechanism, where information about the migrant's developmental process in the destination environment is transferred to the origin. The international migration system is made up of countries exchanging migrants, facilitated by feedback mechanisms connecting the interactions between the countries.

The New Economics of Labour Migration

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The new economics of labour migration is perspective was developed to challenge the neo-classical assumptions of migration. The new economics of labour theory explains migration from the individual level to the units' level, which includes families, households, groups, or shared kinship. This perspective explains that the decision to migrate is collectively made among households and families, with the aim of increasing income and as a strategy to manage the risk in the context of failures in the labour market (Arnold, 2012). According to King (2012), this theory does not ignore an individual's behaviour but integrates it in a larger context.

Massey et al. (1993) argue that due to the difficulties in job securities and income fluctuation, families could make a member earn income through assigned economic activities in both the receiving country and the country of origin to complement the deterioration in the local income. Migrants may return to their country of origin after achieving the targeted skills, savings, and investment (de Haas, 2009). The emphasis on households in the new economics of labour migration challenges the wage differentials of the Neo-classical approach. Although wage differentials are considered a strong determinant factor in choosing abroad destinations for family members, they are also considered with other factors such as the destination's socioeconomic and political structure.

Functionalist Social Theory

This theory aligns partly with system theory. It sees society as a system with interconnected parts functioning as an organism in which equality exists in performance (E. S. Lee, 1966). These theories view migration as a significant factor that contributes to the development of the receiving regions through the flow of resources from both origin and destination countries (Brettell & Hollifield, 2023). They explain migration as the strategy

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through which individuals explore a sustainable source of income and other opportunities that enhance their standard of living. The fundamental basis of this theory is that people make the decision to migrate in order to maximise their income (King, 2012). According to the functionalist perspective, the individual's rational decision is expected to contribute to the efficient distribution of factors of production, especially through the transfer of labour from poor regions to the advanced regions and, invariably, a reverse flow of capital from prosperous regions to deprived areas in order to decrease the socio-economic and political gaps between both regions (Skeldon, 1997).

Migrants' Narratives and Experiences

Migrant narratives are frequently utilised to examine a variety of immigration-related topics, such as racism, discrimination, and economic hardship. Immigrants who are compelled to leave their nation for a better life are frequently portrayed in these narratives as courageous and resilient. Consequently, migrant narratives give a potent illustration of the immigrant experience and its influence on individuals and nations. Research has suggested that there is a relationship between migrants' narratives and their experiences. For example, Pun (2019) found that the temporally and spatially changing socio-cultural contexts are grounds for evolving new stories of the everyday lives of migrants, suggesting that migrants' experiences are related to the stories they tell. Zhang's (2017) study showed how Chinese international students' narratives reflect their past circumstances and anticipations, present experiences, and aspirations for the future. These studies show the biographical potency of narratives for exploring migrants' life course.

Migrants' experiences are related to how they are categorized by others. A study explored youth identities through self-identification and categorization, revealing how racialization and

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“othering” mediated their sense of belonging and emotional attachment to their countries of origin. (Katartzi, 2018). In fact, narratives play a crucial role in the construction of personal identities, as they shape the meanings individuals give to their lives and communities (De Fina, 2015; Golden, 1997). Identities are formed through various expression levels, from implicit narrative styles to explicit negotiation of membership categories, indicating a correlation between migrants’ experiences and their self-expression (De Fina, 2003, 2015). Together, these studies indicate that there is a relationship between migrants’ narratives and their experiences.

Furthermore, research has suggested that narrative inquiry can help us understand migrants’ experiences. The qualitative research approach of narrative inquiry focuses on the interpretation of stories or experiences. It is founded on the premise that “stories are powerful tools for understanding and making sense of the lives of individuals and communities” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 7). Through the tales people tell, narrative inquiry tries to comprehend the lived experiences of individuals, groups, and communities, with an emphasis on the meanings they attribute to these events (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Due to the complexity of the phenomenon and the necessity of capturing the various narratives of the people affected, narrative inquiry is particularly useful for examining the experiences of migrants. Stories offer insights into forced migrants’ struggles to navigate displacement and violence, re-establish identity, and witness repression in their disrupted life courses and communities (Eastmond, 2007). For example, Abkhezr (2018) found that resettled young people with refugee backgrounds use narratives to tell their future career plans and decisions.

Moreover, studies have showed that despite varied perceptions of migration issues, there has been increased integration and awareness of newcomers’ specific circumstances, particularly

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in Italy and the United States. Ambrosini (2013) observed that while immigrants are accepted on an individual level, there is a rejection of the idea of immigration in the nation's social organization, leading to tensions in Italian society. This is further complicated by the lack of acknowledgment of cultural and religious differences, particularly concerning Islam (Allievi, 2014). Despite these challenges, there have been positive actions in support of migrants, particularly at the local level (Allievi, 2014). Also, the acceptance and success of Nigerians in Italy has been attributed to the positive impact of globalization on cultural exchange and understanding (Eze, 2014). This is further supported by the presence of transnational networks and activities among West African migrants in Italy (Riccio, 2008), including Nigerians.

However, the experiences of Nigerian women trafficked to Italy for sexual exploitation highlight the vulnerabilities and challenges faced by some members of the Nigerian community in the country (Baye, 2012). Similarly, Nigerian woman in the United States experience gender-based violence, particularly intimate partner violence rooted in gender and patriarchal power play (Olatunji & Tola-Adewumi, 2023). Despite these challenges, research suggests a concerted effort to address educational inequality and promote intercultural education (Azzolini et al., 2019). There is a need to further study Nigerian immigrants' experiences, especially from cross-cultural and transformative perspectives.

Cross-Cultural Transition

Culture is commonly defined as the way of life of a group of people. According to Onosu (2020), culture is the network of beliefs shared by a particular group of individuals. Culture includes the norms, beliefs, and practices that differentiate a group from one another (Busse & Krause, 2015). Culture exhibits the practice and model of a community of people designed for

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them and used to determine their behaviour and background. Culture can be viewed from the perspective of this study as a network of shared beliefs that characterise the reality of a group and determine their interaction within predefined settings. Meanwhile, Transition is a complex concept that involves changes from one situation to another. It is the process of redefining one situation; it involves a psychological process through which people come to align with a new situation by adjusting and adapting to it in order to enable functionality.

Cross-cultural transition is the change process from one cultural setting to another. Cross-cultural transition poses challenges to individuals' personal beliefs and meanings; this is because individuals resort to subsisting their culture to learn new skills in order to function effectively in an unfamiliar cultural environment as well as manage stresses associated with the changes of life (Bethel et al., 2020). Cross-cultural transition involves the psychological processes that an individual is subjected to when they move into another culture. This process involves stages and phases, ranging from the initial stage to the adjustment phase. Zapf (1991) stated that cross-cultural transition starts with the initial stage, which is characterised by positive feelings arising from anticipation and eagerness to move into the culture, followed by a maladjustment period characterised by culture shock, and finally the achievement of adjustment and adaptation. Oberg (1960) represented the process in four stages. These stages include the honeymoon stage, the crisis stage, the recovery stage, and the adjustment stage.

The U-shape curve models shows the honeymoon as the entry point, followed by the crisis stage at the bottom of the curve and the climb up to adjustment and adaptation (Lysgaard, 1955). People who cross from one culture to another seem to go through these stages before finally integrating into another culture. Meanwhile, Collins et al.'s (2021) J-curve model has

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three stages: cultural challenges, adjustment, and mastery. The model suggests that international students do not go through a honeymoon stage but first they are confronted with cultural challenges where students are unfamiliar with the host country, equivalent of Lysgaard's (1955) 'culture shock'. In particular, culture shock is the stage of experiencing factors such as homesickness, depression, maladjustment and irritation (Ward et al., 2001). Thus, culture shock involves a set of emotional reactions to the loss of stimuli in one's culture caused by misunderstandings arising from the new culture. Culture shock may include negative mental conditions like fear, uncertainty, anxiety, discomfort, loneliness, abandonment, tension, loss, and depression that a sojourner experiences in the adjustment process in a new environment. Sabirjanovna (2023) identifies six forms of culture shock, including stress from psychological adaptation difficulties, loss of identity, feelings of loneliness, role disturbance, fear of depression and alienation, and fear of losing control in the new cultural setting.

This phenomenon often arises from differences in worldviews, values, norms, and behavioural patterns between one's native and the new culture. In this stage, an individual may be feeling disappointed about the culture of the new environment; they may start making comparisons to their own culture and feel frustrated and irritated. For example, an individual who travelled to the United States may start to dislike the American culture due to the differences between the culture and theirs. As such, this may lead to stress and negative mental health. This stage is inevitable among migrants; even a well-prepared migrant may encounter culture shock at some point (Åkerblom & Fejes, 2017). Sabirjanovna (2023) highlights the challenges in communication and behaviour that arise in this context and emphasises the importance of understanding and adapting to these cultural differences.

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Meanwhile, I reckon that emotions associated with culture shock could also be positive if they are connected to the excitement or fulfilment of aspirations to arrive and reside in the host country. This recognition of the possibility of positive culture shock is important in the context of the non-negative affect dimension of disorientation (Ensign, 2019). In any case, it has been argued that culture shock is not caused by the new environment or culture but by the individual's contact with the new environment, which creates psychological imbalance and may result in stress (Zapf, 1991). Culture shock also focuses on the way in which an individual copes with the psychological and physiological imbalances associated with adjusting to the new environment (Illeris, 2014). Every individual that expects to live and work in another culture is expected to experience culture shock during the first few months in the strange environment; however, the experience varies from person to person. This experience may constitute a disorienting dilemma and trigger transformative learning or perspective transformation.

Cross-Cultural Preparedness

Preparedness is a pervasive concept with general applicability and subject to the user's perception. There are as many connotations of preparedness as there are authors and researchers. The concept of preparedness is used in education, health, environment, and many more. Preparedness is the sum of all measures, techniques, and policies adopted before the occurrence of an event that ensure effectiveness and mitigate destruction and inconvenience that could ensue from the event (Åkerblom & Fejes, 2017). This definition provides a broader view of preparedness. Park et al. (2009) termed preparedness as individual resilience capabilities to a potential event. Going by the view of Kirschenbaum (2002), it is more feasible to focus on the

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denotative meaning of the concept, which are the activities covered by the concepts, stating that preparedness is the set of activities and tasks needed to attain the quality of being prepared.

A range of studies have explored the concept of preparedness in different contexts. In the context of crisis studies, Staupe-Delgado and Kruke (2018) observed that conceptually and practically, preparedness is proactive, continuous, and anticipatory nature. Baker and Ludwig (2018) applied the concept of preparedness to risk and disaster mitigation; it includes activities such as planning, training, resource allocation, deployment, and feedback. Baker and Ludwig (2018) also applied the concept of preparedness to risk and disaster mitigation; it includes activities such as planning, training, resource allocation, deployment, and feedback. Arulmani (2019) proposed a cultural preparedness model to understand the integration of immigrants, emphasizing the importance of their aspirations and engagement with the host country. Meanwhile, Marshall et al. (2017) found that residents' preparedness to care for diverse patients in cross-cultural context was influenced by their attitudes and exposure to such patients. These studies collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of preparedness, which encompasses knowledge, attitudes, and proactive measures.

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that preparedness reflects a state of temporal and spatial readiness for anticipated and unanticipated events. Therefore, preparedness is the state of readiness or being prepared for a potential event. In this study, the application of the concept of preparedness is limited to the cross-cultural transition. As such, in the cross-cultural context, preparedness can be defined as the state of preparation for cross-cultural transition. It is the state of readiness of the migrant for potential migration events and fallout. The preparation includes anticipating, planning, and determining the migration activities. To varying degree,

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adult migrants may prepare or not for living as an immigrant in another society (Olatunji & Fedeli, 2022a). A phenomenological study has underscored how Nigerians' immigration to the United States has both positive and negative psychosocial impacts on them (Ekwemalor, & Ezeobebe, 2019). The study showed that the immigrants' negative psychosocial experiences were connected to inadequate pre-migration preparation and the cultural differences between Nigeria and the United States. This shows that an individual who is planning to engage in a cross-cultural transition from Nigeria to Italy or the United States would need to adequately prepare and be ready for the transition in order to explore and maximise the benefits attached.

Preparedness to live in another nation is not a static or set idea. The migratory environment, individual traits, and host nation regulations and resources determine the amount of readiness needed for effective integration. Preparedness is also a dynamic and continuing activity. As they face new obstacles in the host nation, people may need to adapt and increase their resources. Preparedness is directly related to social capital. Social capital includes economic resources, social support, and access to information and services. High-social capital migrants adapt and integrate better, according to research (Marger, 2001; Nohl et al., 2006; Zhou & Bankston, 1994). It is also important to remember that the context of readiness would essentially differ for refugees, asylum seekers, and economic migrants. These groups will have different migration experiences, problems, and outcomes. Finally, prejudice, xenophobia, and racism affect migrants' experiences and readiness, as well as the host country's policies and resources for integration and adaptation.

There are different approaches to cross-cultural preparedness; however, the prominent ones among researchers include education, training, orientation, and briefing (Roskell, 2013).

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These approaches help individuals with migration intentions prepare for potential events in the host country. It provides insight into the host country's culture, norms, and geographical environment. According to S. Webb (2017), education equips an individual with a wealth of knowledge that enables the individual to adjust and adapt to anticipated situations. Education prepares cross-cultural migrants by impacting the basic knowledge of the host country, which includes its geographical settings, political and socio-cultural environment, and other factors that they may encounter in their migration journey. For instance, as Arthur (2002) has observed, immigration is increasing cultural diversity in the world of work and invariably increasing the need to prepare individuals for cross-cultural transition, including through training activities.

Training usually focuses on developing the competence and abilities to perform specific tasks. Training is often aimed at achieving a predetermined objective. Vandeyar (2010) noted that cross-cultural training is the transfer of cultural knowledge involving practicability; it includes teaching the host culture's way of life, dressing, feeding, assent, and many other cultural factors that would facilitate adjustment to the new cultural environment. Moreover, orientation helps to prepare individuals for an understanding of the new environment and how to function effectively in it. It is aimed at exposing an individual to a new situation, environment, idea, and principles. Onosu (2020) notes that orientation helps an individual function in a new environment; its teachings include how to know when to cross the road, summon a waiter, start a conversation with someone, and many more. It includes practical information about survival skills, customs, institutions, and other concepts relating to the functioning of the environment. Finally, briefing is aimed at providing the background of the host country in a concise and focused manner. It focuses on giving the most important information about the new environment within a limited timeframe. A briefing helps to provide a broad view of the new environment, including the

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culture and other relevant information that would help the individual survive in the new cultural environment.

The literature on migration preparedness emphasises the importance of various factors in an individual's ability to adapt and integrate into a new cultural and social situation. Such factors include language competence, social support networks, access to resources and services, resilience, coping strategies, cultural identity, the influence of pre-migration experiences, and post-arrival opportunities. Bierwiazzonek and Waldzus (2016) highlight the role of socio-cultural factors, while Miglietta and Tartaglia (2009) underscore the influence of length of stay, linguistic competence, and media exposure. Meanwhile, Johnsson et al. (2015) further emphasises the impact of accumulated stressors, particularly those experienced in the host country. Dan Hertz (1988) adds to this by discussing the role of identity and the migration process in the adjustment of migrants. These studies collectively underscore the complex interplay of individual, social, and cultural factors in migration preparedness.

Nevertheless, studies have suggested that immigrants face many challenges when transitioning to a new country. For instance, exposure to accumulated stressors, particularly discrimination, significantly impacted immigrants' ability to adapt (Johnsson et al., 2015). Sinacore et al. (2009) found that common obstacles to cultural transitioning for Jewish immigrants include the lack of recognition for foreign credentials and work experience, language barriers, and discrimination. Even immigrant professionals face general and career issues when transitioning to a new country (C. P. Chen & Hong, 2016; G. Lee & Westwood, 1996). These challenges make it difficult for immigrants to prepare for cross-cultural transition. Y. Taylor et al. (2021) found that three different groups of professionals who had recently arrived from the

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British Isles, China, and the former Soviet Union experienced divergent sets of characteristics that influenced their cross-cultural adjustment perceptions, suggesting that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to preparing for cross-cultural transition.

Hence, scholars have emphasised the need for a more comprehensive understanding of these stressors and the complexity of adaptation (Dow, 2011; Haslberger, 2005). These studies collectively underscore the need for a comprehensive approach to understanding migration stress and cross-cultural transition difficulties, including the roles of personal and cross-cultural experiences.

The Role of Personal Factors in Cross-Cultural Experiences

Multiple studies have indicated that individual factors such as age, gender, level of education, and prior cross-cultural experiences can play a substantial role in determining the cross-cultural transition and viewpoint transformation experiences of immigrants. Studies have suggested that older immigrants may have more difficulty adapting to a new culture than younger immigrants (Berry & Sabatier, 2011; Genkova et al., 2014) and that immigrants with a higher level of education may have an easier time adapting to a new culture than those with a lower level of education (Berry, 2005). However, the length of exposure to the host culture can also play a role, with younger immigrants being better able to identify with the host culture the longer their exposure to it (Cheung et al., 2011). Bilingual competences, academic efficacy, social support, contact with locals, and psychological adaptation have also been identified as key factors in sociocultural adaptation (Yu et al., 2020). However, the specific influence of these factors can vary depending on the context, with different literature fields emphasising different aspects of cross-cultural adaptation (Bierwiazzonek & Waldzus, 2016).

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Other personal characteristics, such as personality traits, coping styles, and self-efficacy, have also been found to be connected with immigrants' cross-cultural transition and viewpoint transformation experiences. Research suggests that immigrants with a proactive coping style and strong self-efficacy are likely to experience a more positive cross-cultural transition (Harrison et al., 1996; Hua et al., 2019; Titzmann & Jugert, 2017; Ward & Kennedy, 2001). In particular, immigrants with high levels of extraversion, emotional stability, and conscientiousness have an easier time adapting to a new society and undergo a positive viewpoint shift (Ward & Kennedy, 2001). These individuals are more likely to have higher levels of general, interaction, and work adjustment (Harrison et al., 1996), lower levels of depression (Ward & Kennedy, 2001), and more positive citizenship behaviours, particularly when faced with high cultural distance (Hua et al., 2019).

In addition, research indicates that the dynamics of immigrants' personal networks and social support systems also play a part in their cross-cultural transition and viewpoint alteration experiences. Studies have shown, for instance, that immigrants who have strong social support networks and keep close contacts with individuals from their home culture are more likely to undergo a positive viewpoint shift and have greater cross-cultural adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 2001). Summarily, several studies have concluded that personal factors such as age, gender, education level, previous cross-cultural experiences, personality traits, coping styles, self-efficacy, and social support systems can play a significant role in shaping the cross-cultural transition and perspective transformation experiences of immigrants.

The Role of Contextual Factors in Cross-Cultural Experiences

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Research has indicated that the historical and political background of migration can play an important role in affecting the cross-cultural transition and viewpoint-change experiences of immigrants. Studies have indicated, for instance, that immigrants who relocate during periods of violence or political instability in their native countries may experience significant difficulties integrating into their host society (Donato & Massey, 2016). In addition, immigrants who move as refugees or asylum-seekers may encounter specific difficulties in integrating into their host countries owing to the trauma they have endured (Donato & Massey, 2016). These challenges are further compounded by the lack of recognition of their sociocultural reintegration and the economic system's inability to absorb them (Dumon, 1986).

The institutional backdrop of migration, such as the policies and practices of host nations and the support groups for immigrants, can also play a crucial role in determining the cross-cultural transition and viewpoint change experiences of immigrants. Studies have demonstrated, for instance, that immigrants who encounter prejudice and marginalisation in their host communities may have greater difficulties assimilating and they may undergo negative mind shift (Esses et al., 2006; Kosic et al., 2005; Wood & Miller, 2016). Inversely, immigrants who have access to assistance and resources from organisations and institutions may have an easier time integrating into their host countries. Factors that contribute to the positive experiences include the structure of the sending country, ethnic diversity, wage bargaining institutions, pre-migration education, work experience, language proficiency, social capital public policies, visa length, predictability about migration duration, and citizenship acquisition rules (Delaporte & Piracha, 2018; Frattini, 2017; Huber, 2015). In conclusion, contextual variables such as home country political and economic instability, host country immigration rules and practices,

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discrimination, and marginalisation might affect Nigerian immigrants' cross-cultural transition and perspective transformation.

The influence of culture on migrants' experiences is significant. It can offer migrants a potent source of meaning and identity, helping them to make sense of their experiences and make behavioural and attitudinal adjustments. Qin et al. (2015) and Boekestijn (1988) both highlight the importance of maintaining one's native culture while also adapting to the new culture. This bicultural orientation is found to be most beneficial for adaptation. Culture may also offer migrants a helpful and nurturing learning environment, as well as a common language and set of values upon which to grow. Moreover, cultural identities and practices may be utilised to bridge the gap between the migrant's past and present, therefore creating a common knowledge of their new surroundings (Fortier, 2000). In some, structural factors, such as the historical and political context of migration, the institutional context of migration, and the setting of migration, can significantly influence the cross-cultural transition and transformative experiences of immigrants.

Perspective Transformation

Perspective transformation, as theorised by Jack Mezirow (1978b), is a process of structural change in how we perceive ourselves and our relationships, leading to more inclusive and discriminating perspectives (Mezirow, 1991a). This shift involves becoming aware of one's taken for granted assumptions and expectations, leading to a re-evaluation of their relevance (Mezirow, 1978b, 1991). The process of perspective transformation also entails a change in the way individuals perceive themselves and their relationships, often resulting in behaviour change (Mezirow, 1991). The term "perspective transformation" is often used interchangeably with

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“transformative learning”. Over the years, perspective transformation has evolved as transformative learning, a more encompassing adult learning theory. Despite the broad range of outcomes associated with transformative learning, the core idea of a significant change in perspective remains consistent (Hoggan, 2016). Thus, perspective transformation in adult learning involves a process of critically examining and revising one’s frames of reference, leading to a more inclusive and discriminating perspective (Cranton, 2010, 2016; Mezirow, 1991, 1997, 2000, 2006).

In cross-cultural and migration contexts, perspective transformation can be seen as the marked change that occurs in one’s perspective, views, and behaviour resulting from experiencing a new cultural experience, especially through their movement from their habitual culture to a new cultural environment (Hoggan & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2022; Mezirow, 1991a). Perspective transformation involves significant changes in one’s meaning, or the frameworks used to make meaning from events, involving the important mediating roles of emotions (Mälkki & Green, 2014). To Illeris (2014), the essence of perspective transformation or transformative learning is the evolution of identity. Every individual has some predefined social and psychological perspectives from which they give meaning to events and situations. These perspectives have been instilled in them from childhood, coupled with the cultural environment. Migrants moving into another country would experience new behaviours, norms, values, and meanings; as such, there is a need for a change in their perspective in order to aid effective alignment and transition processes.

Adult Education and Migration

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Globalisation and the resultant increased migration have renewed the interest of scholars in adult education field to study the learning needs of adults in the context of migration (Hoggan & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2022; Morrice, 2014). The cycle of marginalisation of migrants necessitates the need for social inclusiveness facilitated by adult education. Adult education plays an important role in migration. It exposes individuals to an understanding of culture, languages and trainings that could enhance their effectiveness. Continuous education and lifelong learning are essential for adults to enhance their adaptive capacities and integrate into a changing socio-professional environment (Yurtaeva et al., 2018). This is particularly important for unskilled or unemployed adults who must develop new identities and skills to compete in the labour market (Illeris, 2000).

Access to high-quality adult learning is crucial for developing skills and competencies that contribute to employability and competitiveness (Ugwu & Oyebamiji, 2021). Moreover, adult education can be seen as an enabler for migrants in new cultures (Onosu, 2020). Many travellers or immigrants move to a new environment with different cultures, values, languages, lifestyles, and environmental settings; thus, they need to adapt and learn in order to enhance their adjustment process (Phillips, 2019; Trifanescu, 2015). Adult education helps to ensure that these individuals learn and integrate the culture into their own. Therefore, adult education has positive interconnections with migration in that it helps in the achievement of the transition process. The transition and transformation processes of migration are complex activities that require adequate preparation by the migrants. Various forms of adult learning might be useful for migrants. Some are examined below.

Migration Education and Training

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Migration education and training are mechanisms that help equip the minds of individuals with the necessary information and mindsets that would aid their adjustment processes. Vandeyar (2010) stressed that migration training provides migrants with the information, skills and capabilities needed to achieve their migration objectives. Migration training includes aspects such as employment orientation, pre-departure and coping orientation, vocational training and other skills that help the migrants have a realistic picture of the new cultural environment (Busse & Krause, 2015).

Migration training and migrant education provide migrants with the coping skills, capabilities, and survival strategies that might encourage and motivate them to deal with unfamiliar situations and events that they may experience in the new society. Morrice et al. (2017) stated that aligning migrants to their new environment is a vital strategy that can be adopted to aid the achievement of migrants' migration objectives; it links them with the opportunities in the new environments; this alignment is achieved through education and training. According to the (Bauloz, et al., 2019), equipping migrants with skills through education and training has been a fundamental key to ensuring their sustainability in the new cultural environment. Generally, skill assessment is necessary to identify and match migrants' skills and capabilities with the new environment.

Intercultural Competency

Intercultural competence is an adaptive capability that emanates from the integrative perspective of individuals and allows them to accept the conditions for living in a new environment (S. Webb, 2017). Intercultural competence involves looking at the world from a different perspective. Intercultural competence is the set of skills and abilities that ensure

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migrants adaptation to the new cultural environment. It includes factors such as language skills, communication, friendliness, etc. Cultural competence is a learning process that involves learning about other cultures by building relationships through observations, listening, and questioning where necessary in order to understand and accept the cultures (Portera, 2014). Deardorff (2015) stressed that it is necessary to develop positive emotions and an appreciation of other people's cultures; intercultural competence would help to achieve this through its elements, which include empathy, self-esteem, attitude, and interaction.

Portera (2014) studied the concept of intercultural competence and concluded that intercultural competence is the ability of an individual to differentiate between the cultures, behaviours, and attitudes of others in order to appreciate and respect them (Busse & Krause, 2015). Tarchi and Surian (2022) identified some of the features of intercultural competence; they include awareness of other people's cultures, understanding of other people's cultures, adapting to other people's cultures, and respecting other people's cultures. Intercultural competence is an antecedent for equity, diversity, and inclusion. Intercultural competence is an important concept in migration studies. It is vital for an individual migrating to another cultural environment to integrate intercultural competence in his preparation for transition.

Civic Learning and Citizenship Education

Civic learning, or citizenship education, is another mechanism to assist migrants' migration processes. Citizenship education maybe carried out by a variety of government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that is aimed at preparing migrants or immigrants to be accepted legally and socially into the new cultural environment as citizens (Zapata-Barrero, 2017). Civic education is a set of curricula designed to imbibe a set of values, behaviours,

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attitude, and civic awareness in an individual immigrating to a new administrative environment (Vandeyar, 2010). Civic education provides the migrants with the appropriate mindset necessary for inhabitants of a defined independent location, which makes them referred to as members (Morrice et al., 2017). Citizenship education instils in learners the ultimate commitment to peace, fundamental rights, and the sustainability of nations (Inuwa et al., 2023). It encourages learners to become promoters and agitators for peace and development (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2017). Education helps the migrants develop enthusiasm for adapting to the new cultural environment. Also, it is used as an instrument of assimilation by host countries (Guo, 2010).

Transformative Learning

The concept of transformative learning was developed by Jack Mezirow in the 1970's from his women's college re-entry study (Mezirow, 1978a, 1978b). This theory focus on changing learner's thinking about their world and themselves (Mezirow, 1991a). Transformative learning theorist views learning as a factor that may change the behaviour and perspectives of people. For instance, someone studying the religious of the world may gain new perspective on religions and culture as they learn more which may change their assumptions. This theory uses situations and dilemmas to challenge individual views and beliefs, and learners evaluate their beliefs and assumptions using critical thinking and learn more about themselves in the process (E. W. Taylor, 2017a). These theorists suggest that learning is a rational process, where learners reflect to know more (Mezirow, 1991a, 2000).

Transformative learning is the process of changing an individual's perspective. Migrants do not only cross geographical boundaries but are also socio-culturally inclusive (Illeris, 2014); as such, the crossing has generated changes in their perspectives. Transformational learning is

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the process of constructive and meaningful learning that includes the acquisition of knowledge in culturally diverse context and provides support in ways in which learners consciously make meaning of their lives (Finnegan, 2022). This type of learning results in fundamental changes in people's worldview because of shifting from mindless acceptance of available information to conscious learning experiences. According to Illeris (2014), transformational learning is the process that leads to changes in individual thoughts, feelings, belief, and behaviours. It permanently alters the way individuals view the world.

Transformative learning involves the expansion of an individual's consciousness through the transformation of perspectives. Transformative learning as a theory comprises three dimensions, including psychological, which is the understanding of the self; convictional, which deals with the belief systems; and behavioural, which involves changes in lifestyle (Glisczinski, 2007). Transformative learning is for individuals to change their perspectives, assumptions, and beliefs by consciously making and implementing plans that bring new ways of defining their world (Stuckey et al., 2013). Transformational learning focuses on the idea that learners can adapt their views to the new environment. People travelling across international boundaries are equipped with social identity provided by their former lives, which they have not subjected to examination before; the international crossing may cause disruptions to individuals views. Transformative learning provides a framework that explains how migrants experience changes in perspectives. It involves the development of new interpretations and meanings for a perspective.

Migrants Learning Needs and Transformative Learning

Migrants have unique needs that must be addressed for successful learning, cross-cultural transition, and integration. Stability, including family and friends, secure residence status, and

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realistic perspectives, is crucial (Fritz & Donat, 2017). Informal learning and education in transnational family spaces, including the construction of ethno-national identities and the passing of cultural traditions, are important for migrants (Alenius, 2018). Language education is a key factor in social inclusion, with a need for comprehensive and multidisciplinary language teaching programs (Mirici, 2020). Informal learning in workplaces and communities can support skilled migrants' career adaptability and employment but may also present challenges related to multiple identities (S. C. Webb, 2015). Moreover, studies have emphasised the importance of flexible language learning approaches and the need for recognition of migrants' diverse capacities and needs (Ćatibušić et al., 2021; & Morrice et al., 2021). These findings indicate that migrants have a significant need for language training and intercultural communication skills in order to improve their integration into the host culture.

Migration can be as exciting as it is stressful, thus its potential to catalyse transformative learning. As Hoggan and Hoggan-Kloubert (2022), posit adult learning in migration society is essentially transformative. Vertovec (2004) suggests that migrant transnationalism may be connected to transformative learning. Migrants experience a variety of obstacles to learning and must frequently adopt a transformational learning strategy to properly navigate their new environment. As they acclimatise to their new surroundings, migrants are likely to encounter a wide range of emotions and experiences. In the form of displacement, migration may leave people feeling lost, confused, and unwelcome. In contrast, migration may help people learn about other cultures, beliefs, and ways of life. Cultural experiences can lead to self-reflection and change in transformative learning. Transformative learning can be seen as an on-going process and a response to the difficulties and possibilities presented by new cultures, beliefs, and lifestyles. Transformation requires rethinking values, perspectives, and identities beyond self

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(Powell & Roediger, 2012). Migration and transformative learning in a cross-cultural setting can develop self-awareness, self-esteem, intercultural communication, and cultural knowledge. It can also improve empathy, understanding, and appreciation of intercultural communication.

More studies have showed the connection between migrants and transformative learning. Migrants who participate in social networks and learning communities are more likely to engage in transformational learning (S. C. Webb, 2015). Mentors who engage with immigrant mentees often engage in informational and transformational learning themselves, thereby disrupting inequality between newcomers and the host society (Shan & Butterwick, 2017). Moss and Brown (2014) found that Recognition of Acquired Competencies (RAC) processes may lead to transformative learning for immigrant learners, and Morasso's (2012) study showed that learning is a precondition for a migrant's interest in and engagement with the host country's culture and institutions.

In addition, transformative learning may help migrants appreciate the culture of their new home. Migrants can get a greater grasp of the culture of their host nation through transformative learning, which can help them recognise the distinctions between their own culture and the host culture (Olatunji & Fedeli, 2022b). Also, Merriam and Ntseane (2008) found that culture shapes the process of transformational learning in Botswana. International graduate students from Africa experienced transformative learning through both educational and non-educational-related activities (Kumi-Yeboah, 2014). These studies suggest that African contextual factors contribute to transformative learning among Africans.

By recognising and respecting the differences between the two cultures, migrants might become more receptive to new experiences and ideas, leading to more meaningful connections

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with the residents of their host nation. Migrants might use transformative learning as a potent transitional aid in their new home. Migrants might obtain a greater grasp of their host country's culture and their own cultural heritage through transformational learning. This knowledge can help individuals feel more connected to their new home, recognise the differences between the two cultures, and engage with the residents of the host nation more successfully. Therefore, it seems that transformative learning may be a way for migrants to adapt to their new surroundings. However, more research is to comprehensively understand how migrants prepare or not prepare for cross-cultural transition and their transformative learning experiences. Hence, multiple-case mixed-methods narrative study explores how Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States prepare for and experience cross-cultural transitions and how their cross-cultural experiences result in transformative learning. To achieve the aim of the study, critical realism, aspiration-capacities framework, and transformative learning theory were deployed as the theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of a study is an important component of the overall research design. It provides a structure for understanding the purpose of the research, the theoretical concepts that are being studied, and the methods that are used to collect and analyse the data. A well-constructed theoretical framework serves to guide the research process and provide a structure for interpreting the results of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The theoretical framework can also be used to identify potential areas for further exploration and to identify potential alternative explanations for observed patterns in the data. Three theories deployed for

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this study are critical realism aspirations-capacities framework, and transformative learning theory. Hence,

Critical Realism

Critical realism is a philosophical paradigm that emerged in the early 20th century (Bhaskar, 1989). It is an ontological stance that maintains that reality is composed of both an objective, tangible world of material objects and a subjective, intangible world of values and meanings (Bhaskar, 1975, 1989; Collier, 1998). Critical realism is an attempt to bridge the divide between positivism and post-structuralism, combining the emphasis on empirical evidence of the former with the focus on interpretation of the latter. Critical realism assumes that knowledge is not confined to what can be observed and measured but instead involves the interpretation of the context, meaning, and implications of the data (Collier, 1994).

The foundation of critical realism is the idea that both physical and social entities make up reality and that both physical and social forces shape the social world. Critical realism asserts that there is an “objective reality” that is independent of our beliefs and interpretations and that our understanding of this reality is constructed through our interactions with it. It further claims that our knowledge of the world is partial and fallible and that we must be open to revising our beliefs as new evidence and perspectives emerge. Critical realism holds that the material level is the foundation of social life and that social phenomena are shaped by underlying material conditions, emphasizing the existence of unobservable events that cause observable ones (Bhaskar, 2020). It also maintains that social phenomena are not reducible to material causes and that there are contextual and systemic structures and processes that have an independent causal effect on social outcomes (Lawani, 2021).

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Elements of critical realism. Critical realism recognises that the social world is complex and that different perspectives can offer insight into the same phenomenon (Bhaskar, 1975). As such, critical realism seeks to understand reality through the synthesis of different perspectives and techniques (Collier, 1994). According to Danermark et al. (2019), the core elements of critical realism include:

1. **Dialectical critical realism:** This element emphasises the importance of understanding the dialectical relationship between social structures and human agency. It argues that social structures are both constraining and enabling, and that human agency is both shaped by and shaping of these structures.
2. **Transcendental realism:** This element emphasises the importance of understanding the underlying mechanisms that generate social phenomena. It argues that social phenomena are not directly observable but are instead the result of underlying mechanisms that can be inferred through empirical research.
3. **Judgmental rationality:** This element emphasises the importance of making value judgments in social research. It argues that social research should be guided by normative principles, such as the pursuit of social justice and human well-being, and that these principles should be used to evaluate the validity of empirical claims.

These core elements capture the essence of critical realism as a philosophical approach that aims to explain social phenomena by identifying the underlying structures that generate them. On the surface, critical realism appears to be an attractive approach to social science. It allows researchers to look beyond the surface of social phenomena and explore the underlying

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structures and forces that shape our world. Its emphasis on interdependency and open-mindedness can also help create a more inclusive research environment.

Critique of Critical Realism. While critical realism has been praised for its ability to integrate subjective and objective elements, it has also been critiqued for its difficulty in operationalizing its concepts and its reliance on abstract and complex theories. It is not always clear how to operationalize the concepts of critical realism in research, and it can be difficult to test the assumptions of the approach. Brown et al. (2002) critiques the method of abstraction in critical realism, suggesting that it fails to capture the “inner connection” of social phenomena. Though critical realism attempts to explain how subjective and objective elements interact and shape social phenomena, its reliance on abstract concepts makes it difficult to operationalize and test empirically.

For example, Bhaskar’s dialectical critical realism posits that social phenomena are shaped by both structure and agency (Bhaskar, 1989), but the precise relationship between these elements remains vague. Lewis (2000) critiques the ontological status of social structure in dialectical critical realism, particularly the claim that it is ontologically irreducible to people and their practices. These discussions highlight the ongoing complexity and ambiguity in understanding the precise relationship between structure and agency. As such, it is difficult to operationalize and measure the effects of structure and agency in empirical studies. Furthermore, as a philosophical paradigm for social science research, critical realism presents challenges in its application due to the need for value judgements and interpretive decisions (Wynn & Williams, 2012). Hammersley (2009) argues that critical realism fails to effectively justify critical social research, as it struggles to derive evaluative and prescriptive conclusions from factual

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investigation. These critiques highlight the complexities and limitations of applying critical realism in practice.

Application of Critical Realism in the Study. Critical realism has been applied to a variety of fields, including economics, sociology, education, and psychology (Archer, 2003). It has been used to explain a range of phenomena, from gender roles and power dynamics to the structure of markets and economic systems (Bhaskar, 1975, 1989). Additionally, critical realism has been used to develop theories of social change (Collier, 1994, 1998). In the context of immigrant experiences and learning, critical realist approach investigates the broader structural and material conditions that shape the experiences of immigrants, and examining how they affect the ways in which immigrants learn.

Critical realism can be applied to understand cross-cultural experiences and transformative learning of migrants by examining the ways in which migrants are able to construct new understandings of their identities and of the world around them through their experiences. This form of learning involves engaging with a variety of societal and cultural norms and values, as well as recognising the limitations of existing systems and structures. Through this process, migrants can gain a deeper understanding of their own identities and perspectives, as well as those of others. This understanding can then be used to inform changes in their own lives as well as to help shape the societies in which they live.

Critical realism provides a philosophical framework for understanding the broader structural and material conditions that shape immigrants' aspirations, capacities, learning as well as contextual realities. Thus, by combining this framework with the aspirations-capacities framework and transformative learning theory, it is possible to gain a more comprehensive

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understanding of immigrant experiences and learning. Additionally, the frameworks can be used to inform strategies and practices for supporting immigrant learning.

Aspirations-Capacities Framework

Hein de Haas, a Dutch sociologist, is the author of the aspirations-capabilities framework or structure and agency theory, a new theory of migration. His 2021 paper elaborates the framework to advance our understanding of human mobility as an intrinsic part of broader processes of social change (de Haas, 2021). The aspirations-capabilities framework is a theoretical framework that conceptualizes migration as a function of people's capabilities and aspirations to migrate within given sets of perceived geographical opportunity structures (de Haas, 2021). It distinguishes between the instrumental (means-to-an-end) and intrinsic (directly wellbeing-affecting) dimensions of human mobility. The framework draws on Berlin's (1969) concepts of positive and negative liberty to conceptualize how macro-structural change shapes people's migratory aspirations and capabilities.

Aspirations-capabilities framework is based on the idea that migration is an intrinsic part of broader processes of social change and development (de Haas, 2021). It conceptualises how macro-structural change shapes people's migratory aspirations and capabilities. Drawing on the sociological concept of structure and agency, the aspirations-capacities framework posits that individual migration decisions and experiences are not solely determined by personal aspirations or structural forces, but rather by the interplay between these two factors. Individuals' aspirations, encompassing their desires for a better life, improved economic opportunities, social mobility, or escape from adverse conditions, play a pivotal role in initiating the migration process. These aspirations are deeply embedded within the social and cultural context in which

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individuals live and are influenced by factors such as family expectations, community norms, and societal values.

The framework helps to understand the complex and often counter-intuitive ways in which processes of social transformation and “development” shape patterns of migration and enable us to integrate the analysis of almost all forms of migratory mobility within one meta-conceptual framework (de Haas, 2021). Structure and agency theory posits that migration is a function of aspirations and capabilities to migrate within given sets of perceived geographical opportunity structures (de Haas, 2021). The theory also recognises that moving and staying are complementary manifestations of migratory agency and that human mobility is defined as people’s capability to choose where to reside, including the option to stay, rather than as the act of emigrating itself (de Haas, 2021). In essence, the aspirations-capacities framework offers a nuanced understanding of migration by emphasizing the interplay between individual agency and structural forces. It recognizes that while individuals have agency in pursuing their aspirations, their choices and opportunities are profoundly shaped by the broader social, economic, and political structures within which they are embedded.

Criticism of Aspirations-Capacities Framework. While the aspirations-capabilities framework has been widely used to understand human mobility, it has also faced some criticisms. Preibisch et al. (2016) raise concerns about the capacity approach’s application in policy and governance, emphasizing the need to integrate human rights and migrant worker rights. The approach may also be criticized for vagueness in its definition of what constitutes an aspiration or capability (Chiappero-Martinetti, 2008) to migrate. Thus, one criticism of the aspirations-capacities framework is that it does not account for the role of power relations in

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shaping migration aspirations and capabilities (de Haas, 2021). Another criticism is that the framework does not consider the role of social networks in shaping migration decisions (de Haas, 2021; Frediani et al., 2019). Critics argue that social networks can play a significant role in shaping migration decisions by providing information, resources, and support to potential migrants.

Despite these criticisms, the aspirations-capabilities framework has been influential in advancing our understanding of human mobility as an intrinsic part of broader processes of social change and development. The aspirations-capacities framework offers a robust analytical framework for understanding the complexities of migration decision-making and experiences. Obi (2021) highlights the approach's potential to address the shortcomings of neoclassical migration theories, particularly in understanding the influence of capabilities on migration decisions and outcomes. This framework provides a nuanced lens through which to comprehend the intricate interplay between individual aspirations and structural forces, offering valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners in the field of migration studies.

Application of Aspirations-Capacities Framework the Study. The aspirations-capacities framework, also known as the structure and agency theory of migration, serves as a valuable analytical tool for understanding the migration experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States in the context of their cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning. This framework provides a comprehensive lens through which to comprehend the interplay between individual aspirations and the structural constraints and opportunities that shape migration decisions and experiences. In the context of this study, the aspirations-capacities framework can be applied to explore the motivations, aspirations, and capacities of Nigerian

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immigrants as they navigate the process of cross-cultural transitions and the potential outcomes of transformative learning.

From an aspirational perspective, the framework allows for an in-depth exploration of the desires, motivations, and aspirations that drive Nigerian immigrants to undertake cross-cultural transitions. It enables this study to examine the individual and collective aspirations of migrants, encompassing their hopes for improved economic opportunities, social mobility, cultural integration, and personal growth. By applying the framework, this study delves into the diverse and dynamic aspirations of Nigerian immigrants, recognizing the influence of their social and cultural contexts, family expectations, and societal values on their migration decisions and experiences.

Simultaneously, the capacities aspect of the framework provides a lens through which to understand the resources, capabilities, and constraints that shape the migration experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. This includes an exploration of economic resources, social networks, legal status, educational qualifications, and access to information that influence their preparedness for cross-cultural transitions. Applying the framework, the study considers the structural factors that shape the capacities of Nigerian immigrants, including labour market conditions, immigration policies, access to social support networks, and the broader socio-political context within which they pursue their aspirations. This intersection provides insights into the opportunities and constraints that influence their experiences of cross-cultural transitions and the potential for transformative learning.

In conclusion, the aspirations-capacities framework provides a robust analytical lens for investigating the migration experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States,

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particularly in the context of their cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning. By considering the interplay between individual aspirations, structural forces, and migration capacities, this framework offers valuable insights into the complex dynamics of migration decision-making and the diverse experiences of migrants as they navigate cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning processes.

Transformative Learning Theory

As earlier explained, transformative learning theory is a major theory of adult learning developed by Jack Mezirow (Merriam & Bierema, 2013) that provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and promoting human development through learning. Transformative learning theory seeks to facilitate a shift in perspective, leading to a transformation in the learner's understanding and worldview (Mezirow, 1991a, 2009). Mezirow's transformative learning theory emphasises that transformation goes beyond simply acquiring new knowledge; it involves a fundamental shift in the learner's perspective, which subsequently influences their beliefs, assumptions, and experiences (Mezirow, 1978b; 1991a). Transformative learning involves the process of understanding, critically reflecting on, and transforming existing frames of reference in order to make sense of new experiences and create new meanings (Mezirow, 1991a).

Thus, transformative learning theory focuses on the process of transforming one's current behaviour beliefs, values, and perspectives in order to better understand and respond to the world around them (Cranton, 2016; Hoggan, 2016; Stuckey et al., 2013). The theory was first developed by Jack Mezirow in the 1970s, and it has since been used in various fields such as education, counselling, and organizational management. The theory is based on the idea that

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learning is a process in which the learners transform problematic frames of reference, such as democracy, justice, and even love (E. W. Taylor, 1997; Mezirow, 1991a; Wolff, 2022). The aim of transformative learning is to make these frames reflective and open for change.

Transformative learning theory emphasises the importance of reflection, dialogue, and critical reflection in order to promote personal and societal transformation (E. W. Taylor, 2017b; Mezirow, 1978a, 1991a, 2000, 2009). Mezirow's theory is grounded in the concept of critical reflection, which involves understanding and reflecting on one's experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of them. Transformative learning involves a cognitive process of critical reflection, which leads to a shift in one's perception of the world and their role in it (Mezirow, 2000). This shift in perspective is believed to result in a transformation of consciousness, allowing individuals to develop new ways of understanding and responding to the world around them (Mezirow, 2000).

Mezirow (2000) argued that transformative learning is a process of reinterpreting one's experience in light of new understandings, which can lead to personal, professional, and social changes. Transformative learning involves a process of critically reflecting on one's assumptions and beliefs, a process of perspective transformation (Mezirow; 1991a, 2000). However, several scholars like E. W. Taylor (1997), Dirkx (1998, 2001), Cranton (2006, 2016), Stuckey et al. (2013), and Hoggan (2016) have highlighted that transformative learning occurs beyond the realm of critical reflection and rational discourse. According to Hoggan (2016) transformative learning refers to processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualizes, and interacts with the world (Hoggan, 2016). This type of learning is based on the idea that individuals can gain insight into their own experiences and develop a greater understanding of the world. According to this theory, learning is both a cognitive and a

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social process that involves the individual's engagement with and transformation of the environment (Cranton & Taylor, 2013; O'Sullivan, 2002).

Meanwhile, Stuckey et al.'s (2013) and Stuckey et al.'s (2022) multiple perspectives of transformative learning include the cognitive/rational, extrarational, and social critique strands or domains. The framework has an accompany online survey tool called Transformative Learning Survey (available at <https://sites.psu.edu/transformativelearning/>). Stuckey et al. (2013) explain that transformative learning theory can be categorised into three:

One is the cognitive/rational perspective... that emphasises rationality, critical reflection, and ideal conditions for discourse. This is a constructivist and universal view of learning... The second perspective has been called an extrarational perspective... it emphasises the emotive, imaginal, spiritual, and arts-based facets of learning, those that reach beyond rationality... The third is the social critique perspective... that emphasises ideological critique, unveiling oppression, and social action in the context of transformative learning. (p. 213-214)

As Table 2.1 shows, each perspective/domain has various processes of transformative learning. The three strands and associated processes provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the diverse dimensions of transformative learning, encompassing rational, emotive, social, and ideological aspects. This model allows for a holistic approach to transformative learning, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of human development and the complex interplay of cognitive, emotional, and social processes in the transformative learning experience.

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Table 2.1*Transformative Learning Processes*

| Strand | Process | Description of domain |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Cognitive/rational | Critical reflection Action Experience Disorienting dilemma Discourse | The cognitive/rational perspective emphasises rationality, critical reflection, and ideal conditions for discourse. This is a constructivist and universal view of learning, explaining a process of constructing and appropriating new or revised interpretations of the meaning of one's experience with a goal of greater personal autonomy and independence. |
| Beyond rational/extrarational | Arts-based Dialogue/Support Emotional Imaginal/ Soul work Spiritual | The second perspective has been called an extrarational perspective. It emphasises the emotive, imaginal, spiritual, and arts-based facets of learning, those that reach beyond rationality. This view of recognizes personal, intuitive, and imaginative ways of knowing that lead to individuation (the development of the self as separate from, but integrated with, the collective of humanity). |
| Social critique | Ideology critique Unveiling oppression Empowerment Social action | The third is the social critique perspective that emphasises ideological critique, unveiling oppression, and social action in the context of transformative learning. Its goal is social transformation by demythize reality, where the oppressed develop critical consciousness. |

Note: Based on Stuckey et al. (2013, p. 213–214) and Transformative Learning Survey results template

The model, as Table 2.2 shows, essentially categorises the behavioural or cognitive effects that occur after a transformational event into four outcome domains: acting differently, self-awareness, open perspective, and worldview shift (Stuckey et al., 2013; Stuckey et al., 2022). These transformative learning outcomes collectively illustrate the profound impact of the transformative learning process, encompassing behavioural changes, heightened self-awareness,

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increased openness, and a fundamental shift in worldview. These outcomes reflect the transformative potential of engaging in critical reflection, relational learning, and spiritual experiences, highlighting the multifaceted nature of transformative learning experiences and their impact on individuals' beliefs, behaviours, and relationships.

Table 2.2

Transformative Learning Outcomes

| Outcome | Description |
|--------------------|--|
| Acting Differently | As a result of TL, individuals revise their perspectives, values, and beliefs, and they then act differently based on these revised perspectives. Acting differently might be reflected in acting differently in relationships and how people go about their everyday life. |
| Self-awareness | As a result of critical reflection, introspection, imagining alternatives, relational learning, and spiritual experiences, individuals increase their awareness of who they are. This means that they develop their understanding of their values, beliefs, and assumptions, both at a personal level and in their relation to others. |
| Openness | One outcome of TL is becoming more open to considering and understanding others' perspectives, values, and beliefs. |
| Shift in Worldview | TL is often described as a deep shift in perspectives. This can take place in relation to a person's world view (philosophy, religious beliefs, political views). |

Note: Based on Stuckey et al. (2013, p. 213–214) and Transformative Learning Survey results template

Critique of Transformative Learning Theory. Transformative learning theory has been widely used in adult learning contexts for many decades. However, it has also faced some criticisms. One classical criticism of transformative learning theory is its heavy emphasis on individual cognitive processes and personal reflection, which may overlook the broader social,

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cultural, and structural influences on learning (DeSapio, 2017; E. W. Taylor, 2008). Critics argue that by focusing primarily on the individual's cognitive development, transformative learning theory may neglect the impact of systemic inequalities, power dynamics, and social structures that shape learning experiences and outcomes. Transformative learning theory has been criticized for its limited attention to power dynamics, social contexts, and the influence of broader societal structures on learning and transformation (Brookfield, 2000; Illeris, 2014). Critics argue that transformative learning theory may not adequately address the ways in which social inequalities, cultural norms, and institutional barriers shape individuals' opportunities for transformative learning and limit their agency in effecting change.

Another criticism of transformative learning theory is its overemphasis on rationality, critical reflection, and cognitive processes, potentially neglecting the role of emotions, intuition, and non-cognitive aspects of learning (Illeris, 2014). Critics argue that the exclusive focus on rational and reflective processes may not fully capture the complexity of transformative learning experiences, particularly in non-Western or non-dominant cultural contexts where alternative ways of knowing and learning are valued (Cranton & Taylor, 2013; E. W. Taylor & Laros, 2014; E. W. Taylor & Snyder, 2012). In addition, application of transformative learning theory in intercultural contexts often classically fail to acknowledge that adults can, in some way, critically challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions of their host cultures as much as that of their origin cultures (Olatunji & Fedeli, 2022b).

Despite these criticisms, transformative learning theory has been influential in advancing our understanding of adult learning and development. Mezirow (1991b) has acknowledged the role of cultural contexts in transformative learning and the theory has been applied in various

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contexts. These criticisms highlight the need for continued critical engagement with transformative learning theory and a more nuanced consideration of the social, cultural, and structural dimensions of transformative learning experiences. Meanwhile, adopting the framework by Stuckey et al. (2013) seems to take of the criticisms of transformative learning theory by comprehensively acknowledging critical, emotional, social, and communal components of transformative learning.

Application of Transformative Learning Theory in the Study. This study on Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States and their cross-cultural transitions aligns with the principles of transformative learning theory. The study aims to explore how cross-cultural experiences result in transformative learning, which resonates with the core principles of transformative learning theory. The study's focus on the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in navigating cross-cultural transitions reflects the potential for transformative learning to occur within the context of cultural adaptation and intercultural encounters. The experiences of these immigrants may cause disorienting dilemma, prompt a process of critical reflection, and the re-evaluation of assumptions and beliefs, which are central to transformative learning theory.

The framework of transformative learning theory outlined by Stuckey et al. (2013), encompassing multiple perspectives, including the cognitive/rational, extrarational, and social critique strands or domains, provides a comprehensive lens through which to understand the diverse dimensions of transformative learning experiences. It acknowledges the multifaceted nature of human development and the complex interplay of cognitive, emotional, and social processes in the transformative learning experience. The study's exploration of how Nigerian immigrants prepare for and experience cross-cultural transitions aligns with the transformative

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learning outcomes identified in the framework, including acting differently, self-awareness, openness, and a shift in worldview. The potential for individuals to revise their perspectives, values, and beliefs, increase their self-awareness, become more open to considering others' perspectives, and undergo a deep shift in perspectives reflects the transformative potential inherent in cross-cultural experiences.

Furthermore, the study's mixed-methods narrative approach allows for a nuanced exploration of the multifaceted nature of transformative learning experiences among Nigerian immigrants, encompassing especially because this framework has an accompanying online survey which was adopted for the quantitative component of the study. In summary, the study on Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States and their cross-cultural transitions provides a rich context for examining the application of transformative learning theory. The experiences of these immigrants offer valuable insights into the potential for transformative learning to occur within the complex dynamics of cross-cultural adaptation, personal growth, and intercultural understanding. The transformative learning theory provides a robust framework for understanding the potential shifts in perspectives, values, and beliefs that may occur as a result of cross-cultural experiences, highlighting the transformative potential inherent in the study's focus on the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States.

In conclusion, the integration of critical realism, the aspirations-capacities framework, and transformative learning theory offers a robust and comprehensive theoretical foundation for exploring the cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. Critical realism facilitates an understanding of the complex interplay between individual agency and structural conditions, recognizing the

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importance of both tangible and intangible elements in shaping immigrants' experiences. The aspirations-capacities framework adds depth by conceptualizing migration as a function of individual capabilities and aspirations, influenced by broader societal structures. This framework illuminates the nuanced ways in which personal desires interact with systemic opportunities and constraints. Lastly, transformative learning theory provides a lens through which to understand the profound changes immigrants undergo, focusing on the alteration of perspectives, beliefs, and behaviours through critical reflection and learning. This multi-theoretical approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, highlighting the transformative potential inherent in their cross-cultural transitions and learning processes.

Chapter Summary

This literature review chapter provides an extensive exploration of the concepts and the factors influencing the cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. The chapter is structured around several key themes, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the subject. Firstly, the chapter delves into various migration theories, including neoclassical theories, historical-structural theories, system and network theories, new economics of labour migration, and functionalist social theory. These theories offer a broad perspective on migration, emphasizing economic factors, social networks, structural inequalities, and individual and collective decision-making processes.

The review then focuses on migrants' narratives and experiences, highlighting the importance of personal stories in understanding migration. These narratives shed light on the

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individual experiences of migrants, including their challenges, resilience, and the transformative nature of their journeys. This aspect of the review aligns closely with the study's focus on narrative methods to explore personal and transformative experiences of Nigerian immigrants. The chapter also addresses the concepts of cross-cultural preparedness and transition. It reviews literature on the strategies and challenges associated with preparing for and undergoing cultural transitions, emphasizing the significance of factors like language competence, social support networks, and resilience. This section informs the study by illustrating the various elements that contribute to the preparedness of Nigerian immigrants for their cross-cultural experiences.

In discussing the role of personal and contextual factors in cross-cultural experiences, the chapter underscores the influence of individual attributes such as age, gender, education level, and personal traits, as well as external factors like political and economic conditions in the host countries. This comprehensive examination provides valuable insights into how these factors collectively impact the cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants. Lastly, the literature review thoroughly examines the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study: critical realism, the aspirations-capacities framework, and transformative learning theory. Each framework offers a unique lens to view the experiences of Nigerian immigrants. critical realism helps understand the interplay between individual agency and structural conditions; the aspirations-capacities framework sheds light on how personal aspirations and structural forces shape migration decisions; and transformative learning theory focuses on the irreversible changes resulting from cross-cultural experiences. Overall, the chapter synthesizes a wide range of theoretical and empirical studies to provide a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing the cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants.

CHAPTER THREE**Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to explore how Nigerian immigrants prepare for cross-cultural transition and how their cross-cultural experiences result in transformative learning in the contexts of Italy and the United States as the host societies. This section introduces the research design and methods adopted for this study. To use a methodology that befits the aim of the study, case study research design, mixed-methods research design, and narrative inquiry are combined for this study. To provide an appropriate justification for the study's selected design, the chapter starts by defining and discussing case study, mixed methods research, and narrative inquiry. It further explains the specific approach adopted for this study. The chapter highlights how various aspects of the methodology—including contexts of the study, participants, research instruments, data collection, and data analysis—are implemented to achieve the purpose of the study.

Integrative Research Designs

This study deployed multiple research designs, namely case study research, and mixed-methods research design, and narrative inquiry, each contributing unique insights into the multifaceted phenomenon under study.

Case Study Research Design

Different perspectives have been provided on what a case study is. Case study research involves an in-depth investigation of a person, group, or unit, or a particular phenomenon within its authentic real-world setting. Seawright and Gerring (2006) note that the term “case study” is

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used in various ways, including to refer to qualitative, small-population research, holistic and thick examination of a phenomenon, and the use of types of evidence. Case study research is a common method for gaining a deeper understanding of a specific context or phenomenon. It can be used to study concrete entities such as organizations, groups, or individuals, or more abstract phenomena such as events or management decisions. S. D. Rose et al. (2014) defines case study research design as the investigation of one or more specific instances of something, which can be concrete or abstract.

Several approaches with varied focal points have been developed for carrying out this endeavour, including those attributed to Michael Burawoy (anomalies), Kathleen M. Eisenhardt (no theory first), Robert E. Stake (social construction of reality), and Robert K. Yin (gaps and holes) (Ridder, 2017). Stake and Yin are recognised as the two most outstanding case study approaches in the growing space of qualitative case study research (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Boblin, et al., 2013). Yin considered postpositivist, while Stake is considered constructivist approach is often used alongside it, but most case studies have followed the Yin's principles (Boblin, et al., 2013). Another scholar that deserves a mention in this discourse is Sharan B, Merriam especially because of her work's focus on the application of case study research in the field of education. Merriam's approach offers practical guidance for managing all phases of case study research, from translating educational issues into specific research problems to organizing the final case report. When juxtaposed, Yin, Merriam, and Stake are complimentary approaches that offer a range of possibilities to emerging researchers (Yazan, 2015). It is important to state at this point that while I primarily relied on Yin's (2018) approach, I also utilised the principles from Merriam (1998) and Stake (2005) in conducting this case study.

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According to Merriam (1998), case study research is particularistic (concentrating on a certain circumstance, occasion, activity, or phenomena); descriptive (providing a thorough, detailed explanation of the phenomenon being studied); and heuristic (helping the reader comprehend the phenomena being studied). According to Stake (1995, 2000, 2005), case study research is defined as the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, aiming to understand its activity within important circumstances. Stake emphasises the importance of understanding the unique characteristics and context of the case being studied, viewing case study research as a qualitative method that provides a holistic view of the case and its surrounding circumstances. The Stake's approach has been regarded as interpretive sensemaking (Ridder, 2017) because of its emphasis on interpretation. Meanwhile, Yin (2018) offers two definitions of the case study research: the scope definition and the features definitions. By scope, a case study "investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (Yin, 2018, p. 15). Yin (2018, p. 16) explains that in terms of features, a case study

- copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
- benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide design, data collection, and analysis, and as another result
- relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion.

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The process of case study research entails the systematic examination and interpretation of information to gain insights into the fundamental associations, mechanisms, and patterns within a particular setting. It differs from other research designs in that it focuses on in-depth analysis of a single case or a small number of cases (Ridder, 2017; Yin, 2018). Case study involves an intensive study of a person, group, or unit aimed at generalising over several units (Heale & Twycross, 2018; Stake, 2000). It is a process of inquiry and its product, the case study or case report. Sneed et al. (2020) observe that case study as a qualitative research methodology widely used in education, with various methodological variations. In contrast, VanWynsberghe and Khan (2007) argue that case study is neither a method nor a methodology nor a research design as suggested by others. Further, Yin (2018) describes a foundational trilogy of case study research, which consists of case study research as the mode of inquiry, case studies as the method of inquiry, and cases as the typical unit of inquiry in a case study. The present study examines the phenomena of cross-cultural transition and perspective transformation of immigrants in the contexts Italy and the United States. It differs from survey research in that it examines a specific case in detail, as opposed to a population as a whole. Similarly, the case of this research study is Nigerian immigrants, allowing me to acquire a deeper understanding of their experiences and challenges.

In the subsequent paragraphs, this section presents an exploration of the case study research design and its various facets. The four primary types of case study designs as identified by Yin (2018)—holistic single-case, embedded single-case, holistic multiple-case, and embedded multiple-case designs—are defined. The benefits of case study research design, illustrating its effectiveness in understanding complex phenomena and its adaptability across various fields, are discussed. However, to provide a balanced perspective, the section also addresses the limitations

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inherent in case study research design, highlighting challenges such as generalisability, resource intensity, and potential biases. Following this, the rationale for choosing case study research design in this study is explained, emphasising its suitability for investigating the context-rich phenomena of Nigerian immigrants' experiences. The section then justifies the use of a holistic multiple-case study design, underscoring its capacity to offer a comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural transitions. Finally, it outlines the methodological variations between the case studies conducted in Italy and the United States, illustrating how these adaptations were informed by the unique contexts of each location.

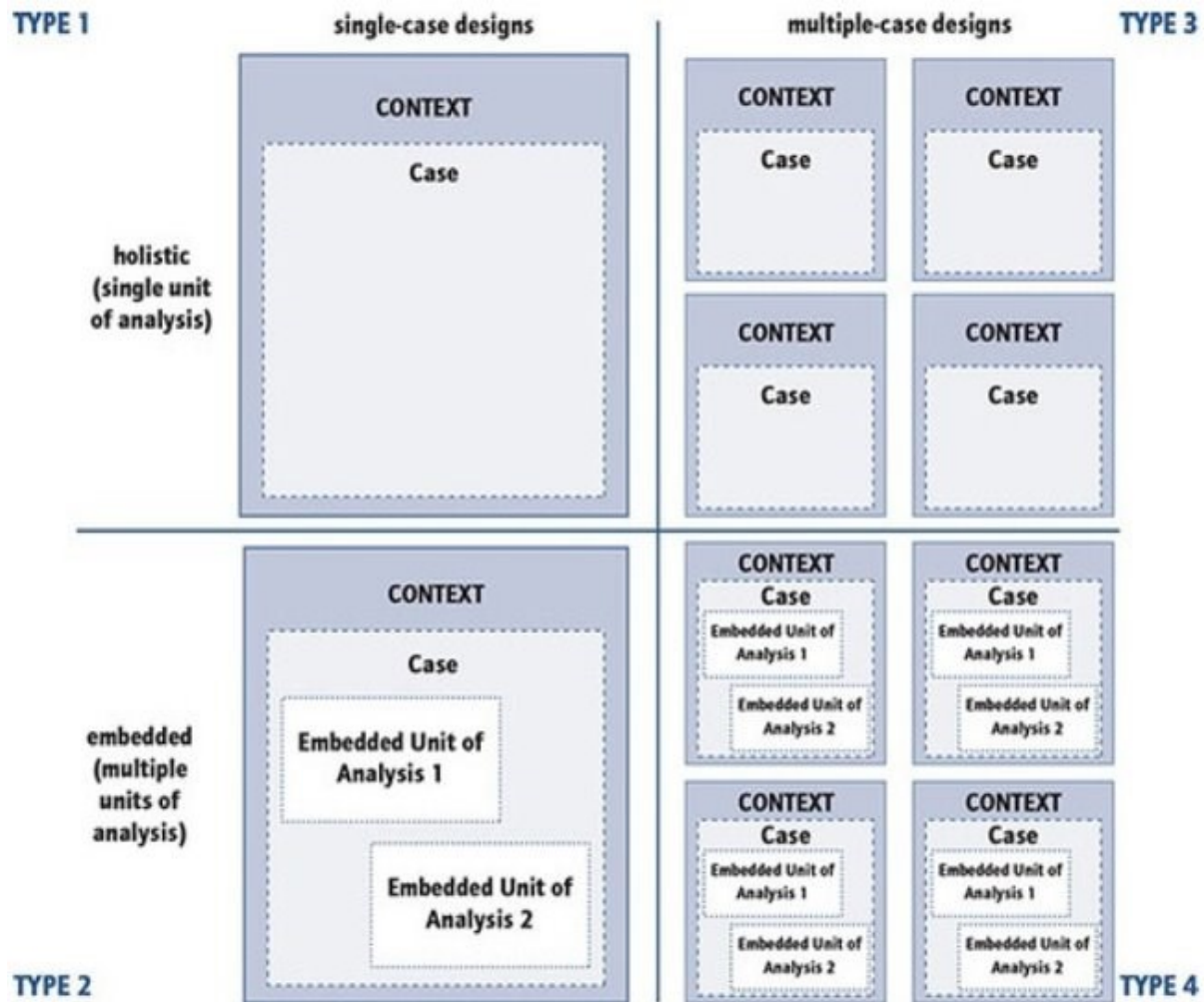
Types of Case Study Research. There are various typologies of case study research. Stake (2005) identifies three types of case studies: intrinsic case study, instrumental case study, and collective case study. One, intrinsic case study occurs when the researcher has an intrinsic interest in the case itself. The focus is on understanding the unique qualities and characteristics of the case, rather than using it as a means to explore broader phenomena. Two, in instrumental case studies, the case is selected because it can provide insights into a broader phenomenon or theory. The case is used as a tool or instrument to gain understanding or test hypotheses related to a larger context. Third, collective case study aims to gain a broader understanding of a particular phenomenon or issue. The cases are selected based on their relevance and ability to contribute to the overall understanding of the research topic. These different types of case studies allow researchers to explore and analyse specific instances in depth, providing rich and detailed insights into the complexities of real-world situations.

According to Yin (2018), there are four primary categories of case study. Indicated in Figure 3.1, they are holistic single-case designs, embedded single-case designs, holistic multiple-case designs, and embedded multiple-case designs. The four types are defined below:

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1. **Holistic Single-Case Design:** Holistic single-case design is a case study approach that concentrates on comprehensively examining a single case. This design methodology is employed to acquire a comprehensive comprehension of a singular phenomenon and its related attributes. The approach of holistic design facilitates a thorough examination of the case and its surrounding environment. The utilisation of this particular design enables the researcher to conduct an in-depth examination of a solitary case, thereby facilitating a comprehensive comprehension of the case and its surrounding circumstances.

Figure 3.1

Basic Types of Designs for Case Studies

Note. This matrix illustrates the basic types of designs for case studies. Reprinted from Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods (p. 53), by R. K. Yin, 2018, Sage.

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2. **Embedded Single-Case Design:** Embedded single-case design is a research methodology that centres on a singular case, while considering its placement within a

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broader framework. This approach is classified as a type of case study design. This design methodology employs a holistic approach by examining a singular case within the framework of a broader system or environment. The objective of this design approach is to enhance comprehension of the case by investigating its interconnection with other constituents within the system or milieu. The embedded single-case design methodology is employed to ascertain the impact of the broader system or environment on an individual case.

3. **Holistic Multiple-Case Design:** Holistic multiple-case design is a case study methodology that concentrates on the complete analysis of multiple cases. This design methodology is employed to acquire a comprehensive comprehension of various phenomena and their corresponding attributes. The approach of holistic design facilitates a thorough examination of the cases and their respective contexts. The utilisation of this particular design enables the researcher to comprehensively investigate numerous cases, thereby facilitating an in-depth comprehension of each individual case and its corresponding context.
4. **Embedded Multiple-Case Design:** The embedded multiple-case design is a case study design that concentrates on multiple cases within a broader context. This design methodology adopts a holistic approach by examining various instances within the framework of a broader system or milieu. The objective of this design approach is to enhance comprehension of the cases by investigating their interconnections with other components within the system or surroundings. The embedded multiple-case design is employed to ascertain the impact of the broader system or environment on the multiple cases.

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Benefits of Case Study Research Design. The utilisation of a case study research design presents a multitude of advantages. The existing literature suggests that the implementation of a case study research design can be advantageous in comprehending intricate phenomena and stimulating the generation of novel theoretical frameworks. Crowe et al. (2011) both highlight the value of case studies in exploring complex issues in real-life settings, particularly in business, law, policy, and health services research. According to Tetnowski et al.'s (2023) perspective, the utilisation of this design can prove to be beneficial in tackling intricate and practical problems. In Barr's (2006) explanation, the utilisation of a comprehensive and adaptable form of inquiry is made available to nurses for various populations. Ridder (2017) emphasises the significance of utilising case study research design in the development of theory, as it entails the gathering and examination of data from diverse scientific objectives.

The utilisation of the case study research design was preferred for this study due to its capacity to facilitate a comprehensive examination of intricate and interconnected phenomena within an authentic setting. Case study research design is suitable when the main research questions are “how” or “why”, there is no control over behavioural events, and the focus of study is a contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2018). I had the desire to understand complex social phenomena of Nigerian immigrants' cross-cultural transition and transformative learning. Undertaking a comprehensive analysis of a specific subject matter can prove to be a potent means of acquiring a more profound comprehension of the matter at hand, as well as comprehending the intricate nuances that underlie the situation. Moreover, it is advantageous as it has the capability to offer solutions to complex, practical inquiries. Furthermore, the versatility of this approach enables its application to diverse populations, rendering it appropriate for

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various fields of study. Also, it can be utilised to facilitate the formulation of novel hypotheses and to generate significant findings.

Case study approach facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon by allowing the researcher to delve deeper into the underlying mechanisms and causative factors, thereby addressing the “how” and “why” inquiries. The research design of case studies is amenable to both interpretivist and realist epistemological orientations, rendering it appropriate for conducting mixed methods inquiry that encompasses single- and multiple-case studies, and even quantitative evidence. Hence, it is combinable with the mixed methods research approach. To sum up, the utilisation of case study research design is a potent methodology that can furnish a plethora of data and comprehension regarding diverse subjects and demographics. This resource holds immense value in providing solutions to complex, practical inquiries and generating significant outcomes. Meanwhile, the flexibility of the case study research design approach presents certain challenges and concerns, including the need to ensure the research is sufficiently rigorous, inability to generalise findings from case studies, and dealing with “unmanageable level of effort” (Yin, 2018, p. 23). Some of these issues are considered in the next sub-section.

Limitations of Case Study Research Design. Designing and implementing case study research can be a complex and contentious issue among researchers and can be especially difficult for emerging scholars (Sanda et al., 2021). Using the case study research design entails certain limitations that necessitate careful consideration when conducting research. One, the generalizability of the case study’s results to other populations or contexts may be limited, restricting the extrapolation of the findings of the study. Two, the challenge of managing extraneous variables in a case study can result in outcomes that lack dependability. Moreover,

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the research method of case study is frequently associated with high expenses and time consumption, rendering the replication of the study challenging. Also, case study research is susceptible to bias due to its reliance on the researcher's observations and interpretations. In summary, the utilisation of case study research design can yield significant contributions towards comprehending a specific subject or demographic. However, it is imperative for researchers to acknowledge the constraints associated with conducting case study research.

Rationale for Case Study Research Design. Case study research approach was adopted for this study because of its affordances in relation to focusing on the context on the phenomenon being investigated. It was not used in this study as a specific research design but as an overarching blueprint to contextualise the research project in two countries, Italy, and the United States. The case study approach cannot be classified as a research design due to its lack of a prescriptive framework for conducting data collection, analysis, and interpretation (VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007). According to VanWynsberghe and Khan (2007), case studies are a heuristic that allows for the delineation of the unit of analysis, characterised by seven features, including a limited sample size, contextual background, and multiple data sources. Thus, they define case study as “a transparadigmatic and transdisciplinary heuristic that involves the careful delineation of the phenomena for which evidence is being collected (event, concept, program, process, etc.)” (VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007, p. 80). This suggests that case study is an approach transcends the category of definite research paradigms, namely the qualitative and the quantitative design. This conceptualisation, in addition to its definitions as a research approach, aligns with how case study research design is deployed for this study. The case study approach is the most appropriate methodology for this study due to the use of a non-representative quantitative sample of Nigerian immigrants-participants in Italy and the United

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States, the emphasis on contextual detail, focus on nonexperimentally controlled events, and multiple data sources (interviews, image elicitation, and questionnaire). Particularly, this study adopted the holistic multiple-case study design.

Rationale for Holistic Multiple-case Study Design. Multiple-case studies are gaining popularity in social science research because they provide a more rigorous methodology than single-case studies (Yin, 2018). Multiple-case study designs permit researchers to investigate both similarities and differences between cases to obtain a deeper understanding of the topic at hand. It also enables the replication of results across cases and the comparison of results across cases, thereby providing a more complete picture of the topic. The study is anchored on the replication rationale, not the sampling rationale (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) explicates two distinct approaches for conducting multiple case studies: the literal replication model, which involves selecting cases with anticipated similar outcomes, and the theoretical replication model, which involves selecting cases with expected contrasting outcomes based on predetermined reasons. These models, in sum, indicate that the multiple-case study design could *both* predict similarities *and* differences. The emerging results from the Italy case provided a premise for the *replication logic*. That is, the United States case study was conducted after a considerable data collection and preliminary data analysis in Italy. Some of the emerging findings from the case study in Italy were:

1. It was more difficult to determine the transformative learning outcomes among the participants (Nigerian immigrants) that had stayed in Italy for less than 1 year as they were still transitioning the post-arrival phase.

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2. Language factor (as a barrier or as an asset) was central to the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and it would be interesting to see how this compares to the United States context since Nigerians typically speak English language.
3. Related to the language factor, Nigerians in Italy narrated issues of “occupational downgrade” manifesting in forms of difficulties in securing a job that befit their academic qualification.
4. Some of the participants in the Italy case study mentioned that they had the dream of migrating to the United States rather than Italy.

The implementation of a holistic multiple-case study design can provide a valuable perspective the immigrants’ cross-cultural transition and transformative experiences across the various study contexts; in Italy, a nation where the Italian language holds sway, and in the United States, where English is the predominant language. Through a cross-case analysis of the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in different contexts, a deeper comprehension of the challenges and opportunities can be attained. For instance, as the language barrier has been identified as a critical factor influencing the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy, it might be insightful to examine the centrality of language in an English-speaking country since Nigeria’s official language is English. By employing a holistic multiple-case study design, a more comprehensive understanding of how cross-cultural experiences results into perspective transformation among the Nigerian diaspora can be attained. In the case study of Nigerian immigrants, the multiple-case study design afforded me the chance to investigate their experiences and perspectives across cases. In addition to being more robust, the results of the multiple-case study are considered more compelling. This is evidenced by the increase in the use

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of case study and narrative inquiry as embedded methodologies to comprehend the interaction between structure and agency within narrated lives (Sunday et al., 2020).

Methodological Variations between the Case Studies. The multiple-case study design permits a thorough comparison of two or more cases. Comparing the experiences of Italian and American immigrants is the focus of my research. Due to the rationale for utilising this design, there are consequent variations in the methodology between the two case studies.

1. In the Italian case study, 14 participants were involved, whereas in the United States case study, 13 participants were involved.
2. The two interview guides used in Italy were combined and modified for use as one interview guide in the United States.
3. The participant selection criteria for the United States case study were different from those for the Italy case study in some sense. That is, each participant in the United States case study had lived in the United States for at least one year, as opposed to the requirement of at least six months of residing in Italy.

These variations were informed by the emerging findings from the case study in Italy, regards for the peculiarities of the United States context, and consideration of time constraints. In any case, qualitative and quantitative data were generated for the two case studies, indicating why the mixed methods research design was adopted. The next section elucidates how the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods enriched the study and provided a more nuanced understanding of the complex social phenomena under investigation.

Mixed Methods Research Design

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I deployed a mixed methods research approach, involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that align with the assumptions and frameworks that underly the research question. Mixed methods research involves collecting, analysing, and interpreting both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in a series of studies that investigate the same underlying phenomenon. Mixed methods research is defined as “the collection or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research” (Creswell et al., 2003, p. 212). Combining qualitative and quantitative provides a more complete understanding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) of exploring how Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States prepared for cross-cultural transition and their transformative learning. This approach is pivotal in addressing the research questions, which necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. Meanwhile, mixed methods research design has its benefits and challenges. While this methodology presents challenges in terms of complexity and resource demands, its capacity to yield a more complete picture of the phenomena under study makes it particularly suitable for investigating intricate, context-dependent social issues.

Benefits of Mixed Methods Research Designs. The use of mixed data in a study offers several benefits. Mixed methods research designs provide opportunities for a more complete and nuanced understanding of complex phenomena by providing opportunities to validate findings through triangulation, achieve depth and breadth in analysis, address research questions from multiple perspectives, and provide richer practical implications and policy recommendations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Stake, 2005; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). One of the strengths

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of mixed methods research is its adaptability and capacity to incorporate multiple perspectives in order to increase comprehension of phenomena. It has been acknowledged, for instance, that mixed methods research can answer queries that neither qualitative nor quantitative methods alone can.

Also, it has been suggested that mixed methods enable the researcher to simultaneously verify and generate theory within the same study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Therefore, such research is not limited in terms of the types of questions to be asked or the types of data to be collected; rather, it can draw on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research to gain a deeper understanding of phenomena while simultaneously attempting to explain or generalise them. This has resulted in an additional benefit, which is that this methodology enables researchers to draw stronger conclusions regarding research findings. In essence, mixed methods research allows for the triangulation of data in order to confirm both qualitative and quantitative findings (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). By using multiple methods, researchers can cross-validate their findings, increasing the credibility and trustworthiness of the results. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), “the use of convergent mixed methods allows for triangulation of data, enhancing the validity of the findings” (p. 112).

Furthermore, mixed methods encourage creativity and affords the opportunities address research questions in multiple ways (Brannen, 2005). Similarly, it has been acknowledged that this method may be more likely to reveal divergent or distinct results. This can occur if the qualitative and quantitative research findings differ or contradict one another (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Even though such findings may appear unsettling, assert that they are a source of new theoretical insights that lead to the development of new hypotheses (Erzberger & Kelle, 2003). In addition, mixed methods research affords researchers

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the opportunity to capitalise on the advantages of qualitative and quantitative approaches while minimising their drawbacks. Due to these advantages, academics continue to advocate for the acceptance of mixed methods research as a third research paradigm. However, despite these benefits and advantages, mixed methods are ridden with concerns and challenges—connected to the criticism of mixed methods as a third research paradigm—that must be carefully addressed.

Limitations of Mixed Methods Research Design. Mixed methods research design has garnered attention and utilization in various fields due to its potential to provide a comprehensive understanding of research questions by integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. However, it is not without criticism and limitations. Mixed methods research designs have been criticized for their complexity, the need for additional resources, and the lack of clear purpose and substantive focus (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Dawadi et al., 2021). Some scholars have also questioned the appropriateness of combining qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study, arguing that researchers may not be equally capable of handling both methods (Dawadi et al., 2021). The issue of equal-status mixed methods research, where both the qualitative and quantitative components are considered of equal value and weight readily comes to mind. Some scholars argue that existing conceptualizations do not adequately allow for equal-status designs, potentially leading to a lack of integration and interaction between the qualitative and quantitative components (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). In addition, some researchers have raised concerns about the lack of consensus on foundational issues in the field, such as the essence of mixed methods, philosophy, procedures, and politics (Fàbregues et al., 2021).

Despite these criticisms, mixed methods research designs have gained popularity among researchers due to their ability to provide a more comprehensive understanding of research questions and phenomena (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Dawadi et al., 2021). Mixed methods

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research designs can also help researchers overcome the limitations of using a single method, such as the inability to capture the complexity of social phenomena or the lack of generalisability of qualitative research findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Dawadi et al., 2021). Hence, mixed methods approach is used in various ways and for difference purposes as explained in the following paragraphs.

Types of Mixed Methods Research Designs. Several authors have developed models that identify various mixed methods research methodologies. Typologies of mixed methods have evolved over the years. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) present a typology of mixed methods designs, which includes a three-dimensional framework and an example for each design while While Hanson et al. (2005) identify six different types of designs, Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) discuss three types of mixed-methods research designs: explanatory sequential design, exploratory sequential design, and convergent design. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), in their most recent typology of the mixed-methods design, have shifted focus from temporal or sequential considerations to the underlying purpose or intention of the design. It emphasises that “the intent of a design is the outcome that the researcher hopes to attain by mixing the two databases” (p. 114), focusing on what the researcher does with the data sources within the intent of the study rather than on the triangulation of data sources—whether to explain, explore, or converge. Creswell et al. (2003) suggest, however, that “although the variants of designs may be confusing, distinguishing between them is useful when selecting a design for an investigation” (p. 215). Overviews of the three core mixed methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) are presented below.

- 1. Explanatory Sequential Design:** The Explanatory Sequential Design is a mixed-methods research design that successively incorporates quantitative and qualitative data.

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It is also known as the explanatory sequential approach. In the first step of this methodology, quantitative data is gathered and examined with the purpose of providing an explanation for a phenomenon or problem. Upon the collection and examination of the quantitative data, the qualitative data is next collected and examined in order to provide a deeper understanding of the conclusions drawn from the quantitative data. When the purpose of the research is to provide an explanation for a phenomenon or a problem, this type of design is appropriate.

- 2. Exploratory Sequential Design:** The Exploratory Sequential Design is a research design that employs both quantitative and qualitative data in a sequential fashion. It is a mixed-methods research design. In this kind of research design, qualitative information is gathered and examined first with the purpose of gaining a more thorough comprehension of a phenomenon or issue. Following the collection and analysis of the qualitative data, the quantitative data is next collected and analysed in order to delve further into the implications of the qualitative results. When the purpose of the research is to explore a specific issue, this design is useful since it allows for more thorough examination.
- 3. Convergent Design:** The term “convergent design” refers to a type of mixed-methods research design that concurrently incorporates quantitative and qualitative data. In this approach to research design, qualitative and quantitative data is collected and analysed concurrently, with the goal of bringing the two sets of findings closer together in order to achieve a deeper level of comprehension and interpretation. When the goal of the research is to build and develop an understanding of a phenomenon or issue, this type of design is beneficial. Researchers can gain a deeper and more comprehensive

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understanding of the phenomenon or topic that is the subject of their research if they gather and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently.

Furthermore, scholars have provided graphical representation or notation systems delineating the flow of activities in a combined methods study (Creswell et al., 2003). Morse's notation system, which uses arcs and plus signs to delineate the sequence of qualitative and quantitative data being gathered and capital letters to give priority to either the qualitative or quantitative data, is frequently employed. Thus, "*QUAL + quan*" denotes a qualitatively driven study in which qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously, whereas "*QUAN* —> *qual*" denotes a quantitatively driven study in which quantitative data is collected first, followed by qualitative data collection (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Other models have provided alternatives to depicting the flow of activities; however, there is no consensus regarding the use of notations in mixed methods research or the graphic depiction of potential designs (Creswell et al., 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Selecting the Convergent Mixed Methods Design for this Study. The procedures of inquiry adopted for this study are encapsulated in the convergent mixed methods design whereby I carried out with the qualitative and quantitative research phases concurrently to explore the views of participants, analyses both sets of data and make final interpretation. The convergent design involves the generation of qualitative and quantitative data relatively at the same time and the combination and comparison of the qualitative and quantitative data to provide a complete understanding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In this study, each case study was divided into two non-successive phases: the qualitative phase (*QUAL*) and the quantitative phase (*quan*). The *QUAL* was the primary component and used the narrative research design (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). The *quan* component was the secondary component and

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adopted a questionnaire to complement the *QUAL* but was not used to test the generalisability of the qualitative findings. Notationally, the adopted mixed methods design is represented thus: *QUAL + quan = converged results*. This means that priority was given to qualitative data while quantitative data were embedded in the design, and results were combined and compared for final interpretation.

Narrative Research Design

As explained above, qualitative data gained dominant status in this study. Consequently, narrative research design was adopted as the specific primary mode of inquiry for the study. Narrative research design is a qualitative research approach that emphasises understanding individuals' experiences and perspectives through the collection and analysis of stories or narratives. Narrative research is based on the premise that people understand and give meaning to their lives through the stories they tell (Ntinda, 2019). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) are widely recognized for their foundational work in narrative inquiry, which introduced narrative research design to explore the personal stories and perceptions of teachers. This approach stands out for its focus on participants sharing their life experiences through rich, detailed narratives, which are then analysed to uncover patterns, themes, and meanings (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

In narrative research, the collection and analysis of narratives are central to the exploration of human experiences. Narrative research is both a data gathering and interpretive or analytical framework that allows people to make sense of their lived experiences in their social context as they understand it, including their self-belief-oriented stories (Ntinda, 2019). In terms of data collection, narrative research typically involves in-depth interviews, focus groups, and

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other forms of qualitative data collection methods. Data analysis in narrative research is often conducted using narrative analysis, which involves identifying themes, patterns, and structures in the data. This technique is suitable for case study research (Merriam, 1998). Researchers engage in inductive analysis, allowing patterns and themes to emerge from the narratives, providing insight into the complexities of human behaviour and experiences. This in-depth analysis helps researchers gain a deeper understanding of their subjects and the underlying reasons for their actions and reactions (Riessman, 2008). Narrative research design offers a valuable and multifaceted method for understanding human experiences and behaviours within the realm of social science research. By focusing on storytelling and personal narratives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), it provides a comprehensive approach to exploring the intricacies of human life and specifically immigrants' experiences, in the case of this study. Whereas narrative research is criticized for its lack of generalisability and the potential for researcher bias, it is argued that the approach provides unique insights into the experiences of individuals and can be used to generate new knowledge and understanding (Ntinda, 2019).

In essence, this study is a narrative inquiry because it utilised narratives as the primary data source and employed a systematic methodological approach to analyse and interpret these narratives. Narrative inquiry uses stories as primary data. It involves asking the individual participants to provide stories about their lives (Riessman, 2008). Narratives allow us to interpret experiences in the context of time connected with change and learning viz-a-viz how institutions frame human lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The use of narrative research design significantly benefited this study. First, narrative research design allowed for an in-depth exploration of the personal stories and experiences of Nigerian immigrants, providing rich, detailed narratives that capture the nuances of their cross-cultural transitions. This approach

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enabled me to understand the intricacies of the immigrants' experiences and the impact of cultural transitions on their lives. Second, narrative research design was well-suited for capturing the process of meaning-making and transformative learning. By allowing participants to share their stories in their own words, the study revealed how the immigrants navigate and make sense of their cross-cultural experiences, leading to personal transformations.

Moreover, narrative research design also shed light on the cultural contexts and identity of the immigrants, as narrative research design emphasises the significance of personal narratives and the meanings individuals attribute to their experiences. It uncovered how cultural identity influences their preparation for and experience of cross-cultural transitions. Finally, this the approach empowered participants to share their stories and perspectives, giving voice to their experiences and allowing for a more nuanced understanding of their cross-cultural transitions. This approach aligns with the study's focus on exploring the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. In summary, the use of narrative research design in this study benefited the research by enabling an in-depth exploration of personal experiences, capturing the process of transformative learning, understanding cultural context and identity, and empowering participants to share their stories.

Multiple-Case Mixed-Methods Narrative Study

The three research designs discussed above were combined to conceptualised this study as a "multiple-case mixed-methods narrative study." The three research designs were used at various levels of the study and in overlapping manner. Figure 3.2 shows the procedural flow of the study. Schematic representations can provide procedural clarity and promote rigour in the conduct of case study research (Rosenberg & Yates, 2007). The schema outlines an integrative

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research design, incorporating a holistic multiple-case study design, a convergent mixed-methods design, and narrative inquiry, which collectively form the structure of this multiple-case mixed-methods narrative study. The holistic multiple-case study design is the overarching framework of the research, signifying that the study examines more than one case (Italy and the United States case studies), allowing for cross-case analysis. The term “holistic” suggests that each case is viewed in its entirety rather than focusing on specific components within the case (Yin, 2018). This approach ensured that the context of each case was considered and understood in its complexity. The cases were connected by a replication rationale, indicating that the preliminary findings from one case (Italy) informed and guided the exploration of the other case. In this study, 14 participants from Italy and 13 from the United States provided the qualitative and quantitative data.

Within each case study, a convergent mixed-methods design was employed, meaning that both qualitative (QUAL) and quantitative (quan) data were collected separately but simultaneously. This design allowed for the comprehensive integration of data types, aiming to converge findings from both narrative interviews (and image elicitation) and Transformative Learning Survey questionnaires. By combining qualitative narratives with quantitative data, the study can provide a holistic view of the cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants.

Figure 3.2*Procedure for Multiple-Case Mixed-Methods Narrative Study*

Note. This figure illustrates the procedural flow of this study's methodology.

Operating as a part of the mixed-methods design, narrative inquiry was utilised specifically for the qualitative component of the study. This method focused on collecting data through narrative interviews and image elicitation, providing a structured yet deeply personal account of each participant's experiences (Ntinda, 2019). The qualitative data was then subjected

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to a thematic-narrative analysis (thematic and narrative analyses) to answer the research questions, which interpreting the stories and perspective to identify common themes and narratives across individual experiences. In terms of data analysis, the *QUAL* data underwent thematic-narrative analysis, while the *quan* data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The *QUAL* data being the primary component, were analysed to answer all the research questions, whereas the quantitative data were only used in comparing the immigrants' cross-cultural and transformative experiences at cross-case level. Thus, the findings from the parallel streams of analysis were then brought together in a cross-case analysis.

This integrative step allowed for an examination of how themes and statistical trends from each case study complemented or contrasted with one another, providing a comprehensive understanding of the cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning of Nigerian immigrants in both Italy and the United States. The integration of the three research designs facilitated a robust, multifaceted exploration of the research questions, offering both the breadth of understanding provided by quantitative measures and the depth provided by qualitative narratives. Case study and narrative inquiry as integrated methodological frameworks significantly contribute to the understanding of processes that may explain contemporary realities can reveal the interplay between structure and agency within storied lives (Sunday et al., 2020).

This combined approach not only strengthened the study's findings through methodological triangulation but also aligned with the complex nature of the phenomena being investigated, which involve multiple dimensions of human experience in diverse cultural contexts. Meanwhile, combining research designs requires careful planning and consideration of how each design would be used, including ensuring that the research question is appropriate for

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the combination of research designs (Sunday et al., 2020). Hence, subsequent sections of this chapter discuss other specific aspects of the integrated methodology—that is, the implementation of the holistic-multi-case convergent-mixed-methods narrative inquiry.

Contexts and Populations of the Study

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with an estimated population of over 223 million people (Galal, 2023). In 2017, the Federal Government of Nigeria declared no fewer than 17 million Nigerians were living in various countries of the world (Fidelis, 2017). A significant population of Nigerians in the diaspora reside in the United States, United Kingdom, Cameroon, Niger, and Italy. There has been a contemporary surge of emigration from Nigeria. The number of Nigerian international emigrants totalled 1,438,331 in the year 2019, growing from 446,806 in 1990 (Adhikari et al., 2021). As per a survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre, it was found that 45% of adults in Nigeria have expressed intentions of emigrating (Connor & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2019). These trends highlight the reality of the *japa* phenomenon. Post-independence, Nigeria has seen evolving international migration patterns including irregular migration, diaspora migration, asylum seekers, and refugees. This study focuses on the segment of the Nigerians who had emigrated as adults and were residing in their host countries legally. They are diverse and includes individuals from various parts of Nigeria, many of whom are highly skilled. This study focuses on two of the top migration destinations for Nigerians—Italy and the United States.

Nigerians in Italy

A significant number of Nigerian immigrants have increasingly arrived in Italy, with economic factors being a key driver of migration (Kirwin & Anderson, 2018). As of early 2023,

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there were 123,646 Nigerians in Italy, constituting 2,40% of the total foreigners in the country (Tuttitalia.it, 2023). The journey to Italy for many Nigerian migrants is fraught with challenges and dangers because Nigerian irregular migrants are the most numerous in Italy, typically crossing the Mediterranean Sea. Language barriers, cultural differences, exploitation discrimination, racism, employment insecurity, housing and social service issues, and legal status issues are predominant challenges. The integration experience and wellbeing of Nigerian immigrants in Italy are complex issues. Studies have explored various aspects of immigrant life, including mental health, life satisfaction, and the impact of social contacts (Obi et al., 2023). Language barriers significantly impact the labour market integration of Nigerian immigrants in Italy, particularly for those with poor proficiency in Italian (Ghio et al., 2023).

Moreover, the heterogeneity of immigrant groups, including economic immigrants and refugees, is recognized, with each group facing different challenges and integration pathways (Obi et al., 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected immigrants in Italy, including Nigerian immigrants. There was drop in employment and widening of poverty net (*Direzione Generale dell'Immigrazione e delle Politiche di Integrazione* [General Director of Immigration of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies], 2021). The migration of Nigerian women to Italy is a phenomenon that is distinct from that of their male counterparts, especially in the case of irregular migration (Baye & Heumann, 2014; Tessitore & Margherita, 2021). These women face a myriad of risks, including forced prostitution and acts of violence, and some tragically lose their lives in the process (Eche, 2019). The integration and wellbeing of Nigerian immigrants in Italy remain critical areas of concern, with the need for policies and support systems that address the unique challenges faced by this community. However, Nigerians immigrants in Italy have

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made significant contributions to Italian society through their involvement in various sectors of the economy (Moscardino et al., 2006; Venturini & Villosio, 2018).

Nigerians in the United States

The Nigerian diaspora in the United States has experienced a significant surge in their population in recent decades, from 130,000 in 2000 to 390,000 in 2019 (Tamir & Anderson, 2022). Nigerian immigrants in the United States represent a significant and highly educated segment of the African diaspora. With approximately 393,000 Nigerian immigrants residing in the United States as of 2019, Nigeria is the largest single source of African migration to the country, and they constitute 18% of Sub-Saharan African immigrants in the country (Batalova & Lorenzi, 2022). The educational attainment of Nigerian immigrants is particularly notable. As of 2017, about 348,000 Nigerian immigrants were living in the United States., and around six-in-ten of these individuals had a bachelor's degree or higher education, a share roughly double that of the overall American population (Gramlich, 2020). When it comes to countries of origin, 64% of Nigerian-born Black immigrants ages 25 and older have a bachelor's or advanced degree—more than double the share of the overall Black immigrant population (Tamir & Anderson, 2022). This makes Nigerians one of the most educated immigrant groups in the country.

The impact of Nigerian immigrants on the United States economy is also significant. Nigerian immigrants are significant contributors to the United States economy, primarily through their participation in entrepreneurship and employment within the science and technology sectors. In 2017, remittances sent from the United States. to Nigeria amounted to \$6.2 billion, the highest to any African nation (Gramlich, 2020). In conclusion, Nigerian immigrants in the United States are a highly educated and economically active group that has made significant

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contributions to American society. Despite their relative success, Nigerian immigrants in the United States have also faced various challenges, including discrimination, racism, and xenophobia. Scholars have studied the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in the United States and have highlighted the importance of understanding the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, occupation, gender, and immigration status in shaping their experiences (Ette, 2011; Olatunji & Tola-Adewumi, 2023). It is possible to acquire a deeper understanding of the cross-cultural and transitions and transformations among the immigrants through a case study.

In sum, the contexts and populations of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States present a compelling backdrop for this study. With Nigeria's burgeoning population and the substantial diaspora across the globe, particularly in Italy and the United States, the phenomena of cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning among Nigerian immigrants are significant areas of inquiry. The challenges they face, from perilous journeys to integration hurdles, underscore the resilience and adaptability of this population. While Nigerian immigrants in Italy grapple with language and legal obstacles amidst a diverse immigrant landscape, those in the United States carve out a niche as one of the most educated groups, contributing notably to the economy and cultural diversity. Yet, they too encounter hurdles that intersect with broader socio-cultural dynamics. By examining the immigrant personal narratives through the lens of case studies, the research not only contributes to a greater understanding of Nigerian immigrants' unique experiences but also offers insights into the broader patterns of migration, adaptation, and learning in a global context.

Participants Selection

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From among the populations discussed above, 27 participants were selected for this study using the criterion sampling technique (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2002). Criterion sampling is a kind of purposeful sampling technique. Patton (2002) has propounded 16 strategies for purposeful sampling for varied unique functions in qualitative research. The strategies include extreme or deviant case sampling, intensity sampling, maximum variation sampling, homogeneous sampling, typical case sampling, stratified purposeful sampling, critical case sampling, snowball or chain sampling, criterion sampling, theory-based or operational construct sampling, confirming or disconfirming sampling, opportunistic sampling, random purposeful sampling, politically important cases, convenience sampling, combination, or mixed purposeful sampling.

These strategies are designed to help researchers select participants that are most likely to produce insights and deeper understanding in qualitative research. Each strategy serves a specific purpose and can be used independently or in combination, depending on the research objectives and the nature of the phenomenon under study. Palinkas et al. (2015) have emphasised the importance of purposeful sampling in qualitative research, specifically highlighting its use in mixed methods research.

Criterion sampling involves reviewing and studying “all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (Patton, 2002, p. 238). Using this purposeful sampling strategy, 14 adult Nigerian immigrants were selected for participation for the Italy case study and 13 were selected for the United States case study. All the 27 participants in the study, as itemised in Table 3.1, were “adults” in the sense that they reported that they were about 18 years old and/or considered themselves adults by any sociopsychological means when they emigrated from

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Nigeria. That is, I was not strict on and I did not confirm the legal ages of the participants, considering the elusiveness defining adulthood in some situations (Jegade, 2015).

In Italy, the participants were selected based on certain criteria including the year of arrival in Italy, immigration status, occupation, ethnicity, age, gender, and mode of entry (regular and irregular migration). It is important to mention that two of the participants in Italy had not spent up to a year in Italy by the time they were interviewed. In the United States, the selection criteria used include age, year of arrival (and duration of stay) in the United States, immigration status, occupation, ethnicity, age, and gender. Informed by the experience in the Italy case study, each prospective participant in the United States was explicitly asked if they were 18 years or older when they left Nigeria for the United States, if they regarded the United States as their country of habitual residence, and if they had lived in the United States for a year or more.

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Table 3.1*Participants in the Multi-Case Study*

| Participant Code | Participant Name | Age Range | Gender | Marital status | Country of Immigration |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| PIT01 | Henry | 25 – 34 | Male | Married | Italy |
| PIT02 | Amaka | 25 – 34 | Female | Married | Italy |
| PIT03 | Dele | 25 – 34 | Male | Single | Italy |
| PIT04 | Ajoke | 25 – 34 | Female | Single | Italy |
| PIT05 | Bimpe | 35 – 44 | Female | Married | Italy |
| PIT06 | Jackson | 45 – 54 | Male | Married | Italy |
| PIT07 | Cordelia | 35 – 44 | Female | Married | Italy |
| PIT08 | Simbi | 35 – 44 | Female | Married | Italy |
| PIT09 | Fatai | 45 – 54 | Male | Married | Italy |
| PIT10 | George | 45 – 54 | Male | Married | Italy |
| PIT11 | Yusuf | 25 – 34 | Male | Married | Italy |
| PIT12 | Bello | 18 – 24 | Male | Single | Italy |
| PIT13 | Olivia | 45 – 54 | Female | Married | Italy |
| PIT14 | Akin | 25 – 34 | Male | Married | Italy |
| PUS01 | Deola | 25 – 34 | Female | Single | The United States |
| PUS02 | John | 18 – 24 | Male | Single | The United States |
| PUS03 | Goke | 25 – 34 | Male | Married | The United States |
| PUS04 | Gbade | 35 – 44 | Male | Married | The United States |
| PUS05 | Olamide | 45 – 54 | Male | Married | The United States |
| PUS06 | Emily | 25 – 34 | Female | Single | The United States |
| PUS07 | Kunle | 35 – 44 | Male | Married | The United States |
| PUS08 | William | 25 – 34 | Male | Married | The United States |
| PUS09 | Ayinla | 35 – 44 | Male | Married | The United States |
| PUS10 | Kolawole | 25 – 34 | Male | Single | The United States |
| PUS11 | Similoluwa | 25 – 34 | Female | Married | The United States |
| PUS12 | Temitope | 25 – 34 | Female | Single | The United States |
| PUS13 | Abigael | 45 – 54 | Female | Widow | The United States |

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Note. This table is an overview of the study's participants and their basis socio-demographics. Each participant reported their socio-demographics during the interviews by responding to a set of anagraphic questions that I asked them. For easy referencing, the participants in Italy are tagged "PIT" whereas the participants in the United States are tagged "PUS". All names are pseudonyms.

Overall, the participant sample size across the two case studies was sufficient to identify similar themes and diverse components of the participants' experiences while also achieving saturation. The participants include immigrants Nigeria-born Italian and US citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugee/asylees, or other habitual residents, including those that were in the host countries for employment, family, studies, and research. The target population did NOT include undocumented Nigerian foreigners, tourists, and visitors. Also, exchange students/professors and temporary workers who had not been in the countries for up to a year where not included. Prospective research subjects were reached at physical and online centres of aggregation (Reichel & Morales, 2017) such as worship centres, ethnic shops, community/ethnic meetings, and social media platforms.

The study was introduced and advertised with a piece of recruitment sheet. The recruitment text stated the purpose of the study, indicated participant inclusion criteria in form of Yes-or-No questions (particularly, in the United States) and requested interested individuals to contact me. Candidates who did not match the qualifying criteria were politely declined from participating in the study. Interested individuals who matched the participants selection criteria and confirmed their availability were contacted and requested to read and sign the informed consent form.

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Research Instruments

To generate data through interaction with the 27 participants, in total, four research instruments were deployed. For the *QUAL* phase, three instruments (two interview guides in Italy and one interview guide in the United States) were used. The interview guides include a semi-structured interview guide and two in-depth interview guides. The three were tagged “G2G” (that is, “Good-to-Go”) and all the interviews were narrative in nature. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews can be narrative when they are designed to elicit stories and personal experiences from participants. In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer has a set of prepared questions but is open to following the narrative flow provided by the interviewee, allowing for the emergence of personal stories and experiences (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

In-depth interviews, on the other hand, delve deeply into individual experiences, feelings, and perspectives, often encouraging participants to recount their life stories or specific events in a narrative form (Chase, 2005). Both methods align with the narrative interview’s goal of understanding the meanings individuals ascribe to their experiences and constructing a coherent narrative from their perspectives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). The fourth instrument was the Transformative Learning Survey (TLS) questionnaire used for the *quan* phase across the two cases. The four instruments are described as follows:

1. **G2G Semi-Structured Interview Guide:** This instrument was used for the first narrative interview that was conducted with the Italy participants. The interview guide (Appendix I) contains 16 questions (mostly open-ended questions) as well as probes and prompts. It served to capture the participants’ migratory trajectories, motivations, excitements, challenges circumstances surrounding their preparedness for migration to

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Italy, their learning experiences/initiatives, and their socio-demographics. Depending on the flow of the interview, not all the questions were explicitly asked. The first interview with each participant in Italy was a precursor to the second interview, which was an in-depth interview, by detailing the context of the participant's migration and identifying their possible transformative learning experiences. The first interview also prepared the participant for taking the Transformative Learning Survey (TLS). Examples of the questions in the semi-structured interview guide include:

- What motivated you to leave Nigeria?
- How did you prepare for moving to and living in Italy?
- How was the preparation and the relocation like emotionally?
- What and how did you learn in order to migrate and live in Italy successfully?
- Describe what it was like when you first landed in Italy. How was the next several days, weeks, and months?

2. **G2G In-Depth Interview Guide:** This instrument was used for the second narrative interview that was conducted with the Italy participants. The in-depth interview guide (Appendix II) has 19 questions (mostly open-ended) as well as probes. The instrument was used to elicit deeper information on various processes and outcomes of transformative learning in connection to the participants' Nigeria-Italy cross-cultural transitions. As in the case of the first instrument, depending on the flow of the interview, not all the questions were explicitly asked. This interview was used to zoom in on the transformative learning of the participant based on the results emanating from the stories and experiences shared during the first interview and the individual results generated from the TLS. It starts with a question that invites the participants to explain how they

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managed the life-changing migration experience that they mentioned in the first interview. It ends by inviting the participant to select an image that represented their immigration experience from the 12 images (Appendix III) presented to them and explain why. Details of the image elicitation will be discussed later. Questions in the interview guide include:

- What has changed about your life since you went through this experience?
 - What did you do to make sense of what you went through during the significant life event?
 - Now that you are living in Italy, what do you think of Nigeria?
 - What is your life in Italy like now?
 - In what ways have you know more about yourself?
 - If you had a chance, what would you do better?
3. **Transformative Learning Survey (TLS) Questionnaire:** TLS is a validated 92-item online questionnaire (available at <https://sites.psu.edu/transformativelearning/>) that assesses the outcomes and processes of engaging in transformative learning in any context developed and validated by Heather L. Stuckey, Edward W. Taylor, and Patricia Cranton (Stuckey et al., 2013). TLS quantifies how an individual has gone through the various processes of perspective transformation in a specific context and it quantifies the various manifestations of the transformation that the individual has experienced. Among the extant scales and surveys, TLS is the first quantitative instrument for measuring transformative learning in any context. The 27 participants across the two case studies were requested to complete the questionnaire. There are two purposes of embedding the survey in the narrative inquiry: one, to complement the emerging findings from the

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interviews and, two, to implement an eclectic approach to the conceptualisation and measurement of transformative learning based on the multiple strands model by Stuckey et al. (2013) and Stuckey et al. (2022). Figure 3.3 shows sample items from the questionnaire.

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Figure 3.3*Transformative Learning Survey Questionnaire*

Transformative Learning Survey A A A
⊕ ⊞

LEARNING OUTCOMES
Please read the statements listed below with your specific life-changing experience in mind.

As a result of my life changing experience:

| | Mostly disagree | Slightly disagree | Slightly agree | Mostly agree |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 7. I feel more confident acting on my beliefs | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | | | | reset |
| 8. Overtime, I have become better able to articulate my values | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | | | | reset |
| 9. I have changed the way I learn something new | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | | | | reset |
| 10. I am okay with uncertainty | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | | | | reset |
| 11. I have experienced a deep shift in the way I see some things in the world | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | | | | reset |
| 12. I have greater empathy for others' positions than I used to have | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| | | | | reset |

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Save & Return Later

Note. This is a screenshot that displays sample questionnaire items from TLS website, by H. L. Stuckey and E. W. Taylor, 2023, (<https://sites.psu.edu/transformativelearning/>).

4. **G2G-US In-Depth Interview Guide:** This research instrument was fashioned to suit the United States case study based on the combination of the two interview guides that were deployed in Italy case study; hence, the instrument was tagged “G2G-US” to indicate that it was used in the United States. G2G-US In-Depth Interview Guide (Appendix IV) contains 16 main items, mostly open-ended questions. It served to capture in details the participants’ migration stories about the circumstances

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surrounding their preparedness for migration to the United States, learning experiences/initiatives, and processes and outcomes of transformative learning. Due to the narrative, interactive and personal nature of the interview and the study purpose, follow-up questions were asked during the interviews to seek clarity and elicit more details when necessary. Each interview ended by inviting the participant to identify an image from the 12 images (Appendix V) presented to them or to provide any image that best represented their journey to and life in the United States, and explain why. Examples of questions in the guide include:

- How did you prepare for living in the United States?
- What kinds of things did you learn in order to migrate and live in the United States successfully? What were some of the biggest challenges that you have faced (or that you are still facing) as an immigrant in the United States?
- Now that you are living in the United States, what has changed about how you view Nigeria and your culture?
- What has changed in your life since you went through your migration experience?
- Looking back, what did you do before or after moving to the United States that has proved to be most helpful for your immigration success?

In summary, the research instruments utilised in this study—comprising narrative interview guides and the Transformative Learning Survey (TLS) questionnaire—played a critical role in generating rich, multi-dimensional data from the 27 participants. The interview guides facilitated the elicitation of deeply personal and detailed accounts of the participants' migratory trajectories, challenges, and transformative learning experiences. These narrative methods, both semi-structured and in-depth, were designed to tap into the participants' life stories, providing a

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framework for understanding their experiences from a holistic perspective. The TLS questionnaire complemented these narrative insights by quantifying aspects of perspective transformation, thereby offering a mixed-methods approach to understanding transformative learning. Details of the innovative use of images in the interviews as well as the validity and reliability of the research instruments are discussed below.

Image Elicitation in the Narrative Interviews

Image elicitation is a component of visual research and involves the inclusion of visual images in qualitative and/or quantitative studies (Margolis & Zunjarwad, 2018). In the age of Internet where people can access billions of images to be used for varied kinds of research, visual research effectively breaches gaps between the conventional qualitative-quantitative divide and broadens possibilities for implementation in a range of fields” (Margolis & Zunjarwad, 2018, p. 621). There are two approaches to studying or analysing images: postpositivist and interpretivist. Postpositivist analysis is the denotative reading of the indexical and iconic quality of images and what they represent in the physical world, whereas the interpretivist analysis focuses on the connotative reading, but connotation, not denotation, dominates (Margolis & Zunjarwad, 2018). Connotative reading of images assumes that “the polysemic nature of images dictates that they mean different things to different persons and that the meaning of images will shift over time” (Margolis & Zunjarwad, 2018, p. 619). This interpretivist approach was deployed for the use of the 12 images as metaphors and for generating text data through the participants’ responses to the images presented to them during the narrative interviews.

In narrative interviews, the use of images can significantly enhance the depth and richness of the data collected. Images can serve various purposes, such as eliciting memories,

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providing visual prompts, and adding layers of meaning to the narrative (G. Rose, 2016; Harper, 2002). Visual methods, including the use of images, can help participants express their experiences in a more nuanced and comprehensive manner. This is particularly important in narrative interviews where the goal is to capture the complexity and depth of personal stories. The use of arts in transformative learning research has gained some attention (Blackburn Miller, 2020; Hooper, 2007; Kokkos, 2010; Lawrence, 2008; Lawrence & Cranton, 2015). Hence, the use of image elicitation in this multiple-case mixed-methods narrative study aligns with Cranton and Taylor (2013) call for the use of “innovative and interesting methodologies” in transformative learning research (p. 44). By incorporating images into the interview process, I gained nuanced insights into the verbal and non-verbal dimensions of the participants’ narratives, enriching the overall understanding of their experiences.

The Table 3.2 contains the images that were presented to the participants to summarise and represent their immigration experiences. The table also displays the total frequency of selection for each image. At the concluding phase of the interview, each participant in both cases had to look at the 12 images presented to them and were asked to choose and explain the one that they thought best represented their immigration experiences. Some of the participants selected a couple of images. In total, 14 images were used. The 14 images were sourced mainly via Google Images and Shutterstock using search terms such as “migration”, “journey”, “transformation”, “Nigeria and Italy”, “Nigeria and the United States”, and “immigrant”. Each of the images was assigned denotative and connotative descriptions. Note that the literal descriptions and the possible metaphorical meanings of the images were not given to the participants. The results chapter will mention the extent to which the participants’ interpretations of the images align or vary from the my preconceived possible interpretations of the images.



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Table 3.2




God-to-Go (G2G) Narrative Interview Images

| SN | Image | Description | Possible Metaphorical Meaning | Image Selection Count |
|-----|---|--|---|-----------------------|
| 1.* |  | <i>A tree in a field:</i> The image depicts a single, vibrant green tree standing tall amidst a barren landscape of tree stumps under a brooding, stormy sky, evoking a sense of resilience in the face of desolation (deforestation). | The tree could represent an immigrant's strength and growth, flourishing despite the challenges of leaving behind one's roots, in contrast to the stumps that represent the parts of one's heritage and past that are no longer present in their new environment. | 4 |
| 2.* |  | <i>A plate of jollof rice and meat:</i> The image shows a generous plate of vibrant spicy-looking, reddish-brown jollof rice accompanied by pieces of fried meat (a mix of chicken and beef) and golden fried plantains, arranged in a way that suggests a traditional West African meal. | This dish could speak to the immigrant home culture and experience. It could represent the blending of cultures and the preservation of heritage, as immigrants often bring a taste of home to share within their new communities. | 3 |
| 3.* |  | <i>A close-up of a compass on a map:</i> In the image, there's a classic, gleaming brass compass lying open on an antique map, with geographical names and boundaries faintly visible in the background. | The compass connotes the guidance needed during the journey of immigration, symbolizing the search for direction and purpose as one navigates through unfamiliar territories and the challenges | 2 |




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| | | | of adapting to new cultures. | |
| 4.* |  | A white-and-brown mask: The image features a traditional African mask with intricate patterns and symbols in black and brown against a stark white background; the mask has pronounced features like hollow eyes, a triangular nose, and a mouth showing teeth. | This mask could represent the identities and rich cultural heritages that immigrants bring with them. The sombre or sad expression on the mask, could symbolise the complex emotions associated with immigration: the sorrow of leaving one's homeland, the weight of the sacrifices made, and the longing for what has been left behind. | 0 |
| 5(IT).** |  | A pizza with a ball of burrata cheese: The image shows a pizza with a golden, crispy crust and vibrant toppings. The pizza is adorned with a large ball of burrata cheese at the center, surrounded by halved cherry tomatoes and fresh basil leaves. This dish suggests an authentic Italian dining experience. | The pizza could represent the Italian (host) culture and experience. The elements suggest the blending of cultures, where each ingredient contributes its unique flavour like immigrants contribute diverse perspectives and experiences to their new society. | 0 |

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|----------|---|--|---|---|
| 5.*** |  | <p>A burger and fries: The image shows a classic American-style hamburger with a thick beef patty, melted cheese, fresh lettuce, a slice of tomato, and pickles, all nestled between a toasted, sesame-seed bun, accompanied by a side of golden-brown, thick-cut fries.</p> | <p>This hamburger connotatively suggests the American (host) culture and the essence of the “melting pot” often associated with (USA-bound) immigration. Diverse elements (ingredients) come together to form a unique and integrated whole (the completed burger), also symbolizing the blending of different cultures within a society.</p> | 0 |
| 6.* |  | <p>A painting of a person smiling: The image is of a vibrant, colourful portrait painted in a style that uses a spectrum of vivid hues to form the features of a smiling woman’s face. The colours give her complexion a kaleidoscopic effect against a neutral background.</p> | <p>The colour splashed could mean the multifaceted identity of an immigrant, celebrating the rich blend of cultural experiences, aspirations, achievements, and emotions that shape their life in a new country.</p> | 3 |
| 7(IT).** |  | <p>A close-up of Nigerian and Italian flags: The image features a pin or emblem of two waving flags whereby the Italian red-white-green “tricolour” flag crosses the Nigerian green-white-green flag. The flags have vertical bands of colours, appearing vivid and metallic.</p> | <p>This emblem could symbolize the dynamic cross-cultural experience of Nigerian immigrants in Italy, the waving flags representing the enduring connection to both countries and the intersections of their home society and host society.</p> | 0 |

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| 7.*** |  | <p><i>A close-up of Nigerian and American flags:</i> The image shows two crossed flags, one being the flag of Nigeria with its vertical green and white stripes, and the other being the flag of the United States, featuring horizontal red and white stripes with a blue field dotted with white stars.</p> | <p>This crossing of flags can serve as a metaphor for cross-cultural immigration, symbolizing the intersection of Nigerian and American lives and the blending of cultures that enriches the social fabric of both nations.</p> | 4 |
| 8.* |  | <p><i>A cat looking at a lion's reflection:</i> The image depicts a ginger-coloured kitten/cat looking into an wooden oval mirror, in which the reflection shown is that of a confident, mature lion.</p> | <p>This image suggests the transformational journey of an immigrant, starting with the uncertainty of a newcomer (the kitten/cat) and growing into a figure of strength and pride in their new environment (the lion), embodying the courage and self-discovery/awareness that often accompanies the immigration experience.</p> | 5 |
| 9.* |  | <p><i>A light bulb of ideas:</i> The image is a graphic representation of a light bulb, the symbol of ideas and innovation, filled with interconnected icons representing various academic disciplines and industries, such as sports, music, education, chemistry, mathematics, communication, and technology.</p> | <p>This symbol connotatively highlights the diverse skills, knowledge, and creative potential that immigrants bring to or develop in their new communities, contributing to a dynamic and interconnected society that thrives on the exchange and fusion of ideas.</p> | 4 |

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| <p>10.*</p> |  | <p>A “WE’RE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT” graffiti: The image is a street art that depicts three children in a dilapidated boat; one child is standing, using a monocular, another (who looks younger) is standing close to them, and the third is at the back of the boat seemingly pouring a bucket of water away from the boat. Behind them, painted in bold letters, is the phrase “WE’RE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT”.</p> | <p>This mural metaphorically captures the essence of immigration, where despite the diverse origins and stories, immigrants are united in their journey of hope and the shared experience of seeking a better life, much like companions in a small boat on a vast ocean.</p> | <p>2</p> |
| <p>11.*</p> |  | <p>A butterfly’s metamorphosis: The image illustrates the life cycle of a butterfly, showing four stages: from a caterpillar to a chrysalis, then to a newly emerged butterfly, a fully formed butterfly, and finally a fading appearance of a butterfly.</p> | <p>This series captures the transformative journey of immigration, with the butterfly’s metamorphosis reflecting an immigrant’s own path of growth and change, from arrival and adaptation to eventually taking flight in a new community, all while carrying the essence of their origins, symbolized by the heart of butterflies.</p> | <p>5</p> |
| <p>12.*</p> |  | <p>A map of the world with strings of threads: The image displays an intricate world map on a wall, formed with different coloured strings connecting various geographic points across continents. It is a network of lines that intersect and overlap against a dark background. On the floor below are globes of threads of varying colours and</p> | <p>This artwork could be seen as a literary depiction of the complex and interconnected paths that people travel across the globe, illustrating how individuals, communities and cultures are woven into the fabric of a diverse, global society.</p> | <p>1</p> |

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| | | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| | | sizes where the strings extend from. | The intricateness of the object could be perceived either negatively or positively. | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|

Note. *Short titles and sources of the images are provided below:

Image 1. A tree in a field. From *A single tree left in a deforested landscape* [Illustration], by Mopic, n.d., Shutterstock (<https://www.shutterstock.com/it/image-illustration/single-tree-left-deforested-landscape-135443573>).

Image 2. A plate of jollof rice and meat. From *Azumi yakusa yakamata mudinga canxama mazajan Mu kalolin abinci* [Photograph], by H&A Kitchen's, 2018, Facebook (https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02duSMGhNsBwwAKz3Tdf6msdFAL5rqzjzmWgdcCyUVMdG7zqgw8stZka5XdfjifQkfl&id=165278444268136&mibextid=WC7FNe).

Image 3. A close-up of a compass on a map. From *Photo of a Compass on a Map* [Photograph], by Scott Rothstein, n.d., Shutterstock (<https://www.shutterstock.com/it/image-photo/photo-compass-on-map-840311>).

Image 4. A white-and-brown mask. From *Maiden spirit mask* [Painting], by Frank Willet, n.d., Encyclopædia Britannica. (<https://www.britannica.com/art/mask-face-covering#/media/1/367906/34700>).

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Image 5(IT). A pizza with a ball of burrata cheese. From *Pizza with burrata cheese* [Photograph], by Ratov Maxim, n.d., Shutterstock (<https://www.shutterstock.com/it/image-photo/pizza-burrata-cheese-1256271175>).

Image 5. A burger and fries. From *Homemade beef burger with Stilton rarebit, burger sauce and chunky chips* [Photograph], by Matthew Tomkinson, 2015, Great British chefs (<https://www.greatbritishchefs.com/recipes/homemade-beef-burger-recipe-stilton-rarebit>).

Image 6. A painting of a person smiling. From *Against all odds 3* [Painting], by Damola Ayegbayo, 2022, SAATCHI Art (<https://www.saatchiart.com/art-collection/Spring-2022-Vol-2-Catalog-Art-for-the-Living-Room/1088288/649713/view>).

Image 7(IT). A close-up of Nigerian and Italian flags. From *Crossed Flag Pins Italy-Nigeria* [Illustration], by Promex, n.d., Promex Crossed Flags Pins. (<https://www.crossed-flag-pins.com/Friendship-Pins/Italy/Flag-Pins-Italy-Nigeria.html>).

Image 7. A close-up of Nigerian and American flags. From *American and Nigerian flags* [Illustration], by SLdesign, n.d., Shutterstock (<https://www.shutterstock.com/it/image-vector/american-nigerian-flags-vector-illustration-221807938>).

Image 8. A cat looking at a lion's reflection. From *What cats and dogs see in the mirror* [Illustration], by Social DogCat, n.d., Social DogCat (<https://www.socialdogcat.com/en/news/what-cats-and-dogs-see-in-the-mirror.html>).

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Image 9. A light bulb of ideas. From *The concept of effective education. Light bulb with colourful educational icon*

[Illustration], by VLADGRIN, n.d., Shutterstock (<https://www.shutterstock.com/it/image-vector/concept-effective-education-light-bulb-colorful-157727576>).

Image 10. A “WE’RE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT” graffiti. From *Street art which has appeared on a wall in Nicholas Everitt Park, Lowestoft, Suffolk, which is believed to be a new work* [Photography], by PA Media, 2021, CambridgeshireLive

(<https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/banksy-confirms-behind-norfolk-suffolk-21310661>)

Image 11. A butterfly’s metamorphosis. From *Mabadiliko (transformation)* [Illustration], by Swahili Land, 2018, Swahili Land

(<https://swahili-land.blogspot.com/2018/04/mabadiliko-transformation.html>)

Image 12. A map of the world with strings of threads. From *Reena Saini Kallat – Woven Chronicle* [Photography], by Jonathan

Muzikar, 2019, The Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/oct/21/when-home-wont-let-you-stay-artwork-addressing-global-migration>).

**Image 5(IT) and Image 7(IT) were presented to the participants in Italy only.

***Image 5 and Image 7 were presented to the participants in the United States only.

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The use of this art-based approach enabled each participant to end their narratives with metaphorical reflection. It also provided an opportunity for me to gain snapshot-like insights into the cross-cultural and transformative experiences of the immigrants, providing a broader understanding of the social and cultural contexts in which the personal narratives unfolded. This visual method serves as a potent tool for encapsulating and expressing the participants' immigration experiences, adding a unique dimension to the data collection process and providing a segue into the metaphorical reflection on their journey of migration and adaptation.

Validation of the Instruments

The validity and reliability of the research instruments used in this study are of paramount importance, as they ensure that the data collected are both accurate and dependable for the research. In the *QUAL* phase, the three interview guides were meticulously crafted and the 14 images were carefully curated to prompt narrative responses from participants, with two versions for use in Italy and one for the United States. To safeguard their validity, these instruments underwent a rigorous evaluation process involving experts in adult learning and transformative learning. The experts include the professors that supervised the study at the University of Padua (Padova), in Italy and at Texas States University in the United States.

The experts provided their judgement on the instruments, focusing on face validity, which ensures that the instruments appear effective in connection to the study's aims, and content validity, which confirms that the instruments comprehensively cover the topic of interest (Lam et al., 2018). Face validity was attained by having experts review the interview questions to determine if they seemed suitable and effective for the intended purpose of eliciting rich narratives about migration, cross-cultural transition, and transformative learning experiences.

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Content validity was ensured by having these experts assess whether the questions adequately represented the construct of cross-cultural experiences and transformative learning as it is understood in the context of adult education and cross-cultural studies. This step involved a detailed examination of the questions to ascertain their relevance, representativeness, and comprehensiveness in capturing the essential dimensions of the participants' experiences and learning processes.

For the *quan* phase, the Transformative Learning Survey (TLS) questionnaire was utilised. The TLS is a robust instrument developed by Stuckey et al. (2013) that has been validated through an array of techniques to ensure its reliability and validity (Stuckey et al., 2022). One of the key measures employed was Cronbach's alpha (α), a statistic commonly used to assess the internal consistency reliability of a survey instrument. A high Cronbach's alpha value indicates that the items within the questionnaire are measuring the same underlying construct and are therefore likely to produce reliable, repeatable results across different administrations of the instrument (Wadkar et al., 2016) Internal consistency is crucial, especially for a survey measuring something as complex as transformative learning, which encompasses a range of psychological processes and outcomes. By ensuring that the TLS questionnaire exhibits a high level of internal consistency, researchers can be confident that the instrument is reliably capturing the nuances of transformative learning experiences among the study participants. The validation process for both the qualitative and quantitative instruments not only strengthens the credibility of the data collected but also enhances the overall rigour of the research methodology employed in this study.

Data Collection Procedure

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This section provides further details about how the research instruments were deployed in Italy and the United States. As earlier explained, at the participant selection stage, each prospective participant who indicated interest in the study was provided information about the research project. Preliminary steps for the data collection included contacting the qualified individuals and informing them about the research and the modality and conditions relating to the interviews and the TLS. Each participant read the informed consent forms and was encouraged to ask questions or express concerns before signing the form. Different informed consent forms were used for the Italy case study and the United States case study. I conducted all the interview sessions. Before each interview, I and the participant discussed the inquiry's purpose, anonymity, confidentiality, incentive, and logistics (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interviews typically were conducted online, via my institutional Zoom account. Only for interviews (with two participants in Italy) were conducted in person and they were audio recorded. Participants were requested to provide their permission for the Zoom sessions to be recorded. Each interview was digitally recorded. The recordings were processed and transferred to the my password-secured computer and a secured institutional server.

Based on the three instruments deployed for the case study in Italy, the data collection involved three stages. First, a semi-structured interview lasting for approximately 45 minutes was conducted to explore the circumstances surrounding the participant's migration to Italy and identify their disorienting dilemma. Second, the participant completed the TLS, taking about 30 minutes. The online questionnaire and guidance for completing it were presented to the participant. Third, an in-depth interview lasting for about 45 to 60 minutes was conducted to further explore the participant's cross-cultural experiences and transformative learning. As part of the last stage, the narrative interviews were concluded with image elicitation as explained

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above. In sum, 28 interviews were conducted in Italy, two per each of the 14 participants, and 14 TLS results were generated.

For the United States case study, the two stages of the data collection are the narrative interview and the TLS questionnaire. Each interview took between 60 and 90 minutes, allowing the participant to recount their migratory trajectories including preparation, transitioning in the United States, and experiences of significant changes. In total, 13 interviews were conducted in the United States. Completing the TLS questionnaire took about 30 minutes. The TLS website generated a results page (including percentage bar graphs) for each participant that completed and submitted the questionnaire. I saved a copy of the TLS results for each participant and collated the TLS results. In total, 26 results were generated across both case studies. A participant in the United States (PUS11 Similolu) did not complete the questionnaire. Since the TLS results page did not include any identification data, there was no need to de-identify the files. Rather each result was saved with the participant code and pseudonym assigned to each participant.

Data Analysis Techniques

The transcription and purification of the interview data were meticulously carried out to prepare for analysis, ensuring consistency and accuracy across the datasets from both the Italian and US case studies. For qualitative data analysis, Atlas.ti software was utilised to facilitate both thematic and narrative techniques. Thematic analysis, as articulated by Maguire and Delahunt (2017), involved a systematic coding process that allowed for the distillation of patterns and themes from the data. This technique proved instrumental in identifying both convergences and divergences within the data sets. The narrative analysis complemented thematic findings by

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offering interpretative insights into the unique experiences of individuals, situating their personal stories within broader socio-cultural contexts, as per the methodology described by Shukla et al. (2014). This dual approach, thematic-narrative analysis, enhanced the depth and breadth of the analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences. In accordance with the six-phase guide to thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), the analysis progressed through the following stages:

1. Familiarization with the data, immersing in the details and nuances of the content.
2. Initial code generation, systematically identifying significant elements of the data.
3. Theme searching, where patterns and clusters of codes were grouped to form potential themes.
4. Theme reviewing, refining the specifics of each theme, and considering their representation in the dataset.
5. Defining themes, developing a detailed analysis of each theme, and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures.
6. Compiling the analysis into a coherent and substantiated write-up.

These steps were utilised for each of the case studies to answer all the research questions.

The quantitative analysis was based on the TLS the results that were instantly visualised in the form of bar graphs, providing a clear representation of the outcomes and processes that most accurately reflected each participant's transformative learning experience. The results from the 26 participants from both countries that completed the questionnaire were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet alongside the participants' socio-demographics which were extracted from the narrative interviews. Exploratory analyses were carried out before further

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subjecting the data to various descriptive and inferential statistics using software such as the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

In the final stage of the analysis, which was cross-case analysis, both quantitative and qualitative findings were merged, employing triangulation to cross-validate and enrich the interpretations, particularly for the last research questions of the study which was to compare the immigration experiences of Nigerians withing multiple cases of Italy and the United States. In cross-case analysis, as Ryan (2012) posits, “Certainly, comparisons between case studies are made”, leading to the production of ““accumulative knowledge”” (p. 554). This integrative approach did not only added rigour to the analysis but also offered a multi-faceted view of the transformative learning journey of the participants, culminating in a nuanced and holistic understanding of their experiences.

Chapter Summary

This chapter the thesis presents the methodology used to study the cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. The multiple-case mixed-methods narrative study employed an integrative research design, combining case study, mixed-methods research, and narrative inquiry. The chapter discusses these methodologies in detail, highlighting their definitions, types, benefits, limitations, and the rationale for their selection. Case study involves an in-depth exploration of individual cases within a real-life context. The chapter explains the selection of specific cases and how they contribute to understanding the broader phenomena. Mixed-methods research combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, providing a balanced analysis of both personal

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narratives and statistical data. Lastly, narrative inquiry focuses on the stories of the immigrants, capturing their personal experiences and insights.

The chapter also elaborates on the contexts of the study, participant selection process, emphasizing criteria that ensure a diverse and representative sample. Research instruments and techniques are discussed, ensuring the study's reliability and validity, and detailing how data was collected and analysed. The chapter underscores the importance of ethical considerations and the measures taken to protect participants' confidentiality. This methodological framework aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the cross-cultural preparedness, transitions, and transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants. The next chapter presents the results derived from the analyses carried out based on the methods discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR**Results**

The purpose of this multiple-case mixed-methods narrative study is to explore how Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States prepare for cross-cultural transitions and how their cross-cultural experiences result in transformative learning. The research questions that guided the study are:

- i. How do Nigerian immigrants prepare or not prepare for cross-cultural transition and life in Italy and the United States?
- ii. What are the transformative learning processes and outcomes among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States?
- iii. How do Nigerian immigrants' cross-cultural transitions relate to their attainment of perspective transformation (transformative learning outcomes)?
- iv. How do personal and contextual factors affect Nigerian immigrants' cross-cultural preparedness and transformative learning experiences?
- v. How do the immigration (cross-cultural and transformative) experiences of Nigerians in Italy and the United States compare?

Multiple-case study and convergent mixed-methods research designs were utilised for this narrative inquiry. The multiple-case study design was employed to investigate the Nigerian immigrants' perspective transformation in two different contexts – Italy and the United States. The convergent mixed-methods design was employed to provide multiple ways of addressing the

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research question by collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously. This study involved the selection of 27 participants using a criterion sampling technique for narrative interviews and the completion of the Transformative Learning Survey (TLS) questionnaire. The thematic-narrative analysis technique was used gain insights from the participants' lived experiences, perspectives, and meanings they attribute to their experiences. The process involved transcribing the interviews and getting familiar with the data, inductive coding, categorising codes and identifying themes, and interpreting the emerging categories and themes. This chapter presents the results from the qualitative and quantitative analyses

Socio-demographics of the Participants in Italy and the United States

The study sample included 27 participants (14 Nigerian immigrants in Italy and 13 in the United States). This demographic data serves as a foundation for understanding the varied personal and socio-cultural backgrounds of the participants, setting the stage for an in-depth analysis of their cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning experiences. Table 4.1 provides the socio-demographic details of the participants. Most participants fell within the 25–34 age range, with a total of 13 participants. Others fell within 18–24 and 35–44 age ranges. This distribution suggests that most participants are in their prime working years, which might influence their experiences and perceptions of immigration. There were more male participants (16) than female participants (11) overall. The gender distribution is fairly balanced in both Italy and the United States. A significant majority (67%) of the participants were married, with 30% being single and a small proportion (4%) being widowed. This aspect may have implications for their support systems and responsibilities in the host countries. The table also categorizes participants by ethno-linguistic group, religion, occupation, educational attainment, language proficiency, years spent in the host country, and immigrant status.

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The participants came from diverse ethno-linguistic groups within Nigeria. The most represented group was Yoruba (South West), constituting 63% of the sample, followed by Igbo (South East) at 22%. Other groups represented are Bole (North East), Edo, Etsako, and Kwale (South South). This diversity reflects the multifaceted cultural backgrounds of Nigerian immigrants, offering a rich context for understanding their cross-cultural experiences. The majority of participants, 74%, identified as Christian, followed by 22% who were Muslim. There was also a participant who was multi-religious. This religious diversity among the participants indicates varied cultural and spiritual backgrounds, which could influence their perceptions, experiences, and coping strategies in the host countries.

Table 4.1*Descriptive Statistics on Participants Socio-Demographics*

| Measure | Italy | US | <i>n</i> | % |
|------------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------------|----------|
| Gender | | | | |
| F | 6 | 5 | 11 | 41% |
| M | 8 | 8 | 16 | 59% |
| Age Ranges | | | | |
| 18 – 24 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 7% |
| 25 – 34 | 6 | 7 | 13 | 48% |
| 35 – 44 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 22% |
| 45 – 54 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 22% |
| Marital Status | | | | |
| Married | 11 | 7 | 18 | 67% |
| Single | 3 | 5 | 8 | 30% |
| Widow | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4% |
| Ethno-Linguistic Group | | | | |
| Bole (North East) | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4% |
| Edo (South South) | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4% |
| Etsako (South South) | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4% |
| Igbo (South East) | 3 | 3 | 6 | 22% |
| Kwale (South South) | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4% |
| Yoruba (South West) | 7 | 10 | 17 | 63% |

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| | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Religion | | | | |
| Christian | 8 | 12 | 20 | 74% |
| Multi-religious | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4% |
| Muslim | 6 | 0 | 6 | 22% |
| Occupation | | | | |
| Student (one college student and 3 MSc) | 1 | 3 | 4 | 15% |
| Research Fellow, Doctoral/Postdoc researcher | 2 | 2 | 4 | 15% |
| Self-employed/Business | 1 | 2 | 3 | 11% |
| Employee in a company | 6 | 6 | 12 | 45% |
| Civil servant in Nigeria** | 3 | 0 | 3 | 11% |
| Job seeker | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4% |
| Educational Attainment | | | | |
| High school diploma | 1 | 1 | 2 | 8% |
| National Diploma/Associate degree | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4% |
| Bachelor's degree/ Higher national diploma | 5 | 4 | 9 | 35% |
| Master's degree | 6 | 6 | 11 | 47% |
| Doctoral degree | 1 | 1 | 2 | 8% |
| Language Proficiency*** | | | | |
| Basic user of Italian (IT only) | 8 | 0 | 8 | 30% |
| Independent /Upper-intermediate user of Italian (IT only) | 3 | 0 | 3 | 11% |
| Advanced/Proficient user of Italian (IT only) | 3 | 0 | 3 | 11% |
| Improved proficient user of English (US only) | 0 | 13 | 13 | 48% |
| Years Spent in the Host Country | | | | |
| Less than 5 years | 9 | 5 | 14 | 52% |
| More than 5 years | 5 | 8 | 13 | 48% |
| Immigrant Status | | | | |
| Citizen | 4 | 5 | 9 | 33% |
| Family permit | 4 | 0 | 4 | 15% |
| Work/Permanent Resident | 4 | 3 | 7 | 26% |
| Post-study work /Research permit | 1 | 1 | 2 | 8% |
| Study permit | 1 | 4 | 5 | 19% |
| Grand Total | 14 | 13 | 27 | 100% |

Note: *In the United States, four of these identified as “Professionals”. **These participants retained their employment in Nigeria. One of them was also working in Italy. ***This is based on how each participant rated their proficiency in the language of the host country.

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The educational attainment of participants was diverse, with 35% holding a Bachelor's degree or Higher national diploma, 47% having a Master's degree, and 8% holding a Doctoral degree. This high level of education suggests that many participants are well-equipped with formal knowledge, potentially aiding their adaptation in the host countries. The participants' occupations were varied. Students (including one college student and three with MSc degrees) and researchers each make up 15% of the sample. Self-employed or business owners accounted for 11%, while the largest group (45%) were employees in companies, with four of these in the United States. identifying as "Professionals." Civil servants (in Nigeria) constitute 11% of the sample.

This distribution reflects a mix of professional and academic backgrounds, providing a rich context for exploring how occupational experiences influence their cross-cultural transitions. Moreover, participants' proficiency in host languages varied significantly between the two groups. In Italy, 30% of participants were basic users of Italian, 11% were independent/upper-intermediate users, and another 11% were advanced/proficient users. In contrast, all participants in the United States improved their proficiency in English, reflecting the linguistic adaptation necessary for integration into their host societies. The contrast in language proficiency between the two groups indicates the different linguistic challenges and learning opportunities they encounter.

Regarding the duration of their stay in the host country, 52% of the participants had spent less than 5 years, and 48% more than 5 years. This near-even split indicates a balance between relatively new and more settled immigrants, offering a broad perspective on the adaptation process over time. Meanwhile, 33% of participants had attained citizenship in their host

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countries, with 4 in Italy and 5 in the United States. This suggests a sizable portion of the participants had undergone the full legal integration process in their respective host countries. Others had immigrant status that includes family permit (15%, all in Italy and all female), work or permanent resident status (26%), study permit (19%), and post-study work or research permit (8%). The different immigrant statuses, coupled with the duration of their stay, paint a picture of their journey towards integration, revealing various stages of legal, social, and cultural assimilation. These statuses were likely associated with different levels of social and economic integration, as well as varying degrees of stability and security in the host country. Also, a substantial number of participants were in the host countries for educational purposes, which might affect their cross-cultural experiences and learning trajectories.

In conclusion, the foregoing socio-demographic characteristics set the stage for subsequent analyses by highlighting the varied backgrounds of the participants. These insights provide a deeper understanding of their personal and socio-cultural backgrounds. Understanding these demographics is crucial for interpreting how varied factors such as age, gender, marital status, and ethno-linguistic background may influence the immigrants' preparation for, adaptation to, and learning in their host countries. Based on the research questions, the results are presented in the subsequent sections.

Nigerian Immigrants' (Non-)Preparation for Cross-cultural Transition and Life in Italy and the United States

The first research question of this study is: How did Nigerian immigrants prepare or not prepare for cross-cultural transition and life in Italy and the United States? The journey of Nigerian immigrants to Italy and the United States offers a rich mosaic of experiences that are

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both diverse and enlightening. This section delves into the myriad ways in which they prepared for, or in some cases, did not prepare for their cross-cultural transitions. Drawing upon narrative interviews, this exploration reveals insights into the immigrants' anticipations, strategies, and adaptabilities. The narratives underscore a spectrum of preparedness, ranging from linguistic proficiency to emotional and mental readiness, while also highlighting the significance of social networks and personal relationships in facilitating these transitions. The section starts by focusing on the Italy case study before presenting the results for the United States case study. Through a comparative summary at the end of the section, this analysis contrasts the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, providing a nuanced understanding of their journeys and the factors influencing their preparation or lack thereof for life in these culturally distinct environments.

Preparation for Cross-Cultural Transition and Life in Italy by Nigerian Immigrants

The narratives of the Nigerian immigrants in Italy offered a rich tapestry of experiences and insights regarding their preparation, or lack thereof, for cross-cultural transitions. This results/findings chapter is dedicated to exploring the different facets of their preparedness. Through a thorough analysis of the narratives, themes emerged, including language preparedness, research and information gathering, relying on relationships for support and integration, challenges of cultural and social integration, emotional and spiritual preparedness, and non-preparation.

Language Preparedness and Learning Italian. The prominence of language as an essential tool for cross-cultural transition was a recurring motif in the narratives of the participants. The grasp of the Italian language was not only seen as a practical necessity but also

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as an empowering tool for personal growth and professional opportunities. For instance, Dele, recognizing the vital importance of the language in the assimilation process, took proactive measures to learn Italian before moving. As he said, “first thing I was thinking about was the language because, like I said, I researched already about the place. I knew the language would be the real challenge.” This preemptive approach is not unique to Dele, as Amaka, Bello, and Henry also imbibed the same ethos. Amaka started learning Italian when she was still in Nigeria through various platforms: “Yes, I started when I was in Nigeria, because for me entering the new terrains, I needed to know what I was entering into.” Henry’s preparation ground was the prison, as he recounted, “I started studying in prison, I learned the Italian language voluntarily.” Meanwhile, Bello explained that upon his arrival in Italy he devoted sufficient time to learning Italian because he “really loved the language,” until he started working and he needed to dedicate more time to work-based learning. For a context, he did not have to speak English at the workplace.

Ajoke’s strategies included an immersive one by watching Italian movies to understand both the language and nuances of the culture. In contrast, while the emphasis on language learning was clear, not everyone had an easy journey with it. Several participants described the challenges they faced with learning and speaking Italian. The challenges border on the ambivalence of the urgency of learning the language vis-à-vis the necessity of economic survival or attending to other priorities. For instance, Cordelia shared her perspective on the ambivalence of language learning as an adult immigrant: “But it’s a bit difficult also because in everyday life you have so much to do. So, putting time to be very perfect in the language is difficult” (Cordelia). To Yusuf, a PhD student, having to attend to multiple issues which include language learning upon his arrival meant a compounded problem:

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“You have your own pressure from your PhD. You have your pressure from acclimatization, you are still acclimatizing to the whole environment. You need some time to study the Italian language. You need some time to get used to where you are staying, to friends. You know, a lot of things that you have to deal with.”

Fatai corroborated Cordelia’s and Yusuf’s stories when he fondly narrated how much he did well in overcoming the language challenge and in the same breath stated why he stopped learning the Italian as soon as he was proficient enough to “fight for my life,” apparently referring to economic survival. Below is how he put it:

The language, how to speak the language in general, how to communicate, what are the simple words that you need to know how to approach people and how to talk to them, what to tell them and how to speak the language in general. So, when I got married, I went back to school. So that was after five years. So, when I got married to my wife, she’s an Italian, I went back to school. So, then I’ve been trying with the help of what I’ve heard before, trying to merge the Italians together to get all this stuff. So, I went back to school, and it was when I got to the school that the teacher then was like, you are too good. Because I’m one of the best students in the school. So, he was like, continue, don’t go. And after this one we’ll try to...so you can try to go to scholar media, so you can go to university, all this stuff. But you know, then everything has changed. I have to now start fighting for my life because five years plus my age, then you know what it means.

(Fatai)

Meanwhile, George explained that while he was proficient in Italian enough for working and facilitating bureaucratic activities such as legalization of documents, he was still learning to

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improve his grammar by learning from his Italian wife and his children. The narratives unanimously echoed the sentiment that language is the primary key to unlocking the door to effective integration.

Communication and the Importance of Speaking Italian. The narratives analysed showed that the immigrant's ability to speak Italian was necessary for several socioeconomic reasons. For example, George mentioned the importance of language for communication, Bello mentioned gaining knowledge about Italian culture, and Akin spoke of his interest in learning the Italian language and culture. Some participants recounted their experiences of lingual disorientation, setting the stage for the realization of the indispensability of speaking the host language. For instance, Yusuf highlighted the challenges he faced with the language barriers upon arrival, accentuating the importance of not just learning the language but mastering it to navigate the Italian society effectively. As he narrated:

So, there are a lot of people that are really very conservative that they don't like you to speak any word that is not Italian, they'll say, no, they will be very upset that you spoke English. At the beginning I was a bit shocked that I have to learn this language so fast because it would be difficult for me to live in Lodi without doing this. (Yusuf)

Olivia's story corroborated Yusuf's, stating that she did not give much thought to the language barriers and cultural differences she would encounter in Italy. Later on, she realised: "It was not going to be easy to get into the system like that and get it rolling as if you are still back home in your country, I actually had high hopes that things are going to be better." As Ajoke noted, "It's very important to learn the language; that's one thing that I've realized" (Ajoke). Henry described his capacity to interact and make public speaking in Italian as "a very good

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foundation” without which he would have been blown away. While George reported that he had never attended in Italian class, from Jackson’s perspective, learning Italian, especially by attending the language school for three years was a way to “be part of the system.” He emphasised the importance of using the language for integration by pointing out that at the language school he was not interested in certification but in communication and understanding. Jackson added that “it wasn’t just a language education for me. It was also like a formal education where I learned other skills”. Jackson recommended that immigrants should always focus on learning the host language for the first three years.

Simbi recounted that it was possible to study in Italy without speaking Italian, but she was compelled to acquire language competence, especially through social interaction, after graduating and needed to work. She emphasised the place of social interaction by highlight that having a partner, or a friend would correct one while one freely speaks Italian without the shame or fear of committing errors. She also stated that she had difficulties securing a rent because she could not speak Italian.

Akin: “That is why knowing their language will give, will give me more opportunity to mingle with them and to know more about their culture and also and most important to get more opportunities like job opportunities.”

There was an evident effort among immigrants to engage actively with Italian culture. The emphasis George and Akin placed on learning the language was not merely functional; it showcased their intent to understand, immerse, and integrate into their new environment fully. The necessity of communication and the importance of speaking Italian explains why many of the immigrants devised various strategy to overcoming language barriers.

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Research and Information Gathering. Another pivotal theme in the narratives was the emphasis on research and information gathering as vital preparatory steps. Immigrants took to various means to familiarize themselves with Italian culture and lifestyle, indicating their awareness that successful integration goes beyond just linguistic assimilation. Dele invested time in researching Italian culture, signaling a proactive approach to understanding the societal norms and values of his new home. He recounted: “Yes, of course. As a young man then I googled a lot about Italy, about the language... I would research online to see the meaning of these things [that my dad sent to me]. I did a lot of research about Italy, so I had full knowledge of what to expect.” Dele said that this preparation made him anticipate new experiences and “knew the language would be the real challenge.” Amaka took a similar route, acquainting herself with the Italian lifestyle and food, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of cultural assimilation. As she said, “I did my findings, I did my little research to know the people, so I wouldn’t be surprised, and to know how they behave, how they think, the food.”

Bello’s focus was more procedural, gathering information about immigration to ensure a smoother transition. He gathered information through various platforms, including by joining a WhatsApp group to interact with other Nigerians that were planning their relocation to Italy “but the information wasn’t clear enough to me, because many of them were trying to go with school visa, and I was the only one trying to get the work visa.” Yet, not all experiences were smooth; Ajoke’s narrative stands out as a poignant reminder of the challenges some faced. In spite of having a history of visiting Italy in 2015 to take care of her ailing father, she did not anticipate or understand the challenges she faced in facilitating her journey to Italy as she later discovered that her previous experience did not count. She reflected on her visa application process with a hint

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of regret, wishing she had taken a more proactive approach, underscoring the crucial importance of being thoroughly informed. She captured her difficulties in securing a studies visa thus:

“First travel was in 2015, in December 2015 and I traveled back to Nigeria in February 2016. It was on a three-month tourist visa. Then, I came for medical reasons, for my dad. My mom was the only one catering to him. So, the doctor recommended that she has a daughter in Nigeria. She did prepare the paper and everything. I just got invited to the embassy. I didn’t do anything. It was part of the reason why I didn’t get the second visa application approved when I wanted to study [some years later] because I didn’t know the rudiments, the procedures for application. I didn’t know it was something serious. I didn’t know the levels of requirements. I just thought it was something that was very easy, like filling in this form, presenting my account details. Because the first one was very much on the side of the person that was inviting me, I didn’t have much to prove. There was not much requirement for me. ... I should have done more like building my bank account that I was going to use for financial support. I just left it at normal earnings. I didn’t declare enough to really prove that I could fund myself. I didn’t really convince the consular that ‘yes, I was really going,’ I just felt I traveled before, and I came back.” (Ajoke)

These narratives underscore the importance of preparedness for emigration to another societies, especially in anticipation of transition and integration into the new system. They prioritized understanding and adapting to Italian culture and system by seeking specific information in the process of their migration.

Building and Relying on Relationships for Support and Integration. Nigerian immigrants in Italy generally engaged in building social networks within and outside the

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Nigerian community and they relied on their new and old social connections as a way of easing their cross-cultural transition. The role of personal relationships in aiding the cross-cultural transition was a recurrent theme. The narratives painted a picture of a journey that, while individual, was significantly influenced by interpersonal connections. Amaka's experience epitomizes this; she heavily relied on her husband for interpretation and perhaps cultural nuances. Her husband, sister-in-law and mother-in-law who were resident in Italy tried to make her feel comfortable, taught her Italian, and exposed her to the Italian culture and foods. As she pointed out, "It was my first time coming to Italy, I needed assistance because I'm not conversant with the terrain. So, I needed someone to guide me." This reliance on close personal relationships underscores the significance of having a local guide in navigating the complexities of a new culture.

Similarly, George reminisced on the role that his sister played during his early days in Italy. "I can remember how my sister gave me a book. That book is called 'Italian in six months.' ... So, that book helped me a lot." Also, George's integration process was facilitated by his Italian girlfriend, highlighting the bridge that intimate relationships can provide in the assimilation process. He described it as key "because she explained everything, and she taught me a lot do." Meanwhile, Yusuf, George, and Bello relied heavily on social and professional networks for support. Bello got a job in Italy through a friend and was assisted in the immigration process by the company. Yusuf received support from friends, wife, and a senior colleague. George seems to have relied on jobs to support himself initially.

Olivia's story further emphasises the importance of relationships. Her swift decision to move to Italy was driven by her relationship with her husband, showcasing the profound influence personal relationships can have on cross-cultural decisions. She narrated how her

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marriage motivated her emigration and the role her husband played in her preparation for living in Italy:

“First and foremost, it was marriage that brought me to Italy. Actually, I had lived all my life in Nigeria. I went to school there and I actually never had intention of coming to Italy in the first place, but fate brought me and my husband together and he lives in Italy. And after we got married, we decided we would need to be together as husband and wife. So that was how I came down here to join him. ... But my journey was quite smooth because then in my own case, I was already working with an airline and so my husband had to put one or two together for me to be able to join him here. So, it was actually not too much of a problem like that, it was just a matter of him getting the necessary documents and putting them together and getting a visa and coming down here... I traveled with me and myself and my pregnancy.”

The participants’ narratives show the important roles of social networks and personal relationships the immigrant preparedness for cross-cultural transitions.

Challenges of Cultural and Social Integration. Beyond the pragmatics of language learning, information gathering, and utilization of social capital, the immigrants’ narratives highlighted the more intangible challenges of integrating into Italian society’s fabric. Olivia and Akin both faced and overcame these stereotypes in different ways, whether in housing or social interactions. Olivia faced stigma associated with Nigerian women in Italy, while Akin faced accommodation challenges due to stereotypes about Nigerian students. Also, both George and Akin discussed the importance and challenges of language acquisition for integration into Italian society.

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George's appreciation for the organized environment contrasted with his experiences of racial discrimination, presenting a juxtaposition of acceptance and alienation. His observation is:

I love most of the Italian culture. I don't like some of their culture. That culture I don't like is their exclusion. Italian people like somebody that is already informed. They don't like informing you, building you up. For instance, let me give you just a simple example. Before you'll be given a job in Italy, you must provide a curriculum, your job experience. If you don't have job experience, they don't take you. They don't believe what you are. Maybe you said you are an engineer, you are this, they don't believe in what you read. They don't believe in your certificate. They believe in what you can do. That's the talent for you. Even if you're a shoemaker, they'll provide the leather, provide everything. If you produce the shoe, you convince them. These are Italians for you. That is why most of our people that studied before coming here are sent back to school. They would like them to do the practical. So, it is in their (Italian) blood. Some people (immigrants) would be feeling somehow, but it's what Italians do. If you do something outside and come to Italy, they don't give more value to what you did outside. They give more value to the works you do in their own land and how you interact with them." (George)

The emphasis on practical skills over formal education, as he noted, is a reflection of differing societal values and expectations. The results showed that Nigerians in Italy are confronted with varied challenges even after they have stayed in the country for a long time.

Emotional and Other Preparations. Most participants seemed to have varying levels of preparation for their life in Italy. For instance, Amaka did mental preparations and researched to understand the Italian culture before moving, ensuring that she had some background

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information. The psychological aspect of immigration is perhaps as taxing, if not more so, than the logistical preparations. For Dele, the preparation, particularly his mental preparations started with anticipating new experiences and awareness of possible challenges he would encounter. He reflected: “What else? People, new experiences. Would I live the same life as I was living when I was in Nigeria, or would I have to change my lifestyle because I now reside abroad? So, will I change my values? Is There a redirection of purpose? As we agreed, traveling out too can change the focus.” Immigrants like Bimpe, Simbi, Akin, Henry, Olivia and Yusuf grappled with a range of emotions from disappointment to resilience. Olivia recounted:

Like I told you, my moving was spontaneous. There was really not too much preparation, apart from the fact that I just had to resign my job and then pack few of my things and into a plane. ... We thought about it, and I just said, okay, fine, there’s nothing to lose anyway. That was why when I came after some time, I think there were regrets. Actually, I said I regret truly, I almost started having depression, because I discovered that if I had actually sat down to think about it very well, maybe I wouldn’t have come down the way I did. I noticed that my career, of course, had to go, had to be on hold. And there was particularly nothing I could do about it. If Italy was to be another country, it would have been easy. But Italy been the kind of country, Italy is not the best place to come. No, you can’t come here. I tell people, ‘If you know, you’re educated, please don’t bother to come here because frustration will kill you.’ ... So, at the time, I think I started feeling a lot of depression anyway, but I just took solace in the fact that my being here is not a waste; with my kids, I was happy. I think I just took everything easy. Though, emotionally at times, even up till now, I can be down. I would tell myself ‘This is not the way I wanted it.’ I had high dreams. I know where I would’ve been if I had been in Nigeria.” (Olivia)

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Olivia faced mixed emotions leaving her family behind but prioritized her pregnancy. Olivia's way of managing her feelings, by investing in her children and community activities, underscores the emotional labour involved in transitioning. On the other hand, Yusuf's narrative, which touched on emotional difficulties and criticism from relatives, accentuated the external pressures immigrants might face, emphasizing the mental fortitude required for such a significant life change. According to Yusuf, he was aware of what he was delving into by moving to Italy and therefore "emotionally I cannot say that I was traumatized because I know what I was going there to do. And it was my choice to go and do it." He reported that in spite of his readiness to live in Italy, negative perceptions (by others) on Italy predisposed him to emotional strains and limited his preparedness, narrating:

I can tell you vividly—I will be honest with you—that I was given a lot of negative comments also by some people [in Nigeria] telling me that, 'oh, you are going to Europe; why didn't you apply to the UK or to the United States or to some of the Asian countries?' And if I asked why, they usually told me that they are more diverse, they are more open, there is less racism. These are the things that they usually tell me. They tell me that 'you are going to Europe? There is a lot of racism. ... They always tell me this, 'you have to be patient.' I remember that one of them was telling me that you could be just walking and then someone can just hit you from behind and you just have to be patient and continue walking. And so there were a lot of these negative things that were told to me. But when I received these kinds of things, I usually also looked at how the school was supporting me to come. What usually baffled me was that I knew no one that had gone to Italy from the university where I studied, or from my area or from the whole state who went to Italy to study. And I have two people that I know. One of them came to

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Italy not to do something really for a long time. He came here to do some laboratory things for just six months. And I went to him to ask him what to do, 'what do I need?'

And he told me, 'Look, I went there for just six months. I cannot tell you anything.' That was also a negative or a red flag for me. Even the one that has been to Italy was not able to disclose anything to me. So, I asked the person that studied in Europe, in Greece. And he told me, 'No problem. You don't have a problem.' (Yusuf)

Yusuf's and Olivia's stories are representative of dynamics of immigrants emotional and mental preparedness suggesting. While emotional and mental preparedness might help in facilitating smooth cross-cultural transition and immigrants might regret their lack of enough of it, the process of such preparation could involve contradictory perspectives.

In preparing for cross-cultural transition, Nigerian immigrants in Italy highlighted some other aspects of preparation. A notable aspect was the reliance on faith and spirituality, with Dele discussing the significant role of religion in his migration journey, and Bimpe emphasizing the importance of faith and prayer for guidance. Simbi said that the "spiritual reserve" is most appreciated when "you're leaving your comfort zone sincerely, and you're finding yourself in a trying period, you need to pull beyond the social network. Sincerely, you need to pull from an inner strength." Additionally, financial and physical preparedness were crucial elements. Ajoke spoke about the importance of financial preparedness, indicating the practical considerations involved in migration. These narratives reflect additional diverse strategies employed by Nigerian immigrants, encompassing both spiritual reliance and tangible preparations to navigate the complexities of transitioning to life in Italy.

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Non-preparation, Spontaneity and Uncertainty. The preparation for cross-cultural transition among Nigerian immigrants in Italy varied significantly, with instances of both minimal cultural preparedness and spontaneous decisions. Some immigrants, like Olivia in Italy, initially lacked explicit preparation for cultural integration, while Bello did not engage in any specific cultural activities before moving. In contrast, Fatai's migration to Italy was unplanned, seizing an opportunity as it arose, and George, aiming for the United States., adjusted his destination to Italy after visa challenges. This spontaneity was also reflected in Akin's struggles with family relocation due to procedural challenges. Henry's narrative is one of the saddest stories of relocation to an unknown without any preparation. He dangerously journeyed through the Sahara Desert, lived a fearful transit life in Libya, and ended up in the prison as soon as he survived the peril of crossing the Mediterranean Sea. These varied experiences illustrate a spectrum of non-preparation levels among the immigrants, ranging from minimal to spontaneous and uncertain moves influenced by personal circumstances and other influences. He said:

No. No. There was no preparation. I have said it more than three times that what you don't know is bigger than you. The future is beyond human comprehension, but the advice I always give to people is that, as a man or woman, you have to be ready to face what is in front of you. ... In the prison ... So, in another aspect of school, I started studying the other language because, um, I said, at least I'm here and I don't know when I'm going out. Let me learn, because sometimes the policia [police] and some of them try to communicate with us, but they don't hear English, and we don't hear Italian. So, the communication was not fluent. ... So, there were some teachers; they were coming from outside to teach the Italian language. And I started writing. Maybe, if you want, I can show you some books I wrote inside the prison. But the prison also prepared me to know

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some rules and regulations, what to do and what not to do, because there are rules and regulations on how to live in an outside society. When you go out, it prepares me.

(Henry)

This Henry's narrative classically exemplifies how the immigrants convert their challenges and hardships to learning opportunities, at experiential and non-formal levels.

In summary many Nigerian immigrants took it upon themselves to prepare for their new life in Italy. A prevalent method of preparation was through learning the local language, with George highlighting how the Italian language is vital for communication. This suggests that linguistic preparation, both formally and informally, was considered an essential step for many. Additionally, Bello went a step further, diving into the Italian culture before his move, showcasing how cultural awareness plays a significant role in the migration process. Yet, there was a profound reliance on social and professional networks. The narratives tell tales of connections providing both opportunities and guidance. Bello's venture into the Italian job market was facilitated through a friend, and the company he joined played a crucial role in his immigration process. On the other hand, Yusuf leaned heavily on his spouse, friends, and a senior colleague when navigating the intricacies of visa applications and subsequent life in Italy. Interestingly, not all immigrants prioritized cultural preparation. For instance, Olivia initially moved to Italy without specific preparation to integrate into the Italian culture. It is evident that while some felt prepared, others learned and adapted along the way.

In conclusion, the cross-cultural transition narratives of Nigerian immigrants in Italy offer a multifaceted picture of the preparation journey. The results underscored the significance of language preparedness, information gathering, and leveraging personal relationships as pivotal

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components in the immigrants' preparation for life in Italy. While the importance of language and research is clear, it is the interplay of personal relationships, emotional preparedness, sociocultural navigation and non-preparation that presents a comprehensive view of the participants' experiences. The stories reflect anticipation, action, adaptation, as well as adversity and uncertainty, painting a rich and nuanced picture of the immigrant cross-cultural experience in the context of moving from Nigeria to Italy. The next segment presents the results from the United States case study.

*Preparation for Cross-Cultural Transition and Life in the United States by Nigerian**Immigrants*

Understanding how Nigerian immigrants prepared—or did not—for their cross-cultural transition to life in the United States is critical for a comprehensive view of their immigration journey. Through thematic analysis of narratives from the interviews, several prominent themes emerged.

Seeking Opportunities for Betterment. Many Nigerian immigrants saw migration as a chance for improvement, be it academically, financially, or personally. An exemplary instance of this theme is demonstrated by a participant, Similolu, who left Nigeria for the United States in 2016. Motivated by the promise of better educational and career opportunities, Similolu believed that gaining knowledge and skills in the United States would significantly benefit her future: “I didn’t want to have any educational gaps. ... I came here in 2016 to start to continue my education” (Similolu). She recounted that although she chose the United States as the destination because her parents were already living in the country, her rationale was that “there are more scholarship opportunities here in the United States compared to Canada.” Similarly, Deola came

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to the United States for educational pursuit inspired by the negative experience she had during her undergraduate studies. As she put it:

Part of what prompted me to come here was the fact that the learning environment for my undergraduate degree wasn't so palatable; it was deficient. So, I decided to look into it to see who the people in charge of the learning environment are and who the people in charge of higher education administration are. And I found out that people who are in charge are called students personnel. After a lot of research, I found out that this is a thing that I can pursue in the United States, and I decided to apply to the United States, and of course, I got my admission, I got my visa, and I've been here since then. (Deola)

This proactive approach to immigration, driven by the prospect of upward mobility, epitomizes the aspirational spirit that's evident among many in the immigrant community. Ayinla shared that "sometimes when I get a chance to talk to some of my friends back home, I realize the opportunity that I have". His opportunity to move to the United States came, according to him, on "a platter of gold" and he was grateful to his parents for putting in the efforts that made him come to the United States even though he came reluctant. However, Ayinla also believed that Nigeria would have offered him the same opportunity to achieve what he had achieve in the United States, but "at a different time or it might be a little bit harder."

Abigael came to the United States as a visitor but decided to stay back, taking risk of overstaying her visa, after observing a marked difference between her home country and the country she was visiting, narrating that:

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America has been my dream country. So, we came for a visit [in 2014]. I spent five months there, and after those five months, I went back to work. I went back to my country, and I came again in 2015. And when I came to the country, I saw that there's a big difference between this country and the country I was coming from. They are more developed and disciplined. They are mature. I mean, the way they run their things is just different. They are whole, at least to some extent. I saw so many things that attracted me. They have constant light. All the social amenities are working—everything. So, I said, 'Wow, this country is good. There are more opportunities to become anything you want to become. So, what am I doing in my country? No light, no road, no food—you don't even have salaries in time. You don't even have a right to certain things that are supposed to be the right of a citizen.' So, I made up my mind that before my visa expired, I was going to come back and stay permanently.

Overall, the participants often viewed the United States as a land of opportunities where their dreams could be realized, even though the journey might be fraught with challenges. It is essential to recognize this spirit as it sets the foundation for their readiness to face the cultural differences and adapt accordingly.

Reliance on Established Connections and Personal Relationships. Established connections and personal relationships, often from their home country or co-immigrants, emerged as a vital support system for many participants. For instance, Kunle upon arrival in Texas, found solace and assistance from two Nigerian churches. These churches, along with several individuals, provided invaluable support in the form of accommodation and financial assistance. He unfolded this:

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I had to meet with them, and then I joined the church, the Dream Church. And I met some brothers who took me in. And ever since then, they've been my guides all through my journey, telling me what to do, how to make ends meet, supporting me both financially and especially when my brother, my uncle, lost his job in the middle of the process, and all that. So, they were kind of a support system for me. ... I have two good brothers that I met in church. They were kind, 'have you tried this, working with this organisation? Have you tried volunteering here in your free hours? Have you tried?' I was just getting involved in all these organisations, setting up events. And I'm a very good planner. I know how to set up events. I was getting involved in all that. (Kunle)

Meanwhile, Kunle had mentioned that a friend who had promised to welcome him to the United States disappointed him thereby putting him in a disorienting jeopardy. Kunle realised that "what he painted for me was different from what I saw when I got here." Similolu recounted when she became homesick for Nigerian food a few days after she arrived in the United States, she told a family in the church she was attending and they "came with jollof rice, fried rice, fried chicken, she cooked a buffet of Nigerian food for me. So yeah, the food was the food for me." The general impression from these narratives is that the importance of such networks cannot be overemphasised in immigrants' post-arrival preparedness for living in their host society. They offered a semblance of familiarity in an otherwise foreign land, playing a pivotal role in easing the initial shock of relocation. These connections and relationships also provided practical resources, advice, and guidance that could be crucial for the early days of an immigrant's life in the United States.

Anticipation of educational pursuits. One significant driver for the move to the United States among participants was the pursuit of higher education. The United States, known for its

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world-class educational institutions, has become a magnet for those seeking advanced degrees and skills. Stories of participant who came to the country through the (postgraduate studies) path, such as Deola, William, Emily, Kolawole, and Similolu underscore this theme. Similolu, who initially wanted to move to Canada but later agreed with her parents to move to the United States, was accepted into a master's programme in the United States. As earlier narrated, her decision to move was solidified by the acceptance and because "there are more scholarship opportunities here in the United States compared to Canada," emphasizing the weight educational prospects carry in the preparatory phase of immigration. Similarly, Deola came to the United States "after a lot of research, I found out that this is a thing that I can pursue in the United States, and I decided to apply to the United States, and of course, I got my admission, I got my visa, and I've been here since then." In Kolawole's case, his experience during undergraduate internships had made him realised the importance of advanced degrees in his field and he found the United States fitting for his aspiration. He recounted:

Before I left Nigeria, I got my undergrad. ... I always knew what I wanted to do; I wanted to go to graduate school and get a higher education because I felt that would give me a better footing in terms of getting into the energy industry in Nigeria. ... Then, thankfully, I was able to get a visa, and then I came here in spring 2021. And then, ever since I've been in the programme. ... Motivation to come to the United States? Honestly, my aim was to just get exposure, get international exposure, and then just go outside the country and get an advanced degree. And the United States just happened to be a great fit because there's a lot of funding for STEM degrees. If you do research, you get funded. So, the fact that I could come to school without having to pay a lot of money was the big catch. And I think that would probably be what even pushed me to come to the United

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States, because if I had gotten scholarships to go to France or somewhere else, I probably would've gone to France or somewhere else to get the degree. But the fact that the United States has a structure means that if you're doing research, you could get funded. ...

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Kolawole suggested that the education path was an easier way to attain an immigrant status in the United States. He believed that if one acquired skills and values, "You can always move across borders as long as you have value to offer; moving is not a problem." Hence, although he had the intent of permanently residing in the United States, he had no to make that his immediate priority, but rather "value was the key driver".

Further highlighting the immigrants' conviction and determination to move to the United States through studies, two participants did not mind studying for the same level of degree that they already possessed. For instance, William had moved to Turkey to obtain a degree in economics after his high school in Nigeria. Later on, he transferred his credits to a school in the United States to obtain a degree in finance within two years: "Then after that, I worked a bit in the bank before I started my MBA; I achieved my MBA, and I've been working as a financial

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analyst since then.” Likewise, Emily, who had tried to pursue a postgraduate degree in the UK, already bagged master’s degree in clinical psychology in Nigeria, but aspired to have advanced expertise in criminology “in line with my passion and purpose”. She described the several processes and stages involved in preparing and relocating to study in the United States, chronicling her experience thus:

The admission process was, like for every Nigerian, a story to tell. Everybody goes through the process of applying. First of all, I think about writing different exams—in my case, I had to write GRE [Graduate Record Examination]—and you have to kind of make sure you get a particular score. And then, I think one of the first processes is getting your passport, which is like a struggle back home. ... So, let’s just talk about the United States applications, applying to several schools, and the journey of getting rejections here and there. ... It was quite competitive, but I finally got that admission to study... Next is preparing your bank statement because even after you’ve gotten a scholarship or assistantship that covers your tuition, there are still some fees that you need to share. I think in my case it was like \$1,000. ... I think I experienced some hustle trying to get that reflected to the school. ... You have to show proof before they can give you an I-20. ... Starting the visa application process is the bulk of the whole thing. ... When I started my visa application, it was during COVID, and the United States embassy was closed for a certain period of time. ... I count myself very, very lucky in favour of being able to get an appointment... because I know many people didn’t sleep at nights, trying to wait for a particular time... it was like everybody was trying to rush in and get a time. That was taken care of—paid the whole thing, got the appointment, and I was able to get the visa.

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And that's why I came to the United States; that's the permit you needed. That was in December 2020. (Emily)

Generally, the narrations reflect that the immigrants consciously and advisedly chose to study in the United States. As William put it, "The motivation at first was to get a good degree. Most people in Nigeria feel a degree abroad somehow works better than a degree in Nigeria. So, their main goal was to get a good degree so you could at least come back and get a good job." He explained that as time passes, especially after the immigrants have relocated, "intentions have switched." This theme of anticipating educational pursuit also hints at the long-term preparedness and vision many immigrants have, where they view education as a gateway to better opportunities and integration into American society.

Awareness of Challenges and the Will to Overcome. The narratives presented a clear awareness of challenges but paired with an unwavering will to overcome them. An illustrative example is Abigael, who faced high living costs and took up multiple jobs to sustain her family. As earlier narrated, Abigael made up her mind and took the decision to overstay her visiting visa in the United States to ensure her permanent stay in the country. She continued:

And I had a cousin of mine that said, 'You better be coming here and going; this place isn't good; we are just struggling.' And I was thinking in my mind, 'if you have been here for years and never thought of getting back to Nigeria, why will you discourage me from staying? Let us continue to struggle. If it is not easy for everybody to have good cars, you are riding good cars, build a very big mansion in your state and you're saying it's not easy, let it not be easy for all of us and then let us come home with dollars. So, I didn't allow what they were saying to discourage me. I had made up my mind to stay. If it is for

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the light only, I had made up my mind to stay. If it was for the water that was flowing, I had made up my mind to stay. If it is for the roads, they have good roads. I made up my mind to stick, even just for those special amenities that the cities have and enjoy. I made up my mind to stick with it and let us keep struggling and see how the money comes in.

(Abigael)

Abigael's resolve and perseverance, despite not completing her building in Nigeria before leaving and the lengthy six-year wait for a green card, epitomizes the grit many Nigerian immigrants possess. Similolu reported that she learned about the United States and that for the fact that her father was already resident in the country, she considered herself not totally new to her destination. Despite this, she said: "I knew there was going to be a lot of culture shock for me, and yes, and this is what I experienced when I came across a lot of things that were not happening in Nigeria." She appreciated the fact that she could access social amenities like electricity and water constantly. However, she also unfolded the challenges she soon encountered, starting with how she got tired of eating burgers—which she described as "repetitive"—after a few days of excitement, to the point became sick. Another challenge that defied Similolu's preparation was the that, according to her, "There was no community either," narrating:

I felt a bit lonely, I won't say lonely, but I felt like I was by myself because a lot of things that people would do for me if I were in Nigeria—back home, we had a housekeeper that would help us do all these things—I had to do things by myself. ... But in the first week after my arrival, I was always calling. I was always on the phone, just calling, because I did not have anything to do. So, I was bored. (Similolu)

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The mindfulness and resilience of the participants to confront cross-cultural challenges resilience is deeply rooted in their motivations for migration, be it for better opportunities, safety, or family. While they might not be fully prepared for every challenge, their determination aids them in navigating unfamiliar terrains.

Insufficient Preparation and Non-preparation. In the analysis of the interviews with Nigerian immigrants in the United States., a common theme of inadequate preparation for their cross-cultural transition emerged. Five participants provided valuable insights into their lack of sufficient preparation and non-preparation before moving to the United States. Gbade's narrative reveals a lack of preparation due to initially not planning to stay long-term—"I didn't plan to stay," leading to difficulties in integrating and understanding the United States. system. Similarly, Ayinla described his migration as reluctant and unplanned, with his primary preparation being watching American movies, saying, "I just watched American movies, that's all." Kolawole, displaying case of minimal planning, admitted to not making significant preparations, moving with "no baggage," and facing challenges upon arrival during COVID. Temitope's story is marked by a lack of personal preparation, relying on others for logistical arrangements and finding the initial days lonely and challenging. Temitope's reliance on others for preparations is evident in her statement, "I don't think I prepared per se. I just packed my bag and left; I don't think I prepared. ... I depended on them."

Lastly, Abigael recounted not preparing for the professional requirements in the United States., facing difficulties in using her Nigerian teaching certificate. Abigael's struggle with professional adaptation is clear when she said, "My Nigerian teaching certificate was not enough here." This is despite the fact that she had history of visiting the United States.

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Well, I didn't learn anything because I was thinking, number one, that I have my certificate as a teacher that I could go to teach. And then number two, because I've been coming before, and I see the kind of job my friend was doing. I was acting as; if she could pay me a hundred dollars per day, that means she made more than that. So, I was thinking it'll be easy when I get there and get something like that to do. But I never even knew that whatever you do, you have to be certified for it, except you want to be paid under the table. (Abigael)

These narratives collectively highlight a common theme of underestimating the complexities of transitioning to life in the United States. The immigrants faced challenges due to insufficient preparation, both in terms of understanding the cultural and professional landscapes of their new environment. Their experiences underline the importance of thorough preparation and the potential hurdles that can arise from a lack of it.

In conclusion, the narratives of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States present a multifaceted picture of their preparation for cross-cultural transitions. These stories underscore the complexity of migration and the diverse strategies employed by individuals to navigate new cultural landscapes. Key themes such as language preparedness, reliance on social networks, and spiritual emotional resilience emerge as pivotal components in shaping their experiences. The contrast between the Italian and US contexts further enriches our understanding, highlighting both the universal and unique aspects of the immigrant experience. Ultimately, these narratives offer valuable insights into the multifarious nature of cross-cultural adaptation, revealing a blend of anticipation, action, adaptation, and, at times, adversity. The resilience and resourcefulness demonstrated by these Nigerian immigrants not only enrich their personal narratives but also contribute to the broader discourse on migration and cross-cultural transitions.

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Comparative themes in the two case studies include the areas of motivations, support systems, challenges, and preparation levels. On motivations, in Italy, language learning and cultural integration were primary focuses, whereas in the United States, educational opportunities and career advancement were more emphasised. Regarding support systems, both groups relied heavily on social networks, but the nature of these networks differed. In Italy, the emphasis was on cultural integration through relationships, while in the United States, established connections and community organizations played a more significant role. Regarding challenges, both groups faced stereotypes and cultural integration challenges. Whereas, the United States immigrants dealt with the complexities of educational and professional systems, immigrants in Italy dealt with the systemic barriers to their occupational or career evolution. Regarding preparation levels, there was a spectrum of preparedness in both cases, ranging from proactive learning and research to spontaneous decisions influenced by personal circumstances and contextual influences. In summary, while there are some common themes, such as the importance of social networks and facing challenges in adaptation, the specific experiences and strategies of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States differ, reflecting the unique cultural, social, and economic contexts of each country.

Transformative Learning Processes and Outcomes among Nigerian Immigrants in Italy and the United States

The second research question of this study is: What are the transformative learning processes and outcomes among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States? Analysing the narratives of Nigerian immigrants in Italy unveils the profound learning experiences they undergo as they navigate new sociocultural landscapes. While sometimes there are no clearcut border between what constitute the immigrants' transformative processes and outcomes, attempt

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has been made to categorize the themes for this research questions into processes and outcomes for transformative learning in both case studies.

Transformative Learning Processes and Outcomes among Nigerian Immigrants in Italy

The transformative learning processes and outcomes manifest in various facets of their journey. The story of Olivia in Italy illustrates an immigrant's transformative learning. Olivia, a Nigerian immigrant to Italy, faced a journey filled with challenges, resilience, and transformation. Although her marriage served as the driving force behind her migration, immigration experience was complex and significant. Her qualifications obtained in Nigeria were recognized, hindering employment prospects. Determination led Olivia to discover her knack for trading snacks and offering crucial document processing and translation services to fellow Nigerians, highlighting her adaptability and resourcefulness. Olivia's narrative underscored self-reflection and the need to consider career aspirations prior to immigration. As a Nigerian woman in Italy, she confronted discrimination, yet her entrepreneurship and immigrant support efforts endured.

Amid moments of despair, Olivia centred on the positive nurturing her children, engaging in church, and finding solace in cooking. She aspired to relocate to another country, driven by her desire to let her children acquire education in an English-speaking environment and her disappointment with Nigeria's conditions. Olivia's perspective on the advantages and disadvantages of being an immigrant in Italy is nuanced, as she actively challenges discrimination and champions integration. Throughout, she acquired lessons in maintaining values, preserving reputation, and embracing integration. Her Italy experiences molded her into a stronger, empathetic individual. While regretting her initial choice of coming to Italy, Olivia

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embraced gratitude for all she had benefited and optimism for a brighter future (elsewhere). Her narrative encapsulates immigrants' intricate emotions, resilience, and determination. Processes and outcomes of transformative learning among Nigerians in Italy are discussed below.

Transformative Learning Processes in Italy. Themes that capture the process of transformative learning include language acquisition, experiencing adversities and challenges, building resilience, reliance on community and support structures, and acquisition of new skills and competences.

Language Acquisition. Encounters with new cultural norms and practices necessitated the need to engage with the new culture starting with the process and efforts to learning the language of the new culture. Language acquisition emerged as more than a mere functional tool—it became a transformative journey. Narratives of the immigrants suggest that they made conscious efforts to engage with and understand their new environment. For instance, Dele, Akin, Bello, George, and Jackson who made efforts to learn Italian, not only equipped themselves for day-to-day interactions but also delved deeper into understanding and integrating into the Italian culture. For them, the act of learning Italian was both a practical necessity and a transformative experience, reshaping their interactions and understandings of Italian culture. George and Akin's emphasis on language acquisition showcases a deliberate intent to immerse themselves in and integrate into Italian society. In fact, Jackson propounded a theory for acquiring the language of the host society for the first three years, alluding to the case of Daniel in the Bible.

Dele's description of his Italian language acquisition clearly goes beyond efforts for mere communication or personal growth and signals a transformation:

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But when I got here, I had to go out of my comfort zone and start interacting with people out there to improve my knowledge of the language. Cause if you don't interact with people, there's no way you can actually improve. Of course, you can read books, you can watch Channels on YouTube. But the only way you can interact is meeting with people. So, I have to mix with people cause I'm a kind person that just likes to stay in my room and do whatever. I have not spoken with the White person before coming here. So that's part of those things that I had to change about myself. (Dele)

These participants point to the learning of the Italian language as part of their transformation. Beyond mere communication, learning the local language represented an effort to integrate and understand the new society.

Experiencing Adversities and Challenges. The transformative power of adversity emerges prominently in the narratives. These experiences often led to critical reflection, reassessment, and personal growth among the immigrants. George's struggles with recognition of his degree and racial discrimination made him reflect more deeply on his achievements and identity in Italy. Henry's journey, marked by external hardships like sleeping outside and a prison sentence, also hints at internal battles—the emotional toll of displacement, the constant negotiation between hope and despair, and the search for identity in a foreign land. Yusuf's struggles, from the arduous visa process to confronting the isolation brought about by COVID-19 restrictions, are emblematic of the myriad challenges immigrants face. Cordelia narrated how she faced a challenge that intersected with her motherhood, gender, immigrant status and career aspirations. She said:

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I think this is a challenge that every woman who is open to starting a family would encounter sometime in life. So having to put a pause on your career prospects to have a baby. I mean, I know there are people who do all of it even while working, but it was a pity that it all started right after I had graduated and before I got a job. Well, I guess, I decided to take about a year and a half to focus on the pregnancy and the newborn stage for the babies? I'm hoping soon because the babies are about 15 months now, 14 going to 15 months. So, I'm hoping by the 18-month mark, I will be able to get back into the workforce while they go to the daycare for a bit of time. So altogether, I would say the most challenging thing about it is I've lost some time in which I could have begun in my career. But here we are, there are also other bonuses to having babies. (Cordelia)

Meanwhile, it is within these crucibles that personal growth was catalysed. Henry narrated that being in Italy had taught him patience, the importance of documentation, and the value of serving the community. Amaka learned to let things go and not dwell on malicious issues. Dele acquired a global view, a wider horizon, and felt more confident in interacting with people from different ethnic backgrounds. Participants like Olivia and Cordelia emphasised personal growth, lessons learned from migration, and adapting to new environments. Moreover, Olivia managed disappointment by accepting the situation and Yusuf emphasised perseverance through challenges. These stories indicate the adaptability of the immigrants in their various flexible ways of handling challenges and adversities. Overcoming adversities not only strengthens resilience but also deepens empathy, broadens perspectives, and sharpens aspirations.

Building Resilience for Overcoming Adversities and Stereotypes. For Nigerian immigrants in Italy, the path to sociocultural integration is fraught with both challenges and opportunities, including building resilience to attain positive irreversible changes. Dele and

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Amaka's struggles with language barriers signify the initial hurdles faced by many. Simbi became disillusioned when she found herself working as a cleaner after graduating from a master's programme:

I did tell someone that I do not love the job I'm doing, but I have to do the job because I have to survive. So, the job is for survival, but I guess what keeps me going is the fact, like I said, is because I have to survive and then I have support. Like, well, you just have to do this because of that situation you find yourself. So, I've moved from the crybaby to a more stabilized state of mind, like I said. I changed organizations along the line and that, and then, the organization I worked with subsequently was more human friendly and employee tolerant and cared about the employee than where I started from. So I guess maybe if I started off with this organization, I might have not cried just quite, yes, I might have felt sad, but I think my emotions would have not been that twisted and too stressed and thin, like where I currently work here, when you even make mistakes, they will tell you ... and not... and they just find the solution to it, and you just keep moving. It's in the current organization, mistakes are part of the learning process, which is supposed to be how life should be. (Simbi)

Likewise, Jackson remained determined to find stable employment despite initial setbacks and Fatai also remained determined to challenge negative stereotypes and prove the capabilities of Nigerians. However, their proactive efforts, such as engaging in language learning and researching Italian culture before moving, underscore a commitment to integration. Moreover, Henry learned the importance of unity and community during his challenging journey and experiences while Olivia's learned to be resolute and uphold her self-worth through her experience of gender stereotypes. Similarly, George's experiences reflect a juxtaposition: while

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he admires the organized nature of Italian society, he simultaneously grapples with racial prejudice. Such experiences highlight the double-edged sword of assimilation. On one side, there is the allure and benefits of blending into the new culture, and on the other, the stark reminders of one's 'otherness.' It is within this dichotomy, for instance, that resilience is forged. This resilience is not just about weathering adversity but also about selectively integrating aspects of the new culture while preserving one's native identity.

Reliance on Community and Support Structures. The transformative journey of Nigerian immigrants in Italy is buoyed by community and support structures. Acknowledging the emotional and social support they could benefit from community engagement, Olivia engaged in church activities. For Dele, the religious community becomes a pivotal support system, offering both emotional solace and practical assistance. Similarly, Olivia and Cordelia find kinship within the Nigerian community in Italy. This reliance on community serves multiple purposes. It provides a semblance of home in a foreign land, offers guidance in navigating the intricacies of Italian society, and presents opportunities for collaboration and mutual support.

Also, the participants generally reflected on their Nigerian cultural identity and the importance of representation by associating with their Nigerian communities through ethnic and religious engagements. The spheres of support systems experienced by the immigrants include those provided by some indigenous non-governmental and non-for-profit organisations.

Acknowledging this, Fatai recounted:

If I can remember, it wasn't easy because there was a time in which we were just roaming about the street and with the help of some Italians, we got picked up and, I think there are some suspicions here that, against, racism. So, they took charge of us, and they tried that.

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They give us accommodation and because there was a time in which nobody wanted to accommodate us. So, they took charge of us. They looked for everything they tried to manage to, m they stood by us in the process. So, kudos to them. And I think they're still in existence up till today. So that's the one that sent us from the streets. Let me just put it that way. So, although we were unable to acquire documents through them.

The significance of these support structures extends beyond mere practicalities. They serve as repositories of shared experiences, collective memories, and mutual aspirations, playing an instrumental role in the immigrants' transformative journey. Moreover, dealing with the experiences through social engagements could involve cultural and social learning, which is connected with the importance of understanding cultural differences and actively engaging with societal issues.

Acquisition of New Skills and Competences. While mere acquisition of new skills and competences might not be construed as perspective transformation in itself, it can be part of the transformative learning process, especially among immigrants. Instances of skill and knowledge acquisition by Bimpe, Dele, Henry, and Cordelia, for instance, reflect this dimension. Bimpe's learning to make *fufu* a Nigerian delicacy in a new cultural environment is not just about acquiring a culinary skill. It represents a connection to her cultural roots and identity. This act can be seen as a way of preserving and affirming her cultural identity in a new setting. It is transformative as it strengthens her sense of self and potentially alters her perception of how she can maintain cultural traditions in a foreign environment.

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Dele learning Italian, the local language, is a fundamental skill for communication and integration. For Dele, this is not just learning a new way to communicate, but also an entrance into a new culture and social system.

But when I got here, I had to go out of my comfort zone and start interacting with people out there to improve my knowledge of the language. Cause if you don't interact with people, there's no way you can actually improve. Of course, you can read books, you can watch Channels on YouTube. But the only way you can interact is meeting with people. So, I have to mix with people cause I'm a kind person that just likes to stay in my room and do whatever. I have not spoken with the White person before coming here. So that's part of those things that I had to change about myself. (Dele)

This learning process likely transformed Dele's understanding of the Italian culture and society, and how he sees himself within it. It is a shift from being an outsider to being a more integrated member of the community.

Henry's acquisition of multiple skills, including Italian, civics, and computer programming as well as volunteering in community roles reflect a multi-dimensional form of learning. He was not only involved in acquiring a language, citizenship education, and technical skills but also skills in leadership and community engagement. This involvement could signal a shift from personal adaptation to active participation and contribution to his community. It reflects a change in self-perception from a learner to a leader and influencer. Moreover, Cordelia's comprehensive learning by gaining knowledge, skills, and values necessary for living in Italy indicates a comprehensive adaptation process involving multiple aspects of her life. This suggests a profound transformation in how Cordelia interacts with her environment, assimilates

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new values, and possibly reshapes her identity in the context of her new home. This is also better understood in the context of the fact that Cordelia was married to an Italian and was mothering twins.

Their narratives reflect Nigerian immigrants transition from adapting to thriving in the Italian society. In each case, the acquisition of new skills and knowledge goes beyond mere learning; it represents a transformative path. The individuals were not just accumulating information or skills; they were reshaping their understanding of themselves, their cultures, and their roles in new environments.

Transformative Learning Outcomes in Italy. Flowing from the themes above regarding the process of transformative learning, several themes emerged that indicated cases of significant irreversible changes among Nigerian immigrants in Italy. The themes include evolving self-perception, identity and enhanced self-awareness, increased open-mindedness and awareness, shifts in perspectives, personal values and beliefs, self-recalibration to socio-economic dynamics, and re-evaluation of Nigeria and reflections on Italy as a society.

Evolving Self-Perception, Identity and Enhanced Self-Awareness. The narratives reveal a profound evolution in how Nigerian immigrants perceive themselves within the Italian context. Akin, for instance, saw his immersion into the Italian culture and language not merely as tools for survival but as avenues for personal growth. He also recounted that his doctoral pursuit changed his life:

Before I didn't have a deep knowledge in my research area, but now I don't like for now, I don't like to call myself an expert in my research field, but I'm very much close to experts in my research area. And now I can write a paper as a single author. Therefore, I

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have some papers now and the paper has been published and single author paper. And this also give me the opportunity that now I'm very close to an expert in my research area. Anyway, the program in general, my doing PhD in Italy changed my life. And this is something I cannot have done without the help of some of my supervisors and friends that I work together. But they do tell me something that most especially my supervisor, they do tell me something that 'Akin life is a teacher. The more you learn, the more you gain...' (Akin)

Akins aspirations to contribute to Nigeria's future development, using the skills and perspectives gained in Italy, shed light on a dynamic identity that straddles two worlds. This evolving self-perception was not just about adapting to the new but also about reinterpreting the old. The experiences in Italy offer a mirror, reflecting both the strengths and vulnerabilities of one's Nigerian identity. Through these reflections, immigrants like Akin negotiated, reshaped, and often expanded their sense of self and enhanced self-awareness.

Increased Open-Mindedness and Awareness. Increased openness and awareness to different viewpoints and situations emerged as one of the themes that indicates the immigrants' attained transformative learning outcome. Fatai, Bello, and Akin's experiences of becoming more open and empathetic to understanding different perspectives signify a significant shift in their cognitive and emotional approach to diversity. This indicates a move from perhaps a more monocultural mindset to a more inclusive and pluralistic approach. The aspect of understanding before judgment was particularly highlighted by Fatai, showing a development in critical thinking and empathy, crucial components of transformative learning. Bello and Olivia's reflections reveal an enhanced awareness of self, others, and societal dynamics, encompassing an

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understanding of privilege, the value of maintaining personal ethics, and the balance between integration and identity preservation. For example:

One thing that has changed is being more open to talking to new people because I definitely want to meet more people, like want to meet new people these days. And in Nigeria I didn't used do any sports. I used to go once in a while, but now I have started playing football. I'm a very bad footballer, so I didn't used to play ball in Nigeria. It's supposed to be one of the easier ways, at least to mix with people. So, I play football now. (Bello)

Also, Amaka's development of a new openness to other people's viewpoints mirrors a significant cognitive and affective change. Simbi's and Bello's recognition of his privilege compared to other immigrants and Olivia's lessons on maintaining personal values indicate a heightened self-awareness and social consciousness, which are critical outcomes of transformative learning. Simbi narrated how the humbling experience of working as a cleaner in spite of her attainment of a master's degree holder made her realised the privilege she had enjoyed in Nigeria. Thus,

I think that by the process, I've become more empathetic. I have more empathy and I've been serious because coming from the pinnacle of one ladder and then to the end of another spectrum, it gives you a position of what life is, beyond your sheltered and comfortable life. And so that's a one life journey for me that I cannot take for granted. Now I can laugh about it, but I used to cry through it. But now it's like, now, I finished the work today and, and my ... and everybody were like, there was hugs, kisses and

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everybody was like, you did well, it's easier for me to cope with them because of where I'm coming from. So, it's been life changing. it's been humbling is the word. (Simbi)

This transformation is reflective of the participants' adaptation to a new cultural environment and the resultant evolution of their openness and awareness to self and society.

Shifts in Perspectives, Personal Values and Beliefs. In analysing the transformative learning outcomes among Nigerian immigrants in Italy, it is important to focus on how their experiences have led to significant shifts in character, personal values, beliefs, and perspectives. This aspect of transformative learning is evident when immigrants experience a change in their core values and beliefs as a result of living in a new cultural environment. These shifts may manifest in alterations to their character and personal ethos. For instance, Akin observed with amazement the open display of affection in Italy, compared to his own culture, is a clear example of a shift in perspective. Being a Yoruba and a Muslim, this observation likely led to a rethinking of social norms and acceptable public behaviours. Akin's experience with the overtly affectionate nature of Italians, as opposed to his native cultural norms, reflects a significant shift in his understanding of interpersonal relationships. This evolving perspective suggests a transformative learning outcome where Akin is reconciling and integrating new social norms with his existing beliefs, potentially leading to a broader and more inclusive worldview.

Jackson's mindset change, valuing equality and correct practices in Italy, indicates a profound shift in his perception of social justice and ethical standards. He also changed his perspectives regarding his view on Nigerian cultural values, emphasising hard work and personal responsibility. In fact, he wrote a book on this aspect of his transformation. During the interview, he expounded that it is:

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... a book about exposing our mindset, the power of the mind. That a person cannot do well on this earth except if he has a proper perspective about himself. That, like I told you, one major change about my life was moving from external. You want to make it, you want to have a breakthrough, you want to show that you are. So that external factor of showmanship moved from external to internal. So that discovery was what I put in that book. That your transformation is something that happens within you. And when it happens within you, it makes you begin to take personal responsibility in your life. You no longer have value for the external, just like the way I valued going the United States before. Now it is no longer like that because something has changed, you no longer see people outside as your problem. ... You know, that alone has given me that leverage to be able to shift from when you are angry to when you are happy, shift from when you are emotionally down to when you are up with amazing mind. (Jackson)

Moreover, Fatai, Bello, and Olivia's narratives indicate a broadened worldview, encompassing changes in their views of life, philosophy, religion, and politics. This kind of perspective change is a hallmark of transformative learning, where one's fundamental beliefs and assumptions about the world are challenged and reformed. This transformation could impact not just his personal values but also his actions and interactions within the community. However, Olivia's insights into the importance of integration, while maintaining personal values and reputation, suggest a nuanced understanding of adapting to a new culture without losing one's identity. These narratives indicate that a core aspect of the immigrant adaptation and integration into a new cultural environment might ultimately involve character evolution, value reorientation, broadening interpersonal understanding, embracing new social ideas, cultural assimilation, and perspective enrichment.

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Self-Recalibration to Socio-Economic Dynamics. Navigating the socio-economic terrain of Italy presents both challenges and revelations for almost all the participants. Dele and Amaka confronted hurdles in securing employment, a foundational aspect of economic stability. Yet, these challenges also illuminate broader societal dynamics. George's observation about Italy valuing practical skills over formal education is revealing. It underscores the need for flexibility, adaptability, and a willingness to recalibrate one's professional aspirations in line with societal values and demands. Thus, immigration experiences provided avenues for career diversification and evolution. Yusuf's transition from a veterinary officer to a PhD candidate in Italy represents the academic and professional growth opportunities available in the host country.

Olivia's journey saw her transition from working for an airliner in Nigeria to establishing her business, showcasing entrepreneurial adaptability, albeit amidst psychological and socioeconomic stress and struggles. She recounted her entrepreneurial endeavours thus:

Well, I think I've made some good decisions and some irrational decisions. Would I say out of, I wouldn't say frustration, but vexation anyway, because frustration is a very heavy word. I forgot to add, at a time in order to keep myself busy and then my mother was still alive, I started going back to Nigeria to do some business. I actually occupied my time. I was buying things from here, taking them to Nigeria, to sell. I'll spend like a month, two months, I had a shop then, actually, you know. So, I did that for a couple of years. Then when I lost my mom, I stopped because there was nobody there to actually take care of my business, to do what she would do. So, I stopped. So, when I stopped, that was when I started thinking of what I needed to do. But the truth of it all is that anything, like trying to further my education or trying to look for any means of getting

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myself better to be able to work here was actually out of it. Because I was just angry, you understand? (Olivia)

Olivia's linguistics background and subsequent role as an interpreter underscores the role of education in her migration experience but she expressed lack of fulfilment especially when she compared her socio-economic status to that of her former school and work mates back in Nigeria.

These socio-economic adjustments are not merely pragmatic responses to external pressures; they're transformative in shaping immigrants' perspectives on success, value, and self-worth within a new socio-economic paradigm. Meanwhile, many immigrants' recalibration to the realities and dynamics in Italy often involved moments of disappointment, sorrow, frustrations due to experiences of status downgrading in terms of educational qualifications and occupational attainment. The recognition, or lack thereof, of educational qualifications in the host country influenced the career trajectories and decisions of the immigrants.

Re-evaluation of Nigeria and Reflections on Italy. The transformative learning outcomes for Nigerian immigrants in Italy, as reflected in the participants narratives, include their reassessment of their home country (Nigeria) and their host country in (Italy). This analysis considers the various aspects of their lives that have been impacted, leading to changes in transnational perspectives, values, and behaviours towards both countries. For instance, Ajoke explained her nuanced understanding of human interactions and expressed a refusal to generalize based on negative experiences:

Well, nothing has really changed in my interaction with people, because generally I'm of the opinion that whatever your experience is with one person, or a person should not be

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used to generalize. Because I put myself also into that situation, imagine if somebody does something, if I do something, imagine if they use that to generalize the people that I represent or where I come from. So regardless of my experiences with some Italians that could be racist, there are also people that are not racist, that they're sweet, they're amazing people. So far, I like it, I enjoy Italy. I'm saying in Italy. And then we have the opportunity to learn the language and meet other nationals. Like my friend/classmate from Uganda who first started online before later joining us physically. (Ajoke)

This balanced perspective, acknowledging both the positive and negative aspects of life in Italy, illustrates a mature and reflective approach to new cultural experiences. Ajoke's appreciation of the diverse opportunities in Italy, including language learning and meeting people from other nationalities, signifies a broadening of her social and cultural horizon.

Other participants also acknowledged benefits of living in Italy, which include improved governance and infrastructure. Jackson believed that changing certain values among Nigerians, such as the value of personal responsibility, could facilitate improved governance in Nigerian cultural values changed. In his stories, Fatai highlighted the differences between Italy and Nigeria, particularly in terms of freedoms available in Italy. This recognition suggests a re-evaluation of his understanding of personal and societal liberties, potentially leading to a reformed view of what constitutes a free and just society. Amaka, Henry, and Cordelia's appreciation of better amenities in Italy, such as consistent electricity, good governance, and infrastructure, indicates a comparative evaluation of living conditions between Nigeria and Italy. While participants generally valued the importance of education, George found that practical skills were valued more than formal education in Italian workplaces.

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Amidst these acknowledgments and a re-evaluation of what they value in terms of governance and societal infrastructure, the immigrants' narratives showcase their efforts toward cultural retention as many of them maintained their Nigerian culture. Akin's expression of retaining Nigerian culture, including Nigerian foods, while in Italy shows an effort to preserve his cultural identity amidst adapting to a new environment. This balance of cultural retention and adaptation suggests a key aspect of transformative learning, where immigrants navigate the complexities of maintaining their roots while integrating into a new society. Another way of retaining their cultural identity is through active community participation. Fatai and George's involvement in Nigerian community associations (even at leadership level) supporting immigrants also highlights a shift from being recipients of support to becoming active participants and contributors to the immigrant community. This transition often involves a redefinition of their roles and identities in the host country and is indicative of a shift from individualistic to more communal or collectivist values.

Overall, the narratives of Nigerian immigrants in Italy reveal transformative experiences woven through evolving self-perception, identity and enhanced self-awareness, increased open-mindedness and awareness, shifts in perspectives, personal values and beliefs, self-recalibration to socio-economic dynamics, and re-evaluation of Nigeria and reflections on Italy as a society. Their various experiences and offer rich insights into the process as well as the product of transformative learning. Each thread, while unique in its hue, contributes to a larger story of resilience, adaptation, and profound personal evolution and perspective transformation. These changes are indicative of a deep and meaningful learning process that goes beyond acquiring new information or skills, impacting their worldviews and identities.

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Transformative Learning Processes and Outcomes Among Nigerian Immigrants in the United States

Various themes relating to processes and outcomes of transformative learning among Nigerians in the United States are identified and discussed in this section. The story of Kunle in the United States exemplifies a path of transformation. Kunle shared his experiences of immigrating to the United States, recounting the challenges he had encountered and the support he had received along the way. He spoke about the emotional journey that came with relocating and how that process had left a lasting imprint on his life. Throughout his narrative, Kunle emphasised the pivotal role that his support system played in helping him navigate the intricate path of immigration. He highlighted the significance of seeking guidance and remaining open-minded as he undertook the transformative journey.

The emotional impact of leaving behind familiarity and stepping into the unknown became a central theme in Kunle's story. The adjustments to a new culture, language, and way of life were hurdles he faced with determination. He spoke passionately about the value of embracing these challenges as opportunities for growth, even when they felt overwhelming. Kunle's words resonated with the importance of learning from every experience encountered on his immigration journey. In his narrative, Kunle concluded with a poignant reminder of the power of asking questions and connecting with others who had walked a similar path. He acknowledged that the camaraderie of those who had shared similar struggles proved to be an invaluable source of information and solace. Kunle's story served as a testament to the idea that the immigration journey was not solely a physical transition but a transformative process that shaped him in profound ways.

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Transformative Learning Processes in the United States. The narratives of Nigerian immigrants in the United States provide a rich tapestry of experiences that depict the transformative learning processes. predominant themes emerged to indicate transformative learning processes among these immigrants. The themes include cultural immersion and adaptation through challenges, the role of support networks and spiritual anchoring, development of communication and interpersonal skills, and acquisition of new skills and educational advancement.

Cultural Immersion and Adaptation Through Challenges. One of the most apparent transformative learning processes for Nigerian immigrants in the United States revolves around the consistent adaptation they undergo when faced with myriad challenges. These challenges often stem from cultural, bureaucratic, and socio-economic differences. The United States, with its multicultural fabric and distinct societal norms, presents challenges that require immigrants to constantly learn, unlearn, and relearn. Participants like Goke, Deola, and William navigated cultural shocks and the challenges of integrating into American society. They used strategies like improving communication skills and building relationships. For example, Deola chronicled:

And also, coming here, I just felt like nothing prepared me because, when I came here, I realised that America has this individualistic culture that is very different from what we have back home because in Nigeria, we have this community. We do things together as a family. In fact, growing up, aside from my parents raising me, I felt it took a whole village to raise a child in Africa. Aside from my parents raising me, I also get advice, even if sometimes my mom's friend or outsiders scold me. Me and my mom didn't say anything wrong with it because we appreciate communal living. But coming here and realising that people do things on their own, people want to be on their own, people want

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to, even when you have friends that are American, it can be the same way because most of the time before you see them, you have to keep messaging them, and I just feel nothing prepared me for the culture shock in America. Even though I tried to prepare myself, I tried to grasp that this is what America is all about. But nothing prepared me well enough until I came here. (Deola)

This is an example of how Nigerian immigrants experienced a cultural shock in transitioning from the communal living of Nigeria to the more individualistic culture of the United States, learning to navigate this new social dynamic. Cultural immersion is also evident in adapting to the more individualistic culture in the United States, as contrasted with the communal living experienced in Africa. Deola also faced challenges like imposter syndrome and adapting to the academic environment, while Kolawole struggled with securing internships due to immigration limitations. There were instances of cultural conflicts, such as differences in communication styles or social etiquette, that lead to misunderstandings. Immigrants addressed these by cultivating open-mindedness and a willingness to learn. Engagement in community activities, as Kunle volunteering at homeless shelters, also allowed immigrants to immerse themselves in the local culture and understand diverse social issues.

Immigrants emphasised the importance of being adaptable, open-minded, and willing to embrace change, which was key to their successful transition in a new country. Such adaptation becomes a foundation for many other learning outcomes, fostering personal growth and greater intercultural understanding. through these experiences that they began adapting and learning about their new environment. Their narrative, marked by episodes such as the amusing incident during the application for a master's program, underlines how challenges often metamorphose into learning experiences. This adaptation is not merely about overcoming hurdles. It is about

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understanding and assimilating into a culture distinct from one's own, from comprehending societal norms to navigating everyday life nuances. Participants learned to adapt to the American lifestyle and environment. Olamide, for example, adapted to the American accent and lifestyle by listening to radio and television. Challenges such as adapting to new food, security concerns, and feeling lonely were common. Immigrants coped by seeking support from community groups, using social media to connect with fellow Nigerians, and finding mentors, highlighting the importance of building a supportive network.

The Role of Support Networks and Spiritual Anchoring. Lastly, the transformative learning processes, and outcomes, for Nigerian immigrants are deeply intertwined with the value of support networks and faith. Whether formal or informal, these networks provided guidance, emotional sustenance, and a semblance of home in a foreign land. Participants discussed finding jobs, relying on friends and organisations for assistance, and the importance of mentorship and emotional support. They expressed gratitude for those who helped them and emphasised the importance of giving back and supporting others in similar situations. The participants shared their experiences, and they emphasised the importance of having friends and community to support them through the transition and help them navigate challenges. They also highlighted the importance of community engagement, open communication and seeking support for mental health. For example, John found support from a Nigerian family at church, which highlights the crucial role of community networks in helping immigrants adapt to new environments, providing emotional and practical support.

Also, participants like Kunle and Similolu who found solace and support in Nigerian churches, epitomising the importance of these networks. This is an excerpt from Kunle's story:

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So, I already have friends here who are going to school. Yeah. That's another long story right there. I had a friend that I was hoping to connect with when I got here, and I just had a few dollars with me, for my uncle in the hope of renting something. The mindset was that once I got here, I'd be able to do some side jobs to make extra income because my uncle would not fund the school and at the same time fund my living. So, I was able to, and then when I got here, I found out that my friend was also sponsored by his dad. So, what he painted for me was different from what I saw when I got here. So, and then I couldn't even find him. I had to meet with them, and then I joined the church, [redacted]. And I met some brothers who took me in. And ever since then, they've been my guides all through my journey, telling me what to do, how to make ends meet, supporting me both financially and especially when my brother, my uncle, lost his job in the middle of the process, and all that. So, they were kind of a support system for me.

The churches were more than just religious institutions; they were anchors in an unfamiliar terrain, providing both tangible help and emotional comfort. Temitope talked about the support and guidance he received from his friends in the United States, showcasing the importance of personal connections in navigating the challenges of immigration and facilitating transformation. Support networks, often forged on shared cultural or national identities, offer more than just assistance. They become spaces for shared experiences, stories, and advice. They reinforce the notion that while the immigration journey might be individual, the experiences are collective, offering solace, understanding, and camaraderie. Meanwhile, Abigael critically distinguished between the group of the Nigerian community that supported her and those that did not, saying: "If you think that those who already saw the light will lead you to the tunnel to see the light, then you're a joker—a big joker." According to her, those that assisted her were people

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like her who were also new in the environment, and “not people that were already settled,” whom one would naturally see as helpers.

Olamide mentioned that the church played a major role in providing support, both financially and emotionally, as well as helping him adjust to his new life in the United States, which illustrates how spiritual communities can offer substantial practical and emotional assistance. Prayers provided a sense of comfort and solace, allowing me to express my fears, hopes, and gratitude. William reflects on his stressful experiences and expresses gratitude for overcoming them with the help of God. Goke’s experience, where prayer played a significant role in his relocation process and where he sought guidance from his church and pastors, demonstrates how spirituality can serve as an anchor during transformative experiences. Abigail’s journey included a reflection on the challenges she faced in obtaining documentation to stay in the United States, and she emphasised the importance of trust in God, underscoring the role of faith in providing resilience and hope amidst uncertainty. Community networks, whether based on ethnicity, religion, or shared experiences, provided essential support and guidance to the immigrants. Simultaneously, spiritual practices and beliefs offered emotional resilience and a sense of stability in the face of the challenges and uncertainties of immigration. Together, these processes facilitated adaptation and significant personal growth in a new cultural and social environment.

Development of Communication and Interpersonal Skills. Another transformative learning process evident among Nigerian immigrants is the development of their interpersonal skills. The American societal structure and work culture often necessitate honing one’s communication abilities, leadership qualities, and negotiation skills. For example, Abigail’s story exemplifies this. She had to work multiple jobs to support her family and navigate the

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complexities of life as an immigrant. By her own assessment, her communication improvement was rated at eight out of ten, showcasing how integral these skills became in her journey. For some of the participants, this development required them to improve their English language, especially, in the aspect of accent. Goke shared that, “Another challenge was having an accent, which varied depending on where I lived, whether it was in a more disadvantaged area or a more affluent one.” Goke, for example, overcame challenges by improving his communication skills, essential for both professional and personal interactions.

My performance was really, really bad when I first started working as a customer service representative. A lot of customers gave negative feedback. I couldn't understand, Da, da, da, da, da. But what would I do? Sorry, I had to. I had to work, and now I need that money. I had just adopted and gotten comfortable. If someone says they don't want to talk to me, I'll let them know, hey, I'm hearing yours. You don't need it; that's fine. I know what the issue is. I can fix it within two to three minutes. But if you want to talk to Sas, please go ahead and hang up and call back. The majority of them don't want to call back because it's going to be like 30 minutes old. So, they don't have a choice but to deal with me. I started finding ways to change it for positive feedback and all those things. So, it was a little bit, but it was pretty good. But yeah, that challenge is so big: financial challenges, communication barriers—a big, big one. (Goke)

He chronicled that he had to modify his spoken English: “We have this Nigerian accent. This is not how I used to talk. This is not how I used to talk back in Nigeria. But when you are in the culture and start mixing with people and listening, you don't have a choice but to change.” Inversely, William, who believed it was important to preserve his local language for future generations, adopted code-switching strategies. He alternated his speaking style depending on

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who he was conversing with, adjusting his accent when speaking with White colleagues, but maintaining his Nigerian accent with Nigerian peers.

Kunle explained that when he first arrived in the United States, his main focus was on learning about the American culture. He believed that understanding the culture was crucial for adapting to life in America. He spent the first two years immersing himself in American customs and traditions, including learning how to communicate with Americans. Deola came to the point that it is not necessary to be friends with everyone, depending on the individual's personality and dependability. She shared her experience of not being happy with certain American friends who expected her to live by their rules. Emphasising the importance of interpersonal skills in formal settings, William explained that performance in job interviews, "It is not just about your skillset; if the interviewer likes you and you can relate to them, they may overlook any lack of skills.

Having conversations with people helps you learn about life, different people, and culture, which can be useful in interviews." Improvements in understanding and communicating across cultural lines were noted, with immigrants becoming more confident in addressing misunderstandings and being more culturally sensitive. Interpersonal skills are not just about effective communication. They encompass understanding diverse perspectives, empathising with different viewpoints, and effectively collaborating in multicultural settings. For many Nigerian immigrants, these skills do not just facilitate smoother integration; they become pivotal in personal and professional advancement.

Acquisition of New Skills and Educational Advancement. Skill development and educational and professional advancement were a hallmark of the change than many participants experienced. Abigaël and others learned new skills and gained deeper self-understanding through

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their experiences in the United States. She acquired skills in various aspects, including caregiving, video recording, and scrum masters. She narrated how she got into video recording thus:

I started sitting, and I was in the house again when one of the family members that my sister has known for a long time Asked: What is your sister doing at home? Can she learn video recording? She told me, I said I can do. So, I was going out with him on two occasions for video recording. He was teaching me how to handle the camera. And at the end of the day, he would pay me \$50 when I was still learning. When I was good at what he taught me, he started paying me \$100 for any outing that we had to go to. So that was how I started doing video recording. I could record events, parties, and other things; from there, the video recording is just, is, it's not every day. It's just that by the weekend, if there is a party or something, they do it.

Participants like John, Emily, Deola, Temitope, Similolu, Kolawole, Kunle, and William sought varied educational and professional opportunities in the United States. For example, John focused on pre-university studies and William focused on his career development via further education, findings legal ways to beat visa restrictions. Learning new skills relevant to their professional fields was a common theme, signifying a focus on career advancement and adaptation to the United States job market. Temitope came to the United States as a transportation and logistics expert, but she started learning cybersecurity, which is indicative of professional and educational growth. She said: "It's mainly because there's so much demand for it. My field is transportation, planning, and management. I'm only doing it mainly because there's so much demand for it and because I have time on my hands, so why not?"

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There is a strong emphasis on the value of education and the pursuit of new opportunities, as seen in the participants' narrative. They accessed various resources such as learning centers and counseling services, for personal and academic development in the United States, to explore their identity and expand their skillsets. In summary, the transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants in the United States encompass a wide range of aspects. These processes collectively contribute to their personal growth, adaptability, and integration into American society. The following transformative learning outcomes further underscore the immigrants' transformative experiences and perspective transformation.

Transformative Learning Outcomes in the United States. The transformative learning outcomes among Nigerian immigrants in the United States can be identified through several themes discussed below. The themes include reviewed values and reconfigured identities and perspectives, enhanced cultural sensitivity and adaptability, reinforced resilience and self-reliance, and reflections on and shifted perceptions of Nigeria and the United States.

Reviewed Values and Reconfigured Identities and Perspectives. An undeniable transformative learning outcome is the review of values and reconfiguration of one's identity and perspective. Experiences in the United States prompted Nigerian immigrants to review and reflect on cultural norms and their awareness of systemic issues. Many participants reflected on their personal and cultural values. Olamide's experience in the United States led to changes in his mindset, behaviour, and views on self-reliance and entitlement, reflecting a reconfiguration of identity and perspective. Abigael, for instance, talked about the importance of hard work, integrity, and self-reliance shifts in views on religions and political ideologies were observed, leading to a deeper understanding of life and a greater appreciation of diversity. The shift from a

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collectivist mindset in Nigeria to the individualistic culture in the United States prompted immigrants like Deola to reflect on and adapt to these new cultural and religious values.

Kolawole, for instance, experienced a significant shift in his perspective on religion, learning to appreciate people's humanity beyond religious beliefs, which enhanced his openness and acceptance. Kolawole expressed his new conviction thus:

But coming to the United States, I've seen that a lot of people are not religious. But I wrote of it as though people can be good and have humanity at the root of their being. They're just great people, and they're just not religious, which is fine. I'm coming to the fact that people are. People might just not be religious, but that doesn't mean they're wicked or terrible people. They're just not religious, and it's totally fine. And so, it's kind of opened my eyes, and I don't. I think religion used to be like a key thing, and I always wanted to know about someone first and their religion later. So, let me know if this person is a good person, then how is religious? Good to know. But it's not about whether the person is religious first. I don't; I see religion as the most important thing about the person you get. That's not the first thing I want to know about the person. I wanted to know about the person first before I started asking about religion. So, it's dampened my religious beliefs before coming. No, it's just, like I said, just some of the exposure that I've gotten in terms of understanding that they're genuinely good people, and then they're just not religious. (Kolawole)

Being in the crossroads of Nigerian heritage and American culture, many immigrants grappled with redefining, and eventually reconciling their identities. For instance, immigrants improved their English language skills while maintaining their linguistic heritage, reflecting a

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balance between adapting to a new culture and preserving their identity. The immigrants generally emphasised that the United States offered opportunities, but they also highlighted that beliefs and perspectives play a significant role in achieving success. This acknowledgment, juxtaposed against their candid mention of challenges posed by their accent, captures the essence of evolving identity and perspective. This theme often unfolds as a two-pronged process. On the one hand, there is the affirmation of the immigrant roots and values, ensuring they are not lost amidst cultural assimilation. On the other, there is an openness to adopting new perspectives, enriching their worldview and understanding.

Enhanced Cultural Sensitivity and Adaptability. Appreciation of and adaptation to cultural differences were evident in the participants' narratives. Immigrants learned to appreciate different cultures without considering one as superior to another, aiding their integration into new cultures and alleviating tensions in the process of adaptation. Many participants, such as Gbade and Goke, adapted to the diverse society in the United States and learned to respect different opinions and viewpoints. Gbade, for instance, acknowledged the challenges of practicing and transmitting his Yoruba culture in the United States while respecting other cultures. Ayinla stated that immigrants need to adapt and conform to the system in order to survive in the country they are in. He compared the host country to a system and emphasised that those who do not fit into the system will be rejected and discarded. He explained thus:

So, how's my view changed? I'm more, I'm grown, I'm wiser and I understand the economy more. I understand the environment more. I understand what not to do and what to do and how to go about it. And I understand the multiple opportunities that's there. So, I use all that to my advantage. That's the difference compared to when I didn't have good understanding of how things work. ... Oh yeah, over time. Because if you don't, the

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system will spit you out because this country, like otherwise say, is actually a system, not a country, actually it's a system. And if you don't fall in the system, the system will spit, will chew you and spit you right out. (Ayinla)

Meanwhile, immigrants like Gbade and Kolawole highlighted the importance of keeping an open mind and respecting diverse opinions, which facilitated better connections and communication in diverse environments. Also, Kolawole enjoyed the educational system and cultural diversity, indicating an immersion into and appreciation of the American culture. Attaining the adaptability might entail improved interpersonal skills and building relationships. William and Goke highlighted the importance of building relationships and understanding different cultures. This points to a development in their interpersonal skills, essential for successful integration into a new society.

Immigrants became more conscious of issues like racial discrimination within the criminal justice system in the United States, leading to a heightened awareness and cautiousness in their behaviour. Many participants, like Deola and Kolawole, appreciated the cultural diversity and opportunities for personal growth in the United States. For some participants, it was very important to maintain cultural balance by retaining certain Nigerian cultural values while absorbing new values in the United States. Participants like Gbade made efforts to maintain their cultural identity while respecting and appreciating different cultures in the United States. Immigrants experienced a re-evaluation of personal and cultural values. For example, Deola discussed navigating cultural differences, such as individualism in the United States versus collectivism in Nigeria and adjusting to new cultural norms like the widespread acceptance of vaccines. The enriched cultural competency resulting from exposure to diversity is evident, as is the importance of maintaining connections to native Nigerian culture through

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engagement with cultural artifacts like music, dance, and food. Also, the contrast between the subconscious mindset in Nigeria and the heightened awareness required in the United States, especially regarding the criminal justice system, led to a deeper understanding of societal structures and personal positioning within these systems.

Reinforced Resilience and Self-Reliance. The stories of Nigerian immigrants underscore a significant transformative learning outcome: reinforced resilience and self-reliance. Their immigration journeys, with their ups and downs, fortified a robust sense of determination and an innate ability to rely on oneself. For example, Abigael's narrative is particularly poignant in this regard. From the challenges in obtaining a green card to juggling multiple jobs and facing high living costs, her story is one of unwavering resilience. Her advice to others to be independent and trust in God captures the essence of this theme. Abigael recounted the struggles of finding a job without proper documentation and how they persevered. She mentioned facing racism and discrimination but chose not to let it affect them and instead turned it into a joke. She emphasised the importance of determination and not depending on others. She also shared, among others, her experiences as a widow and how it motivated her to help others in similar situations. Despite this, she was determined to work and provide for her family. Abigael's journey to the United States, her struggle with obtaining documentation, and her eventual success in adjusting to life in the United States highlight her resilience and self-reliance.

The narratives of Deola and John also demonstrate resilience and self-reliance. Deola became more independent and self-reliant despite cultural differences and challenges, while John focused on his studies and supported his mother despite financial challenges. John narrated how he became more resilient and gained the courage to do what he considered right:

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I started hanging around the right circle. Even though it's hard, with time you find people who are at the same level as you are mentally and who have goals they're trying to achieve. And just seeing that is also motivation for you because you're like, I can't be the only person in this friend group that's not mentally trying to get something. And then when you see your friends, you have friends who don't just talk about achieving something, who are actually achieving it. It pushes you to, y'all pushing each other. Like today, my friend will be like, I don't feel like, no, it's like, you push me, I push you, we're all going to be so successful. One time, I was definitely hanging around the wrong circle at one point. I'm not gonna lie, but just a good kid too, for no, but it's perfect. I was definitely hanging around the wrong circle, but I had to slowly pull myself off of it when I saw how it was leading me negatively. (John)

Overall, the participants emphasised the importance of staying positive and adapting to new challenges. Such resilience and self-reliance often become the bedrock for many immigrants, guiding them through challenges and propelling them towards their goals. It is a testament to their indomitable spirit, shaped by their unique experiences and journeys.

Reflections on and Shifted Perceptions of Nigeria and the United States. The changed perceptions of both the United States and Nigeria and reflections on disparities, inefficiencies, and opportunities in both nations are included in this theme. Exposure to the American way of life has altered participants' perceptions, allowing critical reflection on the inefficiencies observed in Nigeria and fostering a desire to contribute to positive change in their home country. The United States experience changed the views of immigrants like Kolawole and Olamide, not just about the United States, but also about Nigeria. Kolawole expressed frustration with inefficiencies in Nigeria, indicating a shift in his perspective.

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Kolawole's frustrations with inefficiencies in Nigeria and William's passion for fixing Nigeria indicate a critical re-evaluation of their home country. Deola unfolded how she found life interesting and saw it from various perspectives. She believed that Nigeria is overly religious compared to what she observed in other places, which altered her perception of religion in Nigeria.

Other participants passionately expressed concerns about the dwindling quality of education in Nigeria and the low level of awareness among the people in Nigeria. They worried that uneducated masses determine the fate of the country, highlighting the brain drain happening in Nigeria and criticised the country's leaders for making it difficult for educated and intelligent people to make positive changes. Goke shared that:

This is in 2023. We can't still be where we are right now. You're trying to withdraw \$5,000, and you have to pay \$500 for it. How does that make sense? In my home country, I'm trying to take money, and you have to charge me to take money. There's no money. There's a scarcity of all those things. So, I just changed my opinion. We had the opportunity to do the right thing, but we did not. We failed. ... That's what's different from the United States and India, even though there are questionable actions from leadership here in the United States as well. But still, they've got it right now.

Emily's experience regarding the existence of law and order corroborates Kunle's perspective above, observing that, "What I like about the United States is that it is very structured. Everything is structured. Everything is structured. Things that are supposed to be done are done. I would just say first of all, the structure is a key." Also, aligning, Temitope emphasised: "America doesn't allow you to make mistakes and come back from them like that. It

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is not exactly flexible that way. ... So, when you are here, you better know what you're doing. You better get your ass together" (Temitope). Emily also recounted her positive experience with the friendliness and helpfulness of the people in her specific area of residence in the United States, while acknowledging the diversity and varying experiences across different regions of the country. She emphasises the United States "is not one culture but several cultures across." Meanwhile, Emily nostalgically compared Nigeria to the United States in terms of foods and expressed her admiration for her home country thus:

Back home, this is not a problem. Food. You don't have to think that this food is non-GMO or GMO... There are some things that are not your problem. So, there's still, for me, a form of appreciation for some things that Nigeria gives. For example, that education is quite cheap. ... There's still some form of appreciation that I have for Nigeria. Like some form of values, we had as a person, as a group, not necessarily as a whole country.

The experiences of immigrants like Olamide and Gbade reflect their reflections on the United States, recognizing both its opportunities and imperfections. Olamide, for instance, adjusted his expectations and worked hard for financial stability in the United States, while Gbade acknowledged the challenges faced by people of colour and the middle class in the United States.

And in turn, you find yourself working really hard and saving late too. And I realised that this system, the economic system, is not designed for the middle class because for the middle class, it just wants you to make money and pay it out, eat, have those basic amenities, and that's it. It is not designed for you to save. So that's why, that's why I say

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that I realised that the system is not perfect, compared to when I first came in, when I felt that the United States system was the best in the world. (Gbade)

Gbade realised that the American economic system may not fully cater to the needs and aspirations of the middle class, leading him to question its perfection compared to his initial impression. In conclusion, exposure to the American way of life has prompted critical reflection on inefficiencies in Nigeria and fostered a desire for positive change in the immigrants' home country. Immigrants have experienced shifts in their views, recognising both the opportunities and imperfections in the United States. While the United States offers structure and certain advantages, it also presents challenges. Despite their newfound appreciation for aspects of the United States, many immigrants maintain a deep sense of attachment to Nigeria, acknowledging the value of education and cultural elements. These reflections highlight the complexity of immigrant experiences and the evolving perceptions of their home countries and adopted nations. The juxtaposition of opportunities and inequalities in both countries has shed light on the multifaceted and cross-cultural nature of immigrant experiences.

In summary, these outcomes demonstrate a complex interplay of cultural, personal, and professional growth, highlighting the transformative impact of the immigration experience on Nigerian immigrants in the United States. Their narratives reveal how the immigrants' reviewed values and reconfigured identities and perspectives, enhanced cultural sensitivity and adaptability, reinforced resilience and self-reliance, and reflections on and shifted perceptions of Nigeria and the United States. They adapted to a new culture, developed resilience, re-evaluated their identities, and gained a nuanced understanding of both their home country and the United States. In the words of one of the participants, Emily, "Anybody that's coming to the United States should prepare for a real change of life, a change of a lot of things." In summation,

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the transformative learning processes, and outcomes, among Nigerian immigrants in the United States are a testament to their resilience, adaptability, and growth. Their stories, punctuated by challenges, triumphs, and insights, offer a profound understanding of the human's capacity to learn, evolve, and thrive.

In conclusion, answering the second research question, the transformative learning processes and outcomes among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States reveal a complex and multifaceted journey of personal and cultural evolution. Nigerian immigrants in both countries encounter numerous challenges, from language barriers and cultural shocks to socio-economic adjustments and the struggle to preserve their identity in a foreign land. However, these challenges serve as catalysts for transformative learning, prompting critical self-reflection, resilience, and a re-evaluation of personal values and beliefs. In Italy, Nigerian immigrants undergo profound changes in their self-perception, identity, and awareness. They learn to adapt to new cultural norms, develop empathy, and gain a deeper understanding of societal dynamics. Their experiences lead to enhanced open-mindedness, shifts in personal values, and a recalibration to socio-economic realities. These changes are not merely adaptive responses but transformative, deeply impacting their worldviews and identities. Similarly, in the United States, Nigerian immigrants experience a reconfiguration of identities and perspectives, enhanced cultural sensitivity, and reinforced resilience. The American societal structure necessitates the development of communication skills and a greater appreciation for diversity. Immigrants learn to appreciate different cultures, adapt to the individualistic culture of the United States, and find a balance between retaining their Nigerian cultural values and absorbing new values.

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Relationship of Cross-Cultural Transitions to Perspective Transformation among Nigerian Immigrants in Italy and the United States

The third research question of this study is: How do Nigerian immigrants' cross-cultural transitions relate to their attainment of perspective transformation (transformative learning outcomes)? Results of the analysis of the interviews are presented for both the Italian case study and the America case study.

Relationship of Cross-Cultural Transitions to Perspective Transformation in Italy

The cross-cultural transition has contributed to a profound perspective transformation in the participants. They demonstrate a more inclusive viewpoint and show adaptability to the Italian way of life.

Language and Communication as a Lens to Transformation. Language and communication challenges were recurring motifs in the narratives of Nigerian immigrants. Many immigrants, including Dele, Jackson, Amaka, and George all grappled with the language barrier, highlighting the foundational role of communication in the cross-cultural transition. As Jackson said:

Well, for anybody that comes here, try to find a way to relate to the system. When Nigerians come, they're just within Nigerians. You find them with Yoruba, Igbo, and the likes. But when you come here, you see this is an Italian society find way to create time, relate with people, have a friend. You know, don't be scared of making a mistake in the language or making a mistake in your behaviour, but relate with the system, which will help to open your eyes to some of the hidden treasures in the land. So that is my number one consideration. Immigration is still going to continue. People are going to be

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migrating, but integrating is where the question lies. Integrate to be into the system that will now lead to learning the language. Thank God for Google translate. Thank God for other apps today. Be committed to learning language. And that will help in the integration, the process, and the sense of humility. Also, that you are in another person's land. So, the person is the one that is hosting you. They may not have the structure on ground, but see that you, yourself can become part of the system despite the structure that is not on ground. (Jackson)

Beyond the functional need to communicate, learning the Italian language served as a portal into the deeper cultural, social, and historical nuances of Italy. For these immigrants, the process of language acquisition was transformative. It not only equipped them with the tools to navigate daily life but also fostered a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Italian worldview. Their ability or inability to communicate directly impacted their perceptions, interactions, and immersion into the new culture, leading to profound shifts in perspective.

Cultural Adaptation and Identity Reformation. The challenge of adapting to a new culture brought forth revelations about personal identity. As Nigerian immigrants interacted with Italian culture, their own Nigerian identity was simultaneously reaffirmed, re-evaluated, and reshaped. George's experience offers a poignant illustration. While he admired certain facets of Italian society, such as its organization, he also confronted racial discrimination. This duality — of being drawn to certain aspects while being alienated by others — shaped a complex, multifaceted identity. According to him:

We are Italian citizens. But maybe if you hear an Italian man or how they speak or how they classify us, they will tell you that you are a Nigerian with Italian passport. They

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cannot call you as a citizen. Can they tell you that you're a citizen of Italy? So, you have the integration, but you're excluded. You're integrated in the city. They allowed you, but they don't include you. They still have that segregation. They would tell that you're a Nigerian with an Italian passport. They cannot classify you as their own citizens. So that is a gap. ... I love most of the Italian culture. I don't like some of their culture. That culture I don't like is their exclusion. (George)

George's challenges with racial discrimination and having his degree recognized led him to reflect on his experiences and achievements. Through such interactions, immigrants underwent a transformative learning process, recalibrating their understanding of self in relation to both their native and adopted cultures. Henry acknowledges Italian cultural practices such as prohibition of beating children and the tradition of going on vacations,

Socio-Economic Integration and Shifts in Value Systems. Navigating the socio-economic landscape of Italy was pivotal to the immigrants' perspective transformation. For example, George's realization that Italy put premium on practical skills over formal education exemplifies this shift in understanding. Dele's and Olivia's struggles with employment were not merely logistical challenges; they provided insights into the broader societal dynamics and value systems of Italy. Dele gave an example:

Yes, there are disadvantages because sometimes there's positions that blacks even those are born there let me say are full Italians, they cannot aspire to be, you don't see blacks working certain jobs that we find blacks working in in other European countries, for example. Even jobs like bus drivers, let's say bus drivers or working in big offices, big managers or the company managers of corporations don't that happen. If they're doing

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that. They have broken beyond the barrier, but they are just, let me suggest one or 2% that have done that. So even though they have been able to break that barrier, they are always heavily criticized by the White indigenous to the lands. So, it's very difficult for Blacks in their numbers to really break through the barrier that has been said because the country believes in Italians posts before others. (Dele)

Engaging with these dynamics, immigrants developed a nuanced appreciation of success, ambition, and value within their new environment. These experiences, while challenging, were instrumental in molding immigrants' perspectives on work, worth, and societal contribution.

Community Bonds and the Duality of Belonging. For many immigrants, communities played a central role in their transformative journey. Dele's connection with his religious community and Olivia's bond with the Nigerian diaspora offered more than just logistical support; they provided emotional solace, cultural continuity, and shared understanding. Simbi highlighted the importance of communal support thus:

So, for me, one of the things that has worked is this my support network. So, I have a large circle of friends or families that understand the changes that I'm going through and have been able to encourage me through the process, especially when I'm at the low point of it. So, it's something for me that has kept me going. And so, to be able to at least cover the cost of expenses of the kids I left back at home. So that has also kept me going at times where I think that I ordinarily have to give up or need to. And then, like I said again, so right there in Italy also, I've also had a committee of some of my colleagues that I now work with that have also been quite encouraging and just keep helping me

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walk through the point of where I'm usually very low on the job. And so that has been the strength for me.

Engaging with communities, immigrants often navigated the duality of belonging: a sense of connectedness with their Nigerian roots and a simultaneous desire to integrate into Italian society. This balance, often delicate and always evolving, was central to their perspective transformation. It reshaped their notions of community, belonging, and cultural identity in profound ways.

Resilience in the Face of Adversity. The transformative learning outcomes of Nigerian immigrants were often catalysed by adversity. Henry's arduous journey, marked by external hardships, and Yusuf's battles with visa processes and COVID-19 restrictions are testament to this. Yet, within these challenges lay the seeds of profound transformation. Challenges and adversities faced during migration played a key role in fostering personal growth. George's battle with racial discrimination and the non-recognition of his degree in Italy drove introspection, reshaping his understanding of achievements and identity.

Similarly, Yusuf's ability to navigate visa complexities and pandemic restrictions showcased a narrative of resilience and transformative growth. As he chronicled:

I don't know how to describe it, but it was really a difficult one to be honest. It was really a difficult one because while it was a bit easy to get the admission, the scholarship, because I did everything within two months' application, and the interview and everything was very smooth, it was the bulk of the work of getting to Italy is passing through the consulate, passing through the visa process that was very tricky for me. I realized that getting it is not easy, as I have never gone out of the country, although I have

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a lot of people that did that study outside, that went for different things, pilgrimage or something. But none of them close to me has gone to Italy. Some of them have been to Europe, but none of them have gone to Italy. So, I thought it'll not be so difficult because of the advice they gave me; "you have a scholarship, so you don't have any problem". So, I was feeling like it'll be so smooth. ... I can tell you that maybe I have never gone through this emotional stress as I did before I came, even after getting the visa, because after getting the visa, it was now clear to me that getting the visa, it is not easy at all.

(Yusuf)

This challenge was later coupled with his efforts to bring his family to Italy, "But my biggest issue is my family, as I mentioned earlier, is to be with my wife here." Yusuf was learning and exploring in an attempt attain his goals. Overcoming adversity not only fostered resilience but also deepened empathy, expanded worldviews, and heightened aspirations, as Simbi's stories illustrate. Confronting and surmounting these obstacles reshaped immigrants' perspectives on self-worth, societal contribution, and the very essence of the human spirit.

Emotional Transitions. Emotional transitions were pivotal in these narratives. The emotional journeys of the immigrants reveal transformative realizations and growth. Olivia's migration, motivated by her pregnancy and subsequent role as a housewife, shows a deeply personal transformation tied to familial responsibilities. For Olivia, the migration was a deeply personal journey, motivated by her impending motherhood and the subsequent evolution of her roles and responsibilities. Meanwhile, there were also mixed feelings about the host society. For instance, Akin had gratitude for the opportunities in Italy but faced stereotypes about Nigerian students. Bimpe was happy to relocate to Italy to be with her husband. However, she tearfully

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narrated that her family lost her sister, and her mother was sick about the time she was relocating. Jackson captured his mixed emotions thus:

It was full of excitement as a newlywed, you come to join your partner, so we were happy, the next challenge was the issue of financing, because, paying rent and meeting up with expenses at that initial stage was not easy. That was basic. And as a man, I needed to take the responsibility, I've been groomed that way, it is not that you are trying to depend on the woman. So, I needed to face that challenge. So that first few weeks was exciting. But after which the month following was more of wanting to get a job, wanting to settle down, which wasn't easy until I got a job. (Jackson)

In sum, the cross-cultural transitions of Nigerian immigrants in Italy are intrinsically tied to transformative learning outcomes. Their journeys, marked by challenges in language, culture, socioeconomics, community engagement, and personal adversities, led to profound shifts in perspective. These shifts encompassed reformed identities, altered value systems, evolved notions of belonging, and a heightened sense of resilience and empathy.

Relationship of Cross-Cultural Transitions to Perspective Transformation in the United States

Navigating cross-cultural transitions is no small feat. It not only requires practical adjustments but also compels individuals to undergo significant cognitive shifts. The process of perspective transformation, or transformative learning outcomes, is at the heart of this journey. From the narratives of Nigerian immigrants in the United States, six distinct themes emerged, illuminating the interplay between their transitions and transformative learning.

Challenges as Catalysts for Growth and Empathy. Facing and overcoming challenges in a foreign land often forces immigrants to not just adapt but also to introspect. Cross-cultural

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transitions often compel individuals to question and re-evaluate previously held beliefs and assumptions. This challenging process, though at times uncomfortable, is foundational to transformative learning, narratives of Abigael, Kunle and others exemplified. Kunle, upon arriving in Texas, had to rely heavily on the support of others. This reliance made him more empathetic, as evidenced when they encountered a friend at work who had faced struggles. This was the same friend he had hoped would help him settle in the country but disappointed him.

Kunle recounted:

What goes around comes around in life. If you don't know what's going on with someone, don't judge before or ahead of time. People are going through a lot, but you never know. Guess what? I became one of the supervisors at my work. I'm talking about three or four years ago now. And then I was doing my rounds. ... Guess what I found at my job? There was my friend. He was working with her, so he relocated from California to Texas. And he didn't know; he didn't know I was in Texas. We haven't communicated since that time. We never talked. We didn't, but I didn't know what was going on with him. I didn't know where he was working. I didn't know anything about him. And it turned out to be my friend, working under me. So, I was like, 'how did you get here?' ... I helped him get a better position at my job, in my office. And then, from there, he moved to another department. (Kunle)

He came to a profound realization about the dangers of judging others without knowing their stories. Such encounters in the United States, a melting pot of diverse narratives, forces Nigerian immigrants to challenge their pre-existing biases and assumptions. Such experiences

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foster a heightened sense of empathy, teaching immigrants to see beyond the surface and appreciate the depth of human experiences.

Redefining Success and Aspirations. The American dream, often painted in broad strokes of success and prosperity, can sometimes be a stark contrast to the ground realities faced by immigrants. A poignant example is the narrative of Abigael who observed successful Nigerians working in factories. She described the experience thus:

I met a lot of big people who are rich in Nigeria and don't have any reason to even come here and work. But I still see them coming to the same factory to work, to make money. They came back home and got richer and retired. You just see people say, we are travelling; we're good. They went to work; they just came back to work. They went there to spend three months; they came to work except you're very rich, you're very wealthy. ... But one thing in the United States is that in their work, you don't really look down to get any work. Even if you're a cleaner, they will respect you. You see, at work, they're coming down to your level to do what you're doing to help you out. Maybe something fell or not; they're so selfless. They're not arrogant; they're not proud. ... As long as you are a worker, you are all equal. (Abigael)

This observation redefined her understanding of success, emphasizing the values of hard work, perseverance, and humility. The transformative learning here is the realization that success is multifaceted and is not always aligned with societal definitions. It becomes a deeply personal journey of understanding one's goals, aspirations, and values.

Maintaining and Re-defining Identity in a New Cultural Context. The constant interplay between preserving one's cultural identity while integrating into a new culture is a

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significant theme in these narratives. Navigating the duality of Nigerian heritage and the evolving cultural milieu of the United States often propels Nigerian immigrants into a transformative journey of identity exploration and re-definition. For example, Gbade narrated:

You have almost that feeling of a village raises a child compared to here, where there's a lot of individualization. You don't really get that community feel of living in the United States because everybody's so busy and everybody has no time to actually reach out and socialise. So that was one of the biggest cultural differences that I noticed. Another one is that, yeah, as an immigrant, you have an accent. And, and now I'll say, depending on where you lived, and I've lived both ends when I'm talking about lived, and now, excuse my language, in the ghetto compared to when you lived in, let's say, a little more polished environment in the United States. ... So, then I got to a crossroad when I started questioning my own education, like, did I learn English the right way or not? And then you have peer pressure; you see people speaking a particular way, and you want to imitate that so that you can feel and have the sense that you belong in that environment. So, this was the time when I started working, and I started to realise that just the way they speak is totally different from the way I speak English, and even the pronunciation of words is totally different. Not until I started college did, I realise that the way I was speaking English was the right way. So that brought a little bit of a reset to my mind.

(Gbade)

Also, Deola candidly spoke about the challenges associated with their accent but remained unwavering in their self-belief and their qualifications, and abilities, highlighting this theme. As Similolu said, "No, I'm not going to change my accent for anybody. I'm going to just

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try to speak as clearly as possible.” This journey of retaining one’s identity while embracing a new culture can be arduous, but it is instrumental in transformative learning. It challenges immigrants to find a balance, leading to a richer, more nuanced perspective on self and society. Participants generally were neither completely anchored in their Nigerian identity nor entirely assimilated into American culture. Instead, they found a balance, drawing strength from both identities to navigate challenges.

The Role of Faith and Spirituality. For many immigrants, faith acts as an anchor during turbulent times. Abigail’s narrative stands out in this respect. Despite facing numerous challenges, including high living costs, juggling multiple jobs, and a prolonged wait for her green card, she leaned heavily on her faith. She also translated her beliefs into action by helping the less fortunate through her foundation. Also, Similolu said:

I don’t know, whatever, anybody I personally am really into, like prayers, and I’m a Christian, and my work with God has been shaky because one time I’m on, one time, and one time I’m not perfect, but one thing I know for sure is that God has really helped me. God has; God has been the one that has made my journey in this country smooth. So, I’m, I give glory to God, and also my parents and my friends. Like I said, you can’t go far in this life if you don’t have anybody around you, because in America it’s about information. (Similolu)

This intertwining of faith with daily challenges and acts of kindness showcases transformative learning in its purest form. It illustrates how belief systems can be reinforced, realigned, and put into action in a foreign land, leading to profound personal growth.

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The Power of Independence, Self-Assuredness and Self-Reliance. A recurring theme was the significance of maintaining one's identity and self-belief amidst the plethora of changes. Participants pointed out challenges associated with their accent but remained steadfast in their belief in their qualifications and abilities. This self-assuredness is crucial as immigrants often find themselves in situations where they might be doubted or marginalized. Holding onto one's identity and beliefs acts as a shield, helping them face potential biases or prejudices, ensuring that their self-worth is not compromised. Deola talked about how she did not like being assumed to be a Black American and clarified because as a Nigerians she did not have same experience and culture as Black Americans. Also, she exerted her self-sufficiency by identifying and discarding micro-aggressions. Deola said:

And also, something that I also don't like is that when I first came here, a lot of people were passing a lot of micro-aggressive comments asking me, 'Do you have schools in Nigeria?' If I don't have schools in Nigeria, did I just wake up and start a master's degree? Of course, for me to have a master's degree and for me to come here for a master's degree, it means that I had a bachelor's degree somewhere. And some of them will be, 'my god, you speak English.' So, well. I don't understand. What do you mean I speak English? So, well, a lot of micro-aggressive comments are also something that I do not like. And I know that some of them were not doing it intentionally, but whether intentional or not, I still considered it micro-aggressive. So, yeah, I would not really say that because I've not really experienced for the first-time what racism is in the United States, but I would say that passive aggression and micro-aggressive comments are something that I've really witnessed a lot. (Deola)

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It is a preparatory mindset, allowing immigrants to stay grounded while absorbing the nuances of a new culture. The narrative of Abigael underscores the transformative learning that emerges from understanding the importance of independence. She advised others not to rely solely on external support, but instead cultivate a sense of self-reliance. This advice, rooted in her personal experiences, suggests a broader theme of growth among Nigerian immigrants. Their journeys, filled with trials and tribulations, teach them the value of autonomy. While communal support is crucial, there's an underlying realization of the power of independence, resilience, and self-belief in navigating the challenges of a new culture.

The Role of Shared Experiences and Community. The transformative power of shared experiences and community cannot be overstated. For Nigerian immigrants, these shared narratives play a crucial role in reshaping their perspectives and facilitating their transformative learning outcomes. Drawing from the narrative where some immigrants found solace and support in two Nigerian churches, it is clear that such communal spaces offer more than just tangible assistance. They become repositories of collective experiences, shared challenges, and mutual growth. As illustrated in Olamide's narrative:

Another major, organisation that I can think of right now is the church. The church actually played a major role too, in making sure that I had a smooth transition here because I could remember, about, after about two months, somebody invited me to, to a church. And in the church knowing that I was new, I was new in, in Chicago, they offered everything they could by, you know, they offered everything they could, encouraging me, you know, in various ways, financially, morally speaking and inviting me to, you know, outings, making sure that I wasn't bored. The church really played a major role too. ... At those times, I did not have the opportunity to say, I want to go see a movie or go to drama

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or whatever. You know, the little time I have is just for church. Due to the type of work that we were doing at that time, there was no time for extracurricular activities or, doing something else besides my work and going to church. (Olamide)

Delving into this theme, these shared experiences often act as mirrors. They reflect the collective struggles, aspirations, and triumphs of the Nigerian immigrant community. By engaging with these narratives, immigrants often find their own stories validated, their challenges contextualized, and their triumphs celebrated. Furthermore, these communal spaces and shared experiences are not just passive repositories. They actively shape the perspectives of Nigerian immigrants, guiding them towards more inclusive, empathetic, and community-centric worldviews. They underscore the importance of solidarity, mutual support, and the power of collective action.

In essence, the cross-cultural transitions faced by Nigerian immigrants in the United States are deeply intertwined with their transformative learning outcomes. Their experiences, as reflected in the narratives, offer a tapestry of growth, resilience, introspection, and evolution. Each theme underscores the profound shifts in perspectives that occur as immigrants navigate the complexities of integrating into a new culture while retaining their unique identities.

Influence of Personal and Contextual Factors on Nigerian Immigrants' Preparedness and Transformation in Italy and the United States

The fourth research question of this study is: How do personal and contextual factors affect Nigerian immigrants' cross-cultural preparedness and transformative learning experiences? Results of analysis in the two case studies are presented below.

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Personal and Contextual Factors Affecting Preparedness and Transformation in Italy

Participants' narratives showed how personal factors such as motivation and aspiration, reliance on existing support networks, previous cultural and educational exposures, and personal adversities. In Italy, the sociocultural environment presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities for Nigerian immigrants, impacting their cross-cultural preparedness and transformation significantly. The narrative interviews reveal varied experiences that highlight the contextual factors affecting these transitions.

Personal Motivations and Aspirations. The aspirations and motivations of the immigrants played a significant role in shaping their learning and adaptation to Italy. Akin's desire for personal growth and career opportunities exemplifies the transformative power of personal motivation. His wish to use the knowledge gained to contribute back to Nigeria showcases a forward-thinking perspective, influenced by both his personal ambitions and the experiences he accrued in Italy. For many immigrants, these personal aspirations acted as catalysts, motivating them to overcome challenges, seek new learning opportunities, and adapt more effectively to their new environment. Dele, Amaka, Simbi, George, and others all had various specific motivations for coming to Italy, whether they were personal relationships, job prospects, or simply the allure of a new culture. These motivations shaped their attitudes, behaviours, and efforts to assimilate. For instance, the importance Amaka placed on being a working woman guided her efforts to understand and integrate into the Italian professional landscape. Personal aspirations, thus, had a direct impact on the immigrants' learning curves and their overall preparedness for life in Italy. Below captures how Simbi's migration motivation intertwined with a systemic organisational issue that she experienced in Nigeria:

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So, the reasons, in my case, are not quite the usual reasons people leave the country. So, one basically was that being a union leader meant that I had to speak truth to power. And so, I was becoming a political pest and then the system didn't want me, technically. So, I was posted into another office and became technically almost redundant. So, I felt that the best option at that point was to find something I could do to stabilize the system. And so, I decided to come to Italy to study human rights. So, I still did not deviate from what my calling was. So, I sort of thought that maybe there was something lacking in my advocacy experience that I might learn outside the country to give me a second opinion to the things I'm doing. And so, the whole idea of me coming to Italy to study human rights was to get a technical—and then, yes, that's the word I would use—a technical expertise and a qualification for my NGO and my human rights and my liberal activities. So, sort of like to put an icing on the cake was what made me come to Italy, to study human rights. (Simbi)

Reliance on Existing Support Networks. The presence or absence of pre-existing connections and support networks in Italy had a tangible impact on the immigrants' transformative learning experiences. Dele's reliance on his religious community and Olivia's bond with the Nigerian community in Italy provided not just comfort but also crucial guidance in navigating the intricacies of Italian society. These networks often acted as essential buffers, aiding immigrants in their initial phases of adaptation, providing them with valuable insights, and helping them avoid potential pitfalls. Conversely, the narratives also reflect instances where the absence of such support networks exacerbated challenges. Without a guiding hand or a familiar face, some immigrants found the transition more daunting. This reliance, or lack thereof, on pre-existing connections played a pivotal role in shaping the immigrants' learning experiences

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and their overall preparedness for their new lives. As exemplified in Akin's narrative, the connection that ameliorated his initial challenges was not a personal relationship one, but it was the connection to his PhD coordinator and his assigned supervisor:

Then I came to Italy on the end day in December, the last day of 2018. Then, I was new in the country, and I will not forget my, PhD coordinator and my supervisor. Before my arrival in Italy, they helped to arrange a temporary accommodation for me, which really helped me a lot because in December, I could get other accommodation, unless I would go to a hotel and hotel was quite expensive by that time. Therefore, they really helped me. (Akin).

Previous Cultural and Educational Exposures. The educational and cultural backgrounds of the immigrants profoundly impacted their transformative learning processes. Henry's decision to watch Italian movies as a means of immersion underscores the importance of prior exposure. This exposure, whether it was through media, education, or personal relationships, equipped immigrants with preliminary insights into Italian culture, making the transition smoother. George's mention of valuing practical skills over formal education in Italy contrasts with a potentially different educational ethos in Nigeria. Such differences in educational and cultural paradigms required immigrants to recalibrate their expectations and approaches to learning and professional growth. These recalibrations were deeply influenced by their previous cultural and educational experiences, determining the trajectory of their transformative learning in Italy. Exemplifying this point, Bimpe responded that that preparing for moving to and living in Italy was not a strange phenomenon to her because she had lived in Russia. She recounted:

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To me, it's not strange, I once traveled to Russia, something I'm used to. When we thought, the relocation was going to take maybe a month or two and it wasn't taking longer, then I thought let me just have my work back than just sitting at home. But anytime they are ready, they are ready. All I have to do is go to the market and get whatever thing.... [During the migration experience,] I was thinking of, because I've been to Russia. I've seen worst. So, what should I expect here?

Personal Adversities. The individual adversities faced by the immigrants significantly influenced their transformative learning and preparedness. Henry's journey, marked by homelessness and a prison sentence, epitomizes the resilience many immigrants showcased. Personal challenges often acted as crucibles, refining immigrants' perspectives and approaches to life. These adversities, while undoubtedly taxing, also instilled a heightened sense of resilience and adaptability. They were transformative experiences in themselves, reshaping immigrants' worldviews, honing their problem-solving skills, and reinforcing their determination to thrive in their new environment. Their personal journeys of overcoming such challenges often became foundational elements of their transformative learning experiences.

Cultural Differences. One of the key themes identified is the struggle with cultural differences and adaptation. Yusuf, for instance, points out the cultural disparities between Nigeria and Italy, emphasizing the reasons behind the limited number of northerners studying abroad. Similarly, Akin talks about his adherence to Nigerian food due to his religious beliefs and past experiences. This adherence reflects a deeper struggle to maintain one's cultural identity in a foreign land. The narrative interviews also shed light on the discrimination faced by Nigerian immigrants. Dele, George, and Bello recounted their struggles with language barriers and racial discrimination. Yusuf's experiences of emotional difficulties and criticism further

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illustrate the diverse challenges these immigrant's encounter. Despite these obstacles, they exhibit remarkable resilience and adaptability.

Support Systems. Support system played a crucial role in aiding these immigrants through their transitions. Dele found solace in his religious community, while Cordelia leaned on the broader Nigerian community for support. Yusuf's reliance on his wife, friends, and professors highlights the importance of a robust support network. These support systems provide not only emotional and social assistance but also practical help in navigating new environments.

Systemic Barriers. Analysis revealed the systemic barriers that Nigerian immigrants face in Italy. George, Yusuf, and Akin's experiences with documentation and family reunification challenges reflect a critical aspect of their journey. These experiences necessitate a deeper understanding of and engagement with the legal and bureaucratic systems in Italy. The challenges faced in navigating these systemic barriers underscore a resilience and a deeper engagement with the complexities of immigrant life in Italy, demonstrating the immigrants' determination to overcome obstacles and integrate into their new society successfully.

External Contextual Factors. External factors, such as Italy's socio-economic environment and the broader European migrant situation, played crucial roles in the immigrants' experiences. The narratives highlight difficulties in finding employment, suggesting potential macroeconomic or policy-driven challenges in Italy. Similarly, racial discrimination, as experienced by George, alluded to broader societal dynamics at play. Yusuf's encounter with COVID-19 restrictions is a poignant reminder of the unpredictability of external contextual factors. Such overarching situations, often beyond the immigrants' control, had profound

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implications for their transformative learning. They required immigrants to be agile, adaptable, and resourceful, profoundly impacting their preparedness and overall experience in Italy.

Summarily, the transformative learning and preparedness of Nigerian immigrants in Italy were deeply influenced by various personal motivations, pre-existing support networks, educational and cultural backgrounds, personal adversities, cultural differences, systemic barriers, support systems, and overarching external contextual factors. Each of these elements played a significant role in shaping their experiences, learning curves, and overall adaptation to life in Italy.

Personal and Contextual Factors Affecting Preparedness and Transformation in the United States

Understanding the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in the United States necessitates exploring how personal and contextual factors shape their transformative learning and preparedness for life in a new culture. Delving into the intricate layers of Nigerian immigrants' experiences in the United States, it is evident that both personal and contextual factors play a crucial role in shaping their preparedness for life in a new country and their transformative learning.

The Weight of Expectations and Personal Aspirations. The drive to pursue higher education and expand career opportunities was a defining factor for some immigrants. Similolu specifically decided to leave Nigeria in 2016 to pursue these aspirations. She was motivated by the potential of gaining knowledge and skills that would be instrumental for their future. This personal ambition, rooted in an individual's definition of success and societal expectations, played a critical role in shaping her transformative journey. The anticipation of realizing her

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dreams in the United States might have prepared her mentally, but the ground realities often posed stark contrasts. Such contrasts push immigrants to re-evaluate their priorities and perspective.

Individual Determination and Adaptability. The journey of Nigerian immigrants in the United States is often characterized by their unwavering determination and adaptability. These personal traits have proven instrumental in how they respond to the unique challenges and opportunities that the United States offers. The stories of the participants like Deola and Goke, who, despite facing challenges related to their accent, firmly believed in their qualifications and abilities, illustrate the significance of self-belief and perseverance. Their narratives mirror the sentiment that individual determination can often override external challenges. It is evident that adaptability, often rooted in their Nigerian upbringing, enhanced their ability to integrate into American society, as immigrants like Gbade and Olamide shared. This adaptability is not just about adjusting to new norms but also involves a flexible mindset that allows for personal growth and perspective shifts. Furthermore, the determination and adaptability of these immigrants are often rooted in their reasons for migration, whether for education or better opportunities. This underlying motivation acts as a constant driving force, pushing them to adapt, learn, and grow, even when faced with significant challenges.

Faith as an Anchoring Force. Religion and spirituality played a pivotal role in some immigrants' journeys. Abigael, for instance, heavily leaned on her faith amidst challenges. Moreover, she actualised her beliefs by helping the less fortunate. Such personal belief systems offer comfort and guidance, shaping how immigrants perceive and tackle challenges. As illustrated in Kolawole's and Ayinla's narratives, the transformative learning in this context is

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recognizing the universal themes in spirituality that transcend cultural boundaries and applying these teachings in day-to-day life, fostering resilience and a sense of purpose.

Reliance on Community and Support Networks. A recurring theme in the narratives is the importance of community and support networks. For many Nigerian immigrants, these networks, often rooted in shared cultural and national ties, play a pivotal role in their transition to life in the United States. Kunle and Similolu recounted how they found immense support from two Nigerian churches and some individuals who provided accommodation and financial assistance. This not only provided immediate relief but also a sense of belonging in a foreign land. The community does not just offer logistical support; it also serves as an emotional anchor. The shared experiences, challenges, and triumphs within these communities create a sense of solidarity, helping immigrants navigate the complexities of life in the United States. Moreover, these support networks act as knowledge repositories, helping newcomers understand the nuances of the American system, from mundane tasks like grocery shopping to more complex ones like navigating visa applications.

Accent, Personal Identity and Cultural Expressions. Accent, a seemingly small facet of one's identity, surfaced as a contextual challenge for a participant. While they believed in their qualifications and capabilities, the accent occasionally posed as an impediment to Nigerian immigrants. This instance brings forth a broader theme of personal identity components and how they interact with the receiving culture. Such interactions push individuals to either fiercely protect their identity or, at times, adapt to fit into the new culture. For instance, Goke did not hesitate to modify his accent whereas Similolu said she would not change her Nigerian English accent. The transformative learning here is twofold: understanding one's own worth irrespective of cultural markers and realising the importance of cultural flexibility in certain contexts.

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Navigating Cultural Differences and Systemic Challenges. The United States, with its cultural melting pot, presents both opportunities and challenges. Nigerian immigrants often find themselves navigating these, and their success in doing so is significantly influenced by their personal backgrounds and the broader systemic context. The narrative of Abigail revealed the complexities of these challenges. She faced high living costs, worked multiple jobs, and it took her six years to obtain a green card. These systemic challenges were juxtaposed against her personal determination and faith, which helped her persevere. Moreover, many Nigerian immigrants often confronted cultural shocks, from nuances in communication to deeper differences in values and beliefs. Their ability to navigate these is often influenced by their prior experiences, education, and individual resilience. Furthermore, systemic challenges, whether related to immigration policies, job markets, or societal perceptions, play a considerable role. While some of these challenges can be daunting, the analysis also revealed that many immigrants find ways to turn these into opportunities, often drawing from their personal strengths and community support.

Economic Realities and Survival Imperatives. Economic factors significantly shape the immigrant experience. Abigail's narrative paints a vivid picture: she faced high living costs, juggled multiple jobs, and encountered the prolonged process of obtaining a green card. These economic challenges, coupled with the survival imperative, often push immigrants to roles they had not envisioned. Seeing successful Nigerians in factory jobs, as one speaker noted, showcased the shift in economic realities. Transformative learning stems from reconciling with these realities, reshaping aspirations, and finding value in unconventional paths.

Overall, personal and contextual factors deeply influence the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in the United States. These factors, ranging from personal aspirations to economic

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realities, shape not just their practical day-to-day lives but also their broader perspectives on self, community, and society. The rich tapestry of their experiences offers profound insights into the intricate dance of personal growth, cultural assimilation, and identity negotiation. From individual determination and adaptability to the pivotal role of community networks and the challenges and opportunities of a new cultural and systemic landscape, their journey is one of continuous learning, adaptation, and growth.

In conclusion, the study on how personal and contextual factors affect Nigerian immigrants' cross-cultural preparedness and transformative learning experiences in Italy and the United States reveals a multifaceted interplay of influences. Personal motivations, aspirations, and individual resilience emerge as key drivers in shaping immigrants' journeys. Ultimately, Nigerian immigrants in both Italy and the United States demonstrated a dynamic process of learning and adaptation. Personal adversities, coupled with cultural and educational exposures, shape their transformative experiences. These narratives underscore the importance of resilience, adaptability, and support systems in navigating the complexities of cross-cultural transitions, offering profound insights into the transformative power of the immigrant experience.

Comparing the Immigration Experiences of Nigerians in Italy and the United States

The ultimate research question that guided this study is: How do immigration experiences of Nigerian in Italy and the United States compare? The cross-case analysis of the cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning delves into the multifaceted experiences of Nigerian immigrants across two culturally diverse nations, namely Italy and the United States. This was conducted by analysing the various datasets from both cases using three methodological approaches, including: thematic-narrative analysis of narrative interviews, quantitative analysis

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of TLS questionnaires, and interpretations of selected images. The study compared and contrasted the nuanced journeys of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, offering a unique perspective on their adaptive strategies, challenges faced, and their transformative experiences.

The cross-case analysis builds on the separate focus on each of the two cases and the previous results on the immigrants' preparedness, transformative learning processes and outcomes, relationship between their cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning, and impact of personal and contextual factors. The identified themes and narratives comprehensively overlap with the themes under the previous research questions and offer a nuanced understanding of the immigrant experience on a context-specific basis. Focusing on how the participants' immigration experiences align and vary in the two distinct contexts offers valuable insights into the unique and shared aspects of their cross-cultural experiences and transformative learning in different societal settings. On the one hand, similarities between Italy and the United States case studies include common experiences of cultural shock, adaptation strategies, and the pursuit of better opportunities. On the other hand, differences between the two case studies include the distinct challenges posed by the sociocultural and economic contexts of Italy and the United States.

Preparation for Cross-Cultural Transition

For many Nigerian immigrants, the process of integration into a new culture begins long before they step foot into their host country. The preparations for cross-cultural transition appear to be a shared experience among the immigrants in both Italy and the United States. The pursuit of better opportunities among Nigerian immigrants was one of the patterns observed across Italy

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and the United States. Nigerian immigrants in Italy had various motivations and recounted various journey. For example, Henry precarious journey was initiated by escaping violence and deception, while Amaka's was motivated by love and Fatai's was kicked started by football aspirations in Italy. Ajoke chose Italy due to family connections, whereas Simbi wanted to study human rights in an Italian university.

For many Nigerian immigrants, both in Italy and the United States, preparation for cross-cultural transition often revolved around learning and information gathering. In Italy, the emphasis was largely on acquiring language skills. The theme preparation and information gathering emphasises the role of preparation and seeking information for transitioning to a new culture. Information gathering also highlights the importance of anticipating resilience, challenging stereotypes, and the benefits of seeking help when needed. Instances from narratives mention the significance of learning Italian and understanding the culture for successful integration. For instance, Henry, Amaka, Jackson, and Cordelia made significant efforts to learn Italian to smoothen their transition.

In contrast, the narratives from Nigerian immigrants in the United States did not overtly emphasise language acquisition, likely due to English being a widely spoken language in Nigeria. Rather, there was a strong focus on interpersonal skills and understanding the new culture and society, aligning with the cultural assimilation process. Emphasis on using digital platforms to gain knowledge about Italy. Additionally, some immigrants made unplanned moves, suggesting a lack of concrete preparation. Reliance on social and professional networks was another noteworthy aspect. In both countries, immigrants often leaned on connections to aid their move. For instance, in Italy, Bimpe relied on her husband for paperwork, while Bello secured a

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job through a friend. This pattern resonates with the narratives from the United States, where immigrants often counted on family or friends for initial support upon arrival. Moreover, spiritual and emotional preparations were strategies employed, notably by Amaka and Kunle before relocating to Italy and the United States, respectively.

Nevertheless, not all preparations were uniform. For some, like Olivia in Italy, there was an initial phase of minimal cultural preparedness. This aspect contrasts with some US narratives, which depicted a more structured approach towards understanding and assimilating into American society, although, similarly, some moves were unplanned or unexpected. Henry (PIT01), who journeyed across the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea amidst uncertainties and lack of preparation, reflecting on his migration experience thus: “When you plant a tree it doesn’t grow that day; it becomes big. It makes me understand that life is step by step ...” This implies a gradual adjustment to the new culture, recognizing the process of adaptation.

Participants often did not anticipate the full spectrum of challenges they would face, as seen in metaphors like the tree standing firm against the wind (PIT03 Dele), symbolizing unexpected resilience needed. This indicates varying levels of preparation among immigrants. In summary, Nigerian immigrants to Italy placed a clear emphasis on language preparation, while this was not prominently featured in the narratives of those moving to the United States. Reliance on personal connections is a common thread in both groups. However, the narratives of those moving to the United States seem more professionally driven, with a focus on education and job opportunities.

Cross-Cultural Experiences, Transition, and Transformation

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The journey of cross-cultural transition often leads to transformative shifts in personal perspectives. Experiencing cultural shock and developing adaptation strategies were common phenomena among both groups of participants. Distinct challenges posed by the sociocultural and economic contexts of Italy and the United States formed a notable difference in the immigration experiences of the Nigerian immigrants and their counterparts in the United States. Many immigrants in Italy discussed shared struggles like obtaining a visa, discrimination, and dealing with bureaucratic processes. The participants faced challenges, particularly in language, racial discrimination, and job acquisition. In Italy, many, like Henry and Jackson, faced challenges but used them as catalysts for growth. Immigrants like George faced challenges like racial discrimination and the struggle for degree recognition. Such adversities spurred deeper introspection and personal growth.

The themes of language and communication as well as social networks and support stood out in the analysis of the participants' narratives. Learning the Italian language was a common transformative experience among the participants in Italy, whereas the participants in the United States generally focused on modifying their English language accent and developing effective communication and interpersonal skills. Learning Italian for sociocultural and socioeconomic integration was emphasised in the Italian context. While the challenge that comes with the efforts of achieving proficiency in a new language was not characteristic of the narratives from the United States, the participants generally had moments of disorientation before learning to navigate diverse linguistic environments and leveraging English proficiency in their host country.

Generally, the theme of benefitting from personal and communal support structures was evident in both Italy and the United States. The use of existing connections and community networks, like families and church communities, was vital. With nuanced dynamics, building

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connections within local and Nigerian communities was common among the immigrants in Italy, whereas leveraging established Nigerian immigrant networks for support and guidance was more pronounced in the United States. Many Nigerians in Italy relied on personal connections or family for support and guidance. Many immigrants in the United States relied on pre-existing knowledge, mainly through movies and digital platforms. There was also reliance on existing networks and connections, emphasising on professional networks and educational opportunities, such as scholarship programs as well as church communities and families. The fact that Ajoke (PIT04) and William (PUS08) associated their experiences to the image of the lightbulb might imply the role of education and professional growth as universal aspects of immigrant transformation, despite differing host cultures.

Furthermore, in the United States, narratives often touched upon the multi-layered facets of identity, belonging, and confronting systemic issues, illustrating the complexities of integration and identity formation. Emotional transitions played a significant role. Olivia's narrative from Italy, for instance, depicted her emotional journey of leaving her family and adapting to her new role in Italy. Despite shared struggles, personal narratives, like that of Dele finding solace in music and Henry facing homelessness, indicate a diversity of experiences among the immigrants. Olivia, Dele, Henry, and Fatai narrated varying experiences and coping mechanisms to facilitate their evolving lifestyle and identities. Many immigrants underwent significant mindset changes, appreciating the different freedoms and values in Italy, like Jackson and Fatai. They emphasise the importance of adaptability, preparation, personal and contextual factors, and transformative learning in their journeys. These instances of adaptation, integration, and personal transformation, influenced by cross-cultural transitions, found parallels in the

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narratives from the United States, where immigrants grappled with the emotional ramifications of leaving their homeland for the promise of a better life.

Influence of Personal and Contextual Factors

Both sets of narratives underscored the profound impact of personal and contextual factors on immigrants' experiences. Analysis showed that Italian societal attitudes and immigration policies influenced the cross-cultural experiences in Italy, whereas the impact of American cultural diversity and economic opportunities was observed in the narratives of Nigerians in the country. In Italy, aspects like Yusuf's ethnic background (Bole, a minority ethnic group in the north of Nigeria) influenced his interactions, while Akin's migration was facilitated by financial support from an organization in Nigeria. Similarly, in the United States, personal backgrounds, educational qualifications, and prior experiences significantly shaped the migration journey. Family and personal connections were crucial in the migration journey and integration of Nigerians in Italy. Many relied on spouses or other family members, such as Amaka and Ajoke.

Challenges, both expected and unforeseen, frequently emerged. In Italy, immigrants like Fatai had documents stolen, while in the United States, others navigated the intricacies of visa processes, job markets, and societal expectations. These challenges, inherent to the immigrant experience, often served as catalysts for transformative learning. Both groups highlighted the importance of support systems in their experiences, the emotional and psychological impact of migration faith and spirituality and socio-economic factors. Among the participants in Italy, personal factors such as age and appearance also affected their experiences. Many leaned on faith and spirituality during challenging times and the importance of support systems was evident.

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Contextual factors like the availability of familiar food (PIT14, PUS11) and the opportunity to maintain cultural practices (PUS05) impact how immigrants negotiate their identity and well-being in a new culture. Simbi's (PIT08) selection of the compass to represent her ongoing journey and the need for perspective highlight the importance of both personal orientation and contextual clues in navigating new cultural landscapes. "The compass implies that I haven't also gotten to where I'm going. I'm still on a journey..." resonates with her sadness about the menial job she had to do in Italy even after bagging a master's degree and the aspiration and determination to forge ahead until her desires are fulfilled.

Transformative Learning Processes and Outcomes

A significant aspect of the immigrant experience is the transformative learning that occurs when individuals immerse themselves in a new culture. As part of their transformative learning processes, cultural immersion leading to self-reflection and reassessment of personal values appeared to be more observable in Italy while professional experiences leading to skill development and career advancement was more common among the United States participants. In the same vein, Similar significant changes were observed among the participants in Italy and the United States. The immigrants' narratives reflected transformative learning outcomes.

However enhanced understanding of self in a multicultural context seemed more pronounced in Italy than in the United States where acquisition of practical skills and adaptation strategies relevant to professional growth. Shifts in worldview driven by everyday social and cultural interactions especially happened among the participants in Italy while changes in perspective influenced by professional challenges and opportunities was a hallmark of perspective transformation among Nigerian in the United States. The Nigerians in Italy expressed

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a change in perspective, understanding of the dual identity (both Nigerian and Italian), and an adjustment in behaviour and attitude due to the new cultural environment., whereas learning through adaptation and the importance of education were emphasised in the United States. Many spoke of personal growth through challenges. Additionally, there was an acknowledgment of the broader perspective attained and the value of embracing and valuing both Nigerian and American cultures.

Yusuf (PIT11) and Emily (PUS06) both related their transformative journey throughs the metaphor of a butterfly, showing personal growth and transformation as a result of their immigration experience. As Yusuf said, “I think I metamorphosized from the initial point of who I was to who I am now.” Dele (PIT03) saw the firm-standing tree as a major educational experience, signifying resilience amidst challenges and the flourishing of one’s identity in a new land. In Italy, narratives like that of Yusuf highlighted career evolution, transitioning from a veterinary officer in Nigeria to pursuing a PhD in Italy. Such transformative career trajectories were more commonly echoed in the narratives from the United States, revealing the broadening horizons that migration can offer. Immigrants in Italy gained significant new skills and knowledge, notably the Italian language and cultural practices, whereas language learning was less emphasised, but cultural learning was still vital.

Language acquisition, especially in the Italian context, was not just a practical necessity but also represented transformative personal growth. This theme was more pronounced among Nigerian immigrants in Italy compared to those in the United States, given the linguistic differences. Additionally, shifts in personal perspectives were evident. Akin, for instance, noted the overt affectionate nature of Italians, suggesting evolving views on interpersonal relations. Similarly, Nigerian immigrants in the United States underwent profound changes in their

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worldview, driven by their exposure to a diverse and multifaceted American society. Moreover, the immigrants expressed critical observations and opinions about both the two host countries and about Nigeria. Although the immigrants generally expressed gratitude for the social amenities, orderliness and opportunities that they enjoyed in their host countries, Nigerians in Italy were more critical of their host country. Immigrants in Italy like Jackson had considered departing Italy for the United States and Oliver, a citizen of Italy, was considering relocating to an English-speaking country with her children.

Meanwhile, both groups of immigrants generally criticised the state of leadership, economy and government in Nigeria while retaining their national and cultural identities and values. There was a mixed sense of appreciation for Italy's amenities, such as 24-hour electricity and healthcare, compared to Nigeria. The participants like Henry, Amaka and Jackson expressed feeling of growth and transformation, with many comparing their life in Nigeria and Italy, expressing appreciation for certain Italian practices and lamenting some aspects of Nigerian governance. Amaka believed that Nigeria is a blessed country but lacks good governance, whereas Jackson appreciated the education he received in Nigeria and believed it helped him in socializing, learning the language, and being confident. In summary, both groups of immigrants displayed significant personal growth and a broader perspective resulting from their experiences. They all learned through adaptation, valued education, and embraced dual identities.

In comparing the immigration experiences of Nigerians in Italy and the United States, several commonalities and distinctions emerge. Both groups emphasised the importance of preparation, the transformative nature of their journeys, and the influence of personal and contextual factors. While there are shared experiences among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, such as reliance on personal connections and the transformative power of

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adversities, specific nuances differentiate the two groups. The emphasis on language and cultural learning was more pronounced among those moving to Italy, while academic pursuits and career progression were predominant themes in the United States narratives. Regardless of destination, these narratives underscore the resilience, adaptability, and growth of Nigerian immigrants in their cross-cultural journeys. However, the specifics of their experiences, like the emphasis on language acquisition in Italy or the complexities of identity in the United States, highlight the unique challenges and growth opportunities each environment offers. Through these narratives, a rich tapestry of the immigrant experience unfolds, shedding light on the universal yet distinct journeys of Nigerians abroad.

Statistical results presented in the sub-sections below offer quantitative insights into the participants' experiences, particularly from the transformative learning dimension. The study's quantitative analysis revealed high engagement among participants in various transformative learning processes such as critical reflection, discourse, and spiritual exploration. Notably, "Discourse" was the most engaged process (96% in Italy and 83% in the United States). These figures suggest that open discussions played a crucial role in the transformative experiences of the immigrants. Moreover, the analysis showed no significant differences in most transformative learning processes between the two countries, highlighting the similarity in their experiences of transformation.

Descriptive and Inferential Statistics on Transformative Learning. A quantitative cross-case analysis of the Nigerian immigrants' responses to the Transformative Learning Survey questionnaire was carried out. The questionnaire is based on Stuckey et al.'s (2013) model of multiple perspectives on transformative learning including cognitive/rational, extrarational, and social critique domains. According to this model, transformative learning

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involves several possible processes across the three domains and four transformative learning outcomes, namely acting differently, self-awareness, openness, and shift in worldview. Below are quantitative results based on the descriptive and inferential analyses. The section includes the results from percentage, regression, and ultimately ANOVA analyses.

Statistics Nigerian Immigrants' Transformative Learning Processes. Analysis showed that the participants experienced transformative learning processes such as critical reflection, taking action, experiencing new perspectives, encountering disorienting dilemmas, engaging in discourse, embracing arts-based approaches, seeking dialogue and support, navigating emotions, exploring the imaginal realm, connecting with spirituality, engaging in ideology critique, unveiling oppression, empowering themselves/others, and taking part in social action. Table 4.2 indicates that across most of the transformative learning processes, the percentages are relatively high for both Italy and the United States. The highest average percentages for transformative learning processes in both Italy and the United States are observed for "Discourse" (96% in Italy, 83% in the United States) while the average grand totals in "Arts-Based" (56%) and "Empowerment" (61%) are the lowest. Analysis further indicated that there are no statistically significant differences at a 95% confidence level in the average percentages on transformative learning processes except for "Discourse" measure.

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Table 4.2*Average Percentages of Nigerian Immigrants' Transformative Learning Processes*

| Processes | Italy | US | Grand total | Statistically significant* |
|----------------------|----------|----------|-------------|----------------------------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>M</i> | |
| Arts-based | 61% | 49% | 56% | FALSE |
| Dialogue/support | 84% | 75% | 80% | FALSE |
| Emotions | 85% | 77% | 82% | FALSE |
| Imaginal/soul | 76% | 73% | 75% | FALSE |
| Spiritual | 87% | 88% | 88% | FALSE |
| Action | 88% | 83% | 86% | FALSE |
| Critical reflection | 70% | 69% | 70% | FALSE |
| Disorienting dilemma | 64% | 67% | 65% | FALSE |
| Discourse | 96% | 83% | 90% | TRUE |
| Experience | 86% | 84% | 85% | FALSE |
| Empowerment | 58% | 64% | 61% | FALSE |
| Social action | 90% | 81% | 86% | FALSE |
| Unveiling oppression | 85% | 75% | 80% | FALSE |
| Ideology | 81% | 69% | 76% | FALSE |

Note. *” Statistically significant” results show the comparison of average percentages in Italy and the United States at $p < 0.05$.

Statistics on Nigerian Immigrants' Transformative Learning Outcomes. Analysis further reflected the second dimension of perspective transformation, the various possible outcomes that signal fundamental and permanent changes among the immigrants. The participants achieved transformative learning outcomes, such as acting differently, developing deeper self-awareness, having more open perspectives, and experiencing a shift in their worldview. Table 4.3 shows that the overall percentages for transformative learning outcomes are also relatively high for both Italy and the United States. The highest average percentages for transformative learning outcomes in both Italy and the United States are observed for “Self-awareness” (Italy: 89%, US: 84%) while the lowest average are for “Openness” (Italy: 75%, US:

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72%). Also, there are no statistically significant differences between Italy and the United States in terms of transformative learning outcomes at a 95% confidence interval.

Table 4.3

Average Percentages of Nigerian Immigrants' Transformative Learning Outcomes

| Outcomes | Acting Differently | Self-awareness | Openness | Shift in worldview |
|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------|--------------------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>M</i> |
| Italy | 85% | 89% | 75% | 79% |
| US | 77% | 84% | 72% | 81% |
| Grand total | 81% | 86% | 74% | 80% |
| Statistically significant* | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE | FALSE |

Note. *” Statistically significant” results show the comparison of average percentages in Italy and the United States at $p < 0.05$.

Regression Analysis on Transformative Learning Among Nigerians. Two composite dependent variable regression analyses were carried out. In the first one, socio-demographics and all transformative learning processes served as the independent variables while the average of transformative learning outcomes was the dependent variable. The most important independent variables were identified through iterative preliminary analysis using the random forest technique. Variables that met the threshold of 5% in at least one outcome were retained. To remove the problem of multicollinearity. We iteratively removed the variables with the highest correlation. As Table 4.4 shows, our conclusion is that the model has an explanatory power of 75% ($adj. R^2 = 0.746$) whereby critical reflection, spiritual, imaginal/soul, years spent, and dialogue/support were found to be significant at $p < 0.05$.

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Table 4.4*Regression of Socio-demographics and Transformative Learning Processes*

| Measure | $P > t$ |
|---------------------|---------|
| Years Spent | 0.003* |
| Arts Based | 0.092 |
| Dialogue/Support | 0.042* |
| Emotions | 0.419 |
| Imaginal/Soul | 0.039* |
| Spiritual | 0.020* |
| Action | 0.540 |
| Critical Reflection | 0.001* |
| Experience | 0.195 |
| Empowerment | 0.189 |

Note: *Significant at $p < 0.05$

In the second composite dependent variable regression analysis carried out, socio-demographics and the three transformative learning process domains—rational, extrarational, and social critique (composite or grouped variables)—were the independent variables while the average of transformative learning outcomes was the dependent variable. The most important independent variables were identified through iterative preliminary analysis using the random forest technique. Variables that met the threshold of 5% in at least one outcome were retained. To remove the problem of multicollinearity, we iteratively removed the variables with the highest correlation. As Table 4.5 shows, our conclusion is that the final model has an explanatory power of 47% ($adj. R^2 = 0.472$) and rational domain of transformative learning process was found significant at $p < 0.05$.

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Table 4.5*Regression of Socio-demographics and Transformative Learning Process Domains*

| Measure | $P > t$ |
|------------|---------|
| Rational | 0.001* |
| Age Range | 0.092# |
| Researcher | 0.198 |
| Business | 0.116 |

Note: *Significant at $p < 0.05$

Analysis of Variance in Transformative Learning Among Nigerians. Furthermore, ANOVA model was used to determine if there is a difference in the transformative learning experiences between Nigerians in Italy and the United States based on the participants' responses on transformative learning processes and transformative learning outcomes. As Table 4.6 shows, with the $PR(>F) = 0.33$ which is greater than $p = 0.1$, there is no difference observed between the experiences of Italy and US respondents.

Table 4.6*Analysis of Variance in Nigerians' Transformative Learning Experiences in Italy and US*

| | sum sq | df | F | PR(>F) |
|----------------|--------|------|--------|---------|
| X_anova ['US'] | 0.0072 | 1.0 | 0.9592 | 0.3372* |
| Residual | 0.1790 | 24.0 | | |

Note: *Significant at $p < 0.05$

In conclusion, this quantitative analysis of transformative learning among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States reveals significant insights. The study found high engagement in various transformative learning processes such as critical reflection, discourse, and spiritual exploration, with notable similarities in both countries. The most prevalent

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transformative learning outcomes included enhanced self-awareness and a shift in worldview.

Regression analysis identified critical reflection, spirituality, and dialogue/support as significant factors influencing these outcomes. However, the ANOVA analysis showed no significant difference in transformative learning experiences between Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. The next section enriches the quantitative analysis by examining how the immigrants metaphorically interpreted their immigration and transformative experiences.

Representing and Explaining Immigration Experiences with Images

The use of images in narrative interviews can serve as a valuable tool for eliciting detailed memories, exploring non-verbal dimensions of storytelling, and adding contextual richness to participants' narratives. Integrating visual methods into the data collection process enriched the depth and complexity of the data collected, ultimately contributing to a more nuanced understanding of each participant's experiences. Table 4.7 contains a comprehensive aggregation of which images each of the 27 participants selected and the interpretations that they attributed to them. It presents a detailed analysis of the images selected by Nigerian immigrants in Italy, identified by the code "PIT". This table meticulously chronicles each participant's demographic profile alongside the images they chose to represent their immigration experiences. Additionally, it provides the meanings and interpretations attributed to these images by the participants, offering a rich, qualitative insight into their personal narratives and the symbolic significance they attach to these visual representations.

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Table 4.7*Italy Participants' Representations of their Immigration Experiences by Images*

| Participant | Basic Socio-Demographics | Image(s) Selected | Meaning Given |
|--------------------|--|--------------------------|--|
| PIT01 Henry | Age Range: 25 – 34 Gender: M Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: No | Image 8 and Image 1 | <p>Image 8 – “There I was, having doubts about myself. ‘Can I do this?’ But [I realized] there is something in... me that I see, that is big, protecting the territory.”</p> <p>Image 1 – “When you plant a tree, it doesn’t grow that day; it becomes big. It makes me understand that life is step by step But when the time comes the trees grow and they’ll overshadow the grasses, which means it’s a process of life, the growth of the tree.”</p> |
| PIT02 Amaka | Age Range: 25 – 34 Gender: F Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: No | Image 8 and Image 9 | <p>Image 8 – “The pussycat is small; it can easily be tossed around but on the inside the pussycat is a lion. The pussycat knows what he wants. The pussycat has a big revelation of itself. Inside, the cat does not accept the status quo. ... So, it’s not about the pussycat, it’s about what is in the pussycat, how the pussycat sees itself.”</p> <p>Image 9 – “I chose number nine because knowledge is power. I can see so many things ... that should bring about insights. Knowledge is key ... and then for you to have a smooth sailing, you need to be knowledgeable about where you are and what to expect from the culture.”</p> |
| PIT03 Dele | Age Range: 25 – 34 Gender: M Marital status: Single Dual citizenship: No | Image 1 | “I can see a very massive wind blowing against the tree. The tree is standing and it’s green. I think that’s one major education of the journey because there would be challenges, there would be tribulations. But when you stand firm and follow the law, you can establish yourself like the tree in image number one, flourishing in the land.” |
| PIT04 Ajoke | Age Range: 25 – 34 Gender: F Marital status: Single | Image 9 | “It involves everything that I try to do, and I want to make better. Study ambition here. I see a computer and all of that. Yeah. I have access to a stable Wi-Fi network.” |

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|----------------|---|----------|--|
| | Dual citizenship: No | | |
| PIT05 Bimpe | Age Range: 35 – 44 Gender: F Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: No | Image 10 | “[The persons in the image] are also looking for greener pasture. This is a boat in a river. Hmm. So, he’s trying to look at something in front of him. So, I could just say what does the future hold in front of him there or here? And it is written on this image, yeah, ‘We are all in the same boat.’” |
| PIT06 Jackson | Age Range: 45 – 54 Gender: M Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: Yes | Image 6 | “Happiness is something that can come from within you. Happiness. So, when I see people who are happy and I see those happy faces, it tends to reflect something within me—the transformation processes. Happiness does not depend on what is external but depends on what is internal. It is a journey of moving from external factors to internal factors.” |
| PIT07 Cordelia | Age Range: 35 – 44 Gender: F Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: No | Image 9 | “You see, it seems like I have my career in the centre. But of course, a major part of it was studying, which is the graduation cap. And down there you find the kids playing. So, it just seems like there’s a goal, but then there are other aspects to it. I’m not just about getting a career; I’m also able to invite some culture, to enjoy the food, to enjoy the people, to start a family, to finish studying too.” |
| PIT08 Simbi | Age Range: 35 – 44 Gender: F Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: No | Image 3 | “The compass implies that I haven’t also gotten to where I’m going. I’m still on a journey and for me it’s a journey. Italy is a journey. It’s not the end, it’s not the end for me. It’s not the start of my journey; and definitely it’s not the end of my journey. It’s just a path. I would call it a ‘fermata’; it’s a stop in my journey. And so, it’s more like the stabilizing stop that I need to be able to put a lot of things into perspective, and then I’ll move. So, for me that’s what the compass is for me. ... For me, my final destination is still Africa, still Nigeria. It’s still going back home. ... [T]he compass... would show me whether I have to go forth to the east, south, or west end.” |
| PIT09 Fatai | Age Range: 45 – 54 Gender: M Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: Yes | Image 1 | “My reason is because coming down here opened my eyes to a lot of things. I can think, I can reflect, and I can feel. Many things or a lot of things that we say, or we discuss in Nigeria, I can see it here. I can feel it here. ... For example, ... I know how [the Ukraine-Russia war] is even affecting [me] economically. So... [The tree] is just like someone that is standing and having a view of everything in front of him.” |
| PIT10 George | Age Range: 45 – 54 Gender: M | Image 1 | “If I could say it biblically, it is only when some fruit dies and being planted that it germinates and bears some fruits. A tree represents branches of life. ... |

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|--------------|---|----------|--|
| | Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: Yes | | It's similar to my life in Italy; being a tree, a tree with branches, a tree that has some phenomenal features." |
| PIT11 Yusuf | Age Range: 25 – 34 Gender: M Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: No | Image 11 | "If I understood the image very well, it shows metamorphosis; changing from one stage to another and I think I metamorphosed from the initial point of who I was to who I am now; who I am because I think there are lot of changes that took place within me." |
| PIT12 Bello | Age Range: 18 – 24 Gender: M Marital status: Single Dual citizenship: No | Image 11 | "There has been a lot of growth, a lot of changing. Image 11 shows that, it captures that." |
| PIT13 Olivia | Age Range: 45 – 54 Gender: F Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: Yes | Image 6 | "At the end of the day, what I got is laughter. Like I told you. It's ending well, yeah. It's ending really well." |
| PIT14 Akin | Age Range: 25 – 34 Gender: M Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: No | Image 2 | "This is a type of food that I know how to cook by myself, and I do eat it. It gives health. I told you that when I eat their [Italian] food, I do vomit. That's why this is the type of the food that I eat and, as you can see, this is a typical Nigerian food, rice with plantain and meat. That's the way." |

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Table 4.8 extends this analysis to Nigerian immigrants in the United States, identified by the code “PUS”. Like the previous table (Table 4.7), it aligns each participant’s basic profile with their chosen images and the accompanying interpretations. This table provides a nuanced understanding of how these immigrants perceive and articulate their experiences in the United States. through visual metaphors, allowing for a comparative analysis of cross-cultural experiences and transformative learning processes between the two groups.

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Table 4.8*The United States Participants' Representations of their Immigration Experiences by Images*

| Participant | Basic Socio-Demographics | Image(s) Selected | Meaning Given |
|--------------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| PUS01 Deola | Age Range: 25 – 34 Gender: F Marital status: Single Dual citizenship: No | Image 11 | “It shows the transformative process that I have had, not just intellectually but also physically, in how I view people and things. Intellectually and educationally, I’m not going to say that I am the same way I was when I was in Nigeria. ... [W]hen I came out to relearn, I had to unlearn. And as a result, I’ve grown; I’ve metamorphosed into something greater, something more beautiful. ... When you first come here, you feel like you are thrown into the ocean, but with some of your experiences, you learn, you make mistakes, and you keep growing.” |
| PUS02 John | Age Range: 25 – 34 Gender: M Marital status: Single Dual citizenship: No | Image 10 | “I say that because you really, really don’t know how many people go through the same stuff that you’re going through. You think it’s just you until you hear other people’s stories, and you’re like, your case is actually better than whatever they’ve got going on.” |
| PUS03 Goke | Age Range: 25 – 34 Gender: M Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: Yes | Image 8 and Image 2 | Image 8 – “I want image 8. It is going to be the first because, until you look into the mirror, you can’t see the bigger picture of why you’re migrating to a different country. When you look into the mirror, that’s when you can see the bigger picture of what you’re trying to do, of what you can accomplish. It was when I got here that I began to see endless possibilities. Because back in Nigeria, I knew it was either I became an academic or I worked for a bank. ... Looking into the mirror, you can see the bigger picture.” Image 2 – “Number two, that food; I miss Nigerian food, home cooked Nigerian food. Not the ones that we’re eating here. I mean, I’m not saying they’re not trying; they’re trying. But it’s not like a <i>buka</i> (bukateria; casual restaurant).” |

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|---------------|---|----------|---|
| PUS04 Gbade | Age Range: 35 – 44 Gender: M Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: Yes | Image 7 | “Well, part of me is still an enduring [Nigerian], although I’ve attained United States citizenship here, and part of me is American. There are some cultural beliefs and practises in Nigeria that I still take part in and do day in and day out. And there are some cultural beliefs and cultural practises of the United States that I practice day in and day out. So, I feel like the two countries intertwine in who I am today, and in my way of life. And in everything I do, there’s a big part of each countries in it.” |
| PUS05 Olamide | Age Range: 45 – 54 Gender: M Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: Yes | Image 7 | “I think I can relate better to number seven... Because I’m a dual citizen of both countries. There is no way; I cannot forget my home, no matter what. Nigeria is still my country while America is also my country. ... [W]herever I am, I still eat my food. I still dress in an African way, in a Nigerian way. I still speak my language, my native language. So, I see myself as one person in two countries.” |
| PUS06 Emily | Age Range: 25 – 34 Gender: F Marital status: Single Dual citizenship: No | Image 11 | “I would say I just see it as a journey. I think of the stages of the journey: from the caterpillar today down to the main butterfly. So, since my stay, since my coming to the United States, I’ve seen it as a progression and growth. I have progressed and grown in different ways; like in understanding academics, in religion, in connection with people, and in trying to relate to them. So, I see that all through any section of my life, I’ve grown. That’s all I can say. Even spiritually. That’s all I can say. Part of it is just normal, like being Nigerian.” |
| PUS07 Kunle | Age Range: 35 – 44 Gender: M Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: Yes | Image 3 | “Is that not the compass or so? Yeah, [I choose it] because I have to navigate through different phases. Learn from me to become an expert in that.” |
| PUS08 William | Age Range: 25 – 34 Gender: M Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: No | Image 9 | “The bulb, the ‘idea’ image. ... I’ve learned a lot—ideas, wisdom, and a lot coming through this journey in the United States: I’ve learned a lot. I’ve become a more open and enlightened person. And that’s where you could see education at the centre. Remember when I told you my advice is education, so you could see. I’m a data analyst and I double as a financial analyst. ... But with it, I decided to move to a STEM major to learn business intelligence. And I’m the person who |

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| | | | |
|----------------|---|----------------------|---|
| | | | heads the business intelligence department of the company. So, it's what I see when I see my immigration status. I see it as this [light bulb image]: I don't see it as a cat [reflecting as a lion in the mirror] which is what most Nigerians, 90% of the people, would definitely go for." |
| PUS09 Ayinla | Age Range: 35 – 44 Gender: M Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: Yes | Image 2 and Image 12 | Image 2 – "If I go to home now, if I go to Nigeria, I go try different food. It's not like there's no food here but it's not as the authentic and the organic fresh food in Nigeria. Besides the food that we cook at home, there's no unprocessed meal or food with the hundred percent nutrients going through your body. Eating all that food without feeling overly filled up is another reason why I enjoy going to Nigeria." Image 12 – "The number 12 is places that I've actually explored and, that I intend to explore and reaching and connecting with the world." |
| PUS10 Kolawole | Age Range: 25 – 34 Gender: M Marital status: Single Dual citizenship: No | Image and Image 11 | Image 8 – "I can see a cat looking into the mirror and seeing a lion. I think it resonates with me in the sense that, coming from Nigeria, where basically I was staying in my father's house, and I probably was still looking at myself as a young guy. I'm someone's kid, I'm just figuring out life and trying to come into a place where I literally know no one, then trying to set my feet and trying to figure out life for myself. But my life is where or what I'm looking at in the mirror, and that life is where I am now. When I look, I see I am a man now and then more responsible. ... He is a man who has responsibilities now and has expectations that have no limit." Image 11 – "It is similar to what I said about the cat because it is about growing and understanding the experiences so far. I still feel like I was just a school graduate, but my experiences so far have shown me that 'you're growing into a responsible adult and you're growing pretty fast.'" |
| PUS11 Similolu | Age Range: 25 – 34 Gender: F Marital status: Married Dual citizenship: No | Image 7 | "It will be the flags... because I'm already almost there. I'm almost there; in a few years, I'll be an American citizen. So, I have dual citizenship [of both Nigeria and the United States], even though I'm also Kenyan. Actually, I was not born in Nigeria; I was born in Kenya. |

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| | | | But I'm Nigerian, and now American.” |
| PUS12 Temitope | Age Range: 25 – 34 Gender: F Marital status: Single Dual citizenship: No | Image 7 | “I am a Nigerian living in America. That is the only thing I can relate with; other things I really can't relate to myself. ... What it means for me is opportunities. I have opportunities to make something out of what I have if I do my best because there's so many opportunities available here at the school. And right now, ask what my goal is: to do the best with what I have available.” |
| PUS013 Abigael | Age Range: 45 – 54 Gender: F Marital status: Widow Dual citizenship: No | Image 8 and Image 6 | “The first image I'd pick is image eight because when I got here, it was not easy. It (my reality here) was unleashing the lion (as in the mirror) and I was not seeing the world I thought I would see. And then I'd pick image six, which shows that I came out (of the disorientation) with smiles. At the end of the day, ... I was able to dare it and I came out smiling.” |

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The analysis of the image elicitation, as summarised in Table 4.9, provides insights into the participants cross-cultural and transformative experiences. The images chosen by participants at the end of their narrative interviews reflect various aspects of their immigration journeys and the transformative learning they underwent. Image 1 (a tree in a field) was selected by 4 participants in Italy but none in the United States. This image, chosen exclusively by Italian respondents, may symbolise growth, stability, or resilience, suggesting a sense of grounding in their new environment. For example, Henry (PIT01) saw it as a representation of life's gradual progress, and Dele (PIT3) interpreted it as resilience in facing challenges to establish oneself. Image 2 (a plate of jollof rice and meat), chosen by 1 participant in Italy and 2 in the United States might represent a connection to their Nigerian roots through familiar cuisine, indicating a balance between retaining their cultural identity while adapting to a new culture.

Image 3 (a close-up of a compass on a map) was equally selected by 1 participant in each country, suggesting a common theme of navigation and direction in their immigration journey. Image 4 (a white-and-brown mask) was not selected by any participant, indicating that this image might not have resonated with the participants' experiences. Also, neither of Images 5 (IT/US) (a pizza with a ball of mozzarella / a burger and fries) was selected by participants in either country, implying that these stereotypical representations of each country's culture were not reflective of the participants' experiences.

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Table 4.9*Summary of the Image Selection Count*

| Image | Image Titles | Sum of Case IT | Sum of Case US | Sum of Selection Count |
|----------------|--|----------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Image 1 | A tree in a field | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Image 2 | A plate of jollof rice and meat | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Image 3 | A close-up of a compass on a map | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Image 4 | A white-and-brown mask | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Image 5(IT)** | A pizza with a ball of mozzarella | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Image 5** | A burger and fries | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Image 6 | A painting of a person smiling | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Image 7(IT)*** | A close-up of Nigerian and Italian flags | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Image 7*** | A close-up of Nigerian and American flags | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Image 8 | A cat looking at a lion's reflection | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Image 9 | A light bulb of ideas | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Image 10 | A "WE'RE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT" graffiti | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Image 11 | A butterfly's metamorphosis | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Image 12 | A map of the world with strings of threads | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Grand Total | | 16 | 17 | 33 |

Note: **Image 5(IT) and Image 7(IT) were presented to the participants in Italy only.

***Image 5 and Image 7 were presented to the participants in the United States only.

Meanwhile, Image 6 (a painting of a person smiling) was selected by 2 participants in Italy and 1 in the United States, perhaps indicating a positive aspect of their experiences or the importance of maintaining a positive outlook. Image 7 (IT/US) (a close-up of Nigerian and Italian/American flags) conspicuously was not selected by participants in Italy but chosen by 4 in the United States, symbolizing the intersection of Nigerian and American lives. This difference

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may highlight a stronger emphasis on dual identity or the blend of Nigerian and American cultures among U.S. participants.

For instance, Gbade (PUS04) felt it represented the intertwining of his Nigerian and American identities. For Similolu (PUS11), it represented her aspiration and excitement of becoming a US citizen soon. Image 8 (a cat looking at a lion's reflection), was selected by 2 participants in Italy and 3 in the United States, suggesting a common transformative theme of self-awareness, and perhaps reflecting feelings of empowerment. Amaka (PIT02) related to it as recognizing inner strength despite external appearances. Goke (PUS03) saw it as realizing the potential and possibilities in the new country. Image 9 (a light bulb of ideas) was more popular in Italy (3 selections) than in the United States (1 selection), possibly indicating a greater focus on innovation or new ideas among the Italian participants. Ajoke (PIT04) related it to her ambitions and access to resources, while Cordelia (PIT07) saw it as balancing career goals with other life aspects.

Image 10 (A "WE'RE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT" graffiti), equally chosen by 1 participant in each country, might symbolise an expression of solidarity and communality in their immigration experiences. Moreover, Image 11 (a butterfly's metamorphosis), was slightly more selected in the United States (3) than in Italy (2), symbolising a profound change experienced by the participants. Yusuf (PIT11) saw it as a symbol of personal transformation, whereas Emily (PUS06) chose it as an epitome of the various stages of her transformative immigration journey.

Finally, Image 12 (a map of the world with strings of threads) was chosen by only one participant in the United States and none in Italy, possibly indicating a less focus on global perspective or connections. The interpretations by the participants often align with the provided metaphorical meanings (See Chapter Three), reinforcing themes of resilience, growth,

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transformation, dual identity, and cultural connection. However, the personal nuances in each interpretation also highlight the unique and individual nature of each immigrant's experience, adding depth and complexity to the metaphorical meanings of the images.

Figure 4.1

Clustered Column Chart Displaying the Image Selection Count



Overall, as displayed in Figure 4.1 there were 16 and 17 image selections in Italy and the United States respectively, 33 in total, indicating that six (two in Italy and four in the United States) of the total 27 total participants selected two images while others selected only one each. The 16 selections in Italy and 17 in the United States, indicates a similar level of engagement with the images in both countries. The topmost selected images (from the total 14 images) include Image 8, 11, 1, 7, and 9. Image 8 (cat and lion reflection) and 11 (butterfly metamorphosis) were the most selected in both countries, suggesting common themes of self-awareness, self-perception and transformation among participants in both case studies. However,

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the least selected images are Image 12, 3, 10, 2, and 6; whereas Images 4, 5(IT/US), and 7(IT) were totally ignored.

Figure 4.2 shows the five most selected images out of the total 14 images—Image 8, 11, 1, 7, and 9. Image 8 and Image 11 were the most selected images. Each of them was selected by five participants across the two countries. Next to these two are Image 1, Image 7, Image 9, which were selected by four participants a piece. Note that Image 7 was only presented to the participants in the United States, whereas none of the 14 participants in Italy selected its counterparts, Image 7(IT). Out of the five most selected images, only Images 8 and 11 appear to be fairly distributed between the two case studies (but both images have higher selection in the United States by one point).

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Figure 4.2*The Five Most Selected Images*

The selection of Image 7 by participants in the United States but not in Italy highlights a notable difference in how immigrants in each country relate to their dual identities. None of the 14 participants in Italy chose image 7(IT) while five of the 13 participants in the United States chose image 7. A closer analysis revealed that while none of the four Nigerians holding the Italian citizenship chose the image 7(IT), two of the five participants that chose Image 7 included two men who had the United States citizenship (PU04 Gbade and PU05 Olamide). The other two US participants that selected Image 7 were women (PU11 Similolu and PU05 Temitope) and they were not holding the United States citizenship. While Similolu had lived in the United States for seven years and considered herself almost due for citizenship, Temitope had only spent one year in the country.

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The use of images in narrative interviews provided rich insights into the immigrants' experiences. For example, Image 1, a tree in a field, was selected by four participants in Italy but none in the United States. This image, representing gradual progress and resilience, was seen by Henry (PIT01) as a metaphor for life's step-by-step growth. In contrast, Image 7 (close-up of Nigerian and American flags), which was chosen by four participants in the United States but none in Italy, indicates a stronger emphasis on dual identity among U.S. participants. This difference in image selection reflects distinct aspects of their cross-cultural experiences. The image selections also reveal different focuses in their transformative learning journeys. While Italian participants, such as Dele (PIT03) and Ajoke (PIT04), selected images symbolizing resilience and the importance of knowledge, U.S. participants like Gbade (PUS04) and Olamide (PUS05) emphasised the blend of their Nigerian and American identities. These variations indicate how cultural context influences the nature of transformative learning.

The choice of images and their interpretations reflect a blend of preserving cultural heritage and embracing new cultural experiences, as seen in the selections of the light bulb and butterfly images. The immigrants' narratives often revolve around themes of resilience, growth, and the blending of cultural identities, indicating transformative learning through their cross-cultural experiences. The image selections by Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States reflect both shared and unique aspects of their immigration experiences. Common themes include navigation, transformation, and maintaining a positive outlook. However, there are notable differences, such as the emphasis on dual identity among U.S. participants, which was not reflected in the Italian group. These selections provide a visual representation of their transformative learning and adaptation processes, offering a deeper understanding of their cross-cultural experiences.

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Chapter Summary

In conclusion, this comprehensive analysis of the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States underscores the transformative impact of cross-cultural transitions. Despite the distinct sociocultural landscapes of Italy and the United States, common threads of resilience, adaptability, and personal growth emerge in the narratives of these immigrants. The study reveals that while language acquisition and cultural learning are emphasised more in Italy, career progression and academic pursuits are predominant in the United States. The combined findings from the qualitative and quantitative analyses provide a nuanced understanding of the transformative learning processes and outcomes experienced by Nigerian immigrants. Despite the geographical differences, there are overarching themes of resilience, growth, and identity transformation that resonate with both groups. The study thus highlights the dynamic nature of cross-cultural transitions and the profound impact these experiences have on personal development and worldview. It reflects not only the shared resilience and adaptability of Nigerian immigrants but also the unique challenges and opportunities presented by each cultural context.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion of Findings

This study explores the experiences of Nigerian immigrants, their preparation for cross-cultural transitions, and the transformative learning that results from these experiences. The study adopted critical realism, the aspirations-capacities framework, and transformative learning theory as its theoretical underpinnings. Critical realism offers a philosophical paradigm combining empirical evidence and interpretative focus, for understanding immigrants' experiences. Aspirations-capacities framework /structure and agency theory explains the interaction of societal and personal factors influencing migration decisions, whereas transformative learning theory describes significant learning from fundamental changes due to cross-cultural experiences. Results of the thematic-analysis and quantitative analyses are discussed in this chapter.

A Profile of Nigerian Immigrants

The socio-demographic overview of the study offers insights into the characteristic profile of Nigerians in the Diaspora. The study sample included 27 participants, with a fairly balanced gender distribution and most falling within the prime working age of 25-34. The participants' diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds, primarily Yoruba and Igbo, and varied religious affiliations, predominantly Christian, set the stage for rich cross-cultural experiences. Educational attainment was high, with many holding master's degrees, indicating a group well-equipped for adaptation.

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Considered from the aspirations-capacities framework, which elucidates the interplay between individual aspirations and capabilities in migration (de Haas, 2021), the participants' high educational levels and professional backgrounds reflect strong personal aspirations and capabilities for migration and adaptation. This framework helps understand how their socio-demographic characteristics influence their decision to migrate and adapt to new cultural environments. The religious, immigration status, ethnolinguistic, educational, and professional diversity among the participants suggests varied experiences leading to transformative learning during their migration journey. This provides a background for the application of transformative learning theory, which underscores the role of experience in fundamental worldview and self-transformations (Eschenbacher, 2020; Stuckey et al., 2013).

Interpreting the immigrants' individual experiences as an interaction of societal structures and personal agency aligns with the critical realism tenets of considering both material conditions and subjective experiences in understanding social phenomena (Bhaskar, 2020), and this is particularly relevant given the diverse backgrounds of the participants. The combined application of aspirations-capacities framework, transformative learning theory, and critical realism in this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the participants' migration experiences and transformative learning. For example, participants' language proficiency varied, with some basic users of Italian in Italy and others improving their proficiency in English in the United States. This linguistic aspect is crucial in understanding their integration and adaptation challenges and strategies.

The near-even split in the duration of stay in the host countries (less than 5 years and more than 5 years) offers insights into different stages of adaptation and/or assimilation. The study is a detailed exploration of the Nigerian immigrants' cross-cultural preparedness, cross-

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cultural transitions, and their transformative learning. Accordingly, the findings from the study are discussed in the subsequent sections of this chapter, generally using a cross-case approach, with a view to achieving the aim and objectives of the study.

Preparation for Cross-Cultural Transition among Nigerian Immigrants

This section discusses the findings related to the preparation or lack thereof of Nigerian immigrants for cross-cultural transition in Italy and the United States. Drawing upon the aspirations-capacities framework, transformative learning theory and critical realism, this discussion contextualizes the immigrants' experiences within broader themes of migration studies, transformative learning, and cross-cultural adaptation.

The Role of Language, Communication, and Cultural Knowledge

The preparation of Nigerian immigrants significantly focused on language acquisition, communication skills, and cultural knowledge. This highlights the centrality of linguistic competence and cultural awareness in cross-cultural and transformative experiences. This finding aligns with a range of studies that have highlighted the significant role of language, communication, and cultural knowledge in immigrants' cross-cultural transitions. For instance, Miglietta and Tartaglia (2009) found that linguistic competence, length of stay, and media exposure are key factors in this process. Bethel et al. (2020) further emphasised the importance of host national connectedness, which mediates the effects of language proficiency and cultural factors on psychological adaptation. The positive contribution of language competence, interpersonal relationships, and media use in refugee resettlement has also been highlighted (Cheah et al., 2011).

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These studies collectively highlight the multifaceted nature of immigrants' adaptation and the crucial role of language, communication, and cultural knowledge in this process. In the present study, in Italy, immigrants like Dele and Amaka took proactive measures to learn Italian. In the United States, this dimension manifested in form of improving their English proficiency, especially in the aspect of modification of accent and development of communication and interpersonal skills. The proactiveness reflects the aspirations-capacities framework's emphasis on agency in navigating structural challenges (Bourdieu, 1986; de Haas, 2021). This linguistic proficiency not only facilitated practical transition and integration but also enhanced the immigrants' ability to engage with host culture and society, showcasing transformative learning's potential for personal and professional growth.

The Role of Research and Information Gathering

Pre-migration research and information gathering emerged as critical preparatory steps. The acquisition of information about the host country's culture, lifestyle, weather, and immigration procedures reflects the aspirational aspects of the aspirations-capacities framework, where individuals actively seek to align their capacities with their aspirations for a better life. The immigrants' efforts may also be interpreted as an anticipation of disorientation of disorienting dilemma in the host culture, thereby making "efforts to understand a different culture with customs that contradict our own previously accepted presuppositions" (Mezirow, 1991a, p. 168).

Research and information gathering play a crucial role in the adaptation of immigrants. Research has highlighted the importance of culturally appropriate information and the role of information and libraries in immigrants' social inclusion (Beretta et al., 2018). Migration being a

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complex and unpredictable process, with outcomes that are difficult to foresee (Marković et al., 2023), the participants' initiative of making desk research and gathering about their journey suggest that they appreciated the importance of such effort. It may also contradict the perspective that migrants often make decisions based on moral intuition rather than rational considerations of risks and costs. Rather, migrants may carefully consider their options and potential consequences before making the decision to migrate (de Haas, 2021).

The Role of Social Networks and Support Systems

The findings also underscore the importance of social networks, personal connections, and support systems in facilitating cross-cultural transitions, resonating with Putnam's (2000) concept of social capital. Previous studies have underscored the importance of social capital in the lives of immigrants (Takenoshita, 2016; Zaman & Hussain, 2019). Social capital helps to make bridge through social networking, social trust, collective actions, sharing knowledge, and experiences. Nigeria immigrants leveraged relationships for support, guidance, and integration, consistent with critical realism's recognition of the importance of social structures in shaping individual experiences. These networks provided emotional, logistical, and informational support, highlighting the role of community and connections in successful adaptation. The manifestation of the immigrants' reliance on social supports, in spite of their varied background, might also be connected in the African cultural value of communality (Columbus, 2014) emphasizing the importance of community life, good human relations, and the sacredness of life.

The Role of Emotional, Mental, and Spiritual Preparedness

Emotional, mental, and spiritual preparedness were crucial yet varied among immigrants. This aspect reflects the transformative learning process where emotional dimensions play a

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significant role in perspective transformation. The process includes extrarational and mystical activities such as expression of emotions, prayers, and meditation (Cranton & Taylor, 2013; Dirkx, 1998, 2001; Grund et al., 2024; Hoggan, 2016; Stuckey et al., 2013; Stuckey et al., 2022; Tisdell, 2000). Immigrants like Amaka used emotional strategies such as prayer, indicating the interplay of spiritual and psychological dimensions in preparation for cross-cultural transitions.

Challenges, Resilience, and Strategies for Integration

The immigrants' narratives revealed challenges in cultural and social integration, resonating with Berry's (2005, 2017) concept of acculturation. They encountered stereotypes and systemic barriers, necessitating the development of coping strategies and resilience. This aspect aligns with ACT and critical realism, which acknowledge the influence of broader societal structures on individual experiences. It also indicates cross-cultural experiences as a form of disorientation and a seed of transformation (Ensign, 2019). Some participants spoke of initial cultural shocks and the gradual process of adapting to new social norms and values, illustrating key elements of transformative learning. Preparedness levels directly impacted immigrants' ease of integration and transformational learning experiences. Those with higher preparedness levels generally experienced smoother transitions.

Meanwhile, research suggests that prosocial behaviour, including cooperation and resource-sharing, is shaped by cultural norms and values, and varies across different societies (Rossi et al., 2023). For Nigerian immigrants, this implies navigating a landscape where these norms may differ significantly from their home culture. In Western societies like Italy and the United States., there is a greater emphasis on verbalized compliance and explicit rationalization in social interactions, which may contrast with the communication styles familiar to Nigerian

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immigrants (Rossi et al., 2023). Moreover, acculturation, the process of cultural change and psychological adaptation that occurs following intercultural contact, plays a critical role in the immigrants' transition experience.

The literature indicates that acculturation encompasses a range of psychological processes, including changes in identity and adaptation strategies (Ward & Szabó, 2023). Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States experienced varying degrees of acculturation, influenced by their individual experiences and the socio-cultural context of their host countries. The adaptation of these immigrants can be understood through their engagement with the host culture while maintaining ties with their native Nigerian culture. This process is complex and multifaceted, involving psychological, social, and cultural dimensions.

Comparing Preparation Experiences in Italy and the United States

The experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States exhibited both similarities and differences. In Italy, the focus was on language learning and cultural integration, while in the United States, educational opportunities and career advancement were more emphasised. The emphasis on language preparation in Italy is crucial for Nigerian immigrants. As per Schumann's acculturation model (1986), language proficiency is key to successful cultural assimilation. In Italy, language barriers and cultural differences posed significant challenges, emphasizing the importance of linguistic and cultural preparedness.

In contrast, in the United States, preparedness was more centred around navigating bureaucratic systems and leveraging educational and professional opportunities as well as interpersonal skills and a broader understanding of the American culture. This contrast reflects the unique sociocultural and economic contexts of each host country, underlining critical

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realism's emphasis on the importance of context in shaping experiences. Narratives from the United States highlight the focus on interpersonal skills and broader cultural understanding. The image elicitation results, portraying diverse social scenarios, underscore the importance of adaptability in varied cultural contexts. This is consistent with Bennett's (2017) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity, which emphasises the need for interpersonal skills in multicultural environments.

The divergence between the results from Italy and the United States foregrounds the need to consider the linguistic relationship between Nigeria and Italy, on the one hand, and between Nigeria and the United States, on the other hand. Most Nigerians speak their mother tongue (first language) and English language. In principle, English is a co-official language alongside Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, but in practice, English is the sole official language in Nigeria (Ugwuanyi, 2023). Being the lingua franca, English dominates almost in all official functions and context, including governance, education, mass media, and law courts. This necessitates that the Nigerian encountering the Italian would lead to an intercultural situation whereby significant compromise and efforts are needed in order to have mutual understanding. Inversely, Nigerian-American encounter might not require significant linguistic compromise between the two parties because English language would essentially be enough as their medium of communication because the two parties would speak some kinds of English. This difference underscores the importance of language in cross-cultural adaptation, particularly in non-English speaking countries like Italy. However, while the need to acquire a new language constituted a major challenge to Nigerians in Italy, results did not suggest that the Nigerians in the United States did not need to make serious preparation or had easy cross-cultural transitions. These findings illustrate the distinct approaches to cross-cultural preparedness among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United

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States, influenced by the respective societal contexts. The critical realism framework helps to understand how these differences arise from the interplay of individual capacities and structural opportunities in each country. While the foregoing explains various aspects or dimensions of preparation observable among Nigerian immigrants, the results also indicated lack of sufficient preparation among the immigrants.

Varied Levels of (Non-)Preparation

The theme of non-preparation or lack of enough preparation for life in their host country constitutes one of the most important findings from both case studies. Immigrants' narratives showed that they were involved or not involved in preparation at the various phases of migration—pre-departure, transit and post arrival. In Italy, three of the participants expressed that they did not prepare or did not prepare enough to live in Italy. Five participants in the United States recounted similar sentiments. Their lack of preparation or minimal preparation was due to reasons such as spontaneity, reluctance, ignorance, and uncertainties surrounding their migratory circumstances.

The aspirations-capacities framework, a critical aspect of my theoretical grounding, posits that the aspirations of individuals are shaped by their capacities, which are in turn influenced by structural factors. This framework provides a lens through which to understand how Nigerian immigrants' aspirations to integrate and succeed in their new countries are shaped by their abilities, resources, and the socio-cultural and economic structures they encounter. Their experiences in Italy and the United States challenged and reshaped their aspirations, leading to a transformative learning process. Thus, the exploration of Nigerian immigrants' preparedness for

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cross-cultural transition in Italy and the United States reveals a spectrum, ranging from highly prepared individuals to those with minimal preparation.

The spectrum of preparedness among Nigerian immigrants is a critical finding, echoing the multifaceted nature of cross-cultural transitions, including the tendency for immigrant to concentrate on some aspects of preparation while ignoring others. This spectrum is influenced by individual, social, and structural factors, as outlined in the aspirations-capacities framework, transformative learning theory and critical realism. Factors that affected immigrants' preparation and causing variance in preparedness levels include access to reliable information about the host; the strength and reach of pre-existing and new networks; economic and educational resources; and individual motivation and initiative. The diverse socio-demographic backgrounds of Nigerian immigrants—including factors like age, gender, marital status, occupation, and education—appear to play a critical role in their preparedness for cross-cultural transition. These factors influenced their access to resources, support networks, and information, all of which are crucial for a successful transition.

Highly Prepared Migrants. At one end of the spectrum are highly prepared immigrants, who engaged extensively in language learning, cultural familiarization, information gathering, and building social networks before migration. They might also have prior experiences in travelling or living abroad (e.g., Bimpe and William). Examples of immigrants in this category could be Bello, Jackson, George, Bimpe, Yusuf, Akin, Kunle, William, Emily, and Deola, Similolu. Their proactive approach reflects high aspirational capacities, aligning with aspirations-capacities framework's emphasis on the interplay between individual agency and structural opportunities. Many participants in Italy demonstrated a focus on acquiring language skills and cultural knowledge before their migration after they arrived in Italy. This shows how

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language and culture play crucial roles in the adaptation process. Some participants that demonstrated high levels of preparedness engaged in language and communication learning, researched cultural norms, legal requirements, and economic opportunities in their destination countries were perhaps motivated by their aspirations. This aligns with the aspirations-capacities framework, which emphasises the role of individual agency within structural limitations. However, their high level of preparation did not totally shield them from encountering varied challenges at one point or the other in their migration journey.

Moderately Prepared Migrants. The middle of the spectrum includes individuals with moderate preparation, often relying on existing social networks and minimal pre-migration research. This group had some level of preparation, often relying on information from friends or family already in the destination country. However, their preparation was not as extensive, focusing more on practical aspects like job opportunities or the acquiring a visa rather than cultural or societal norms. They exhibit elements of commitment but faced more significant challenges in adapting to new cultural contexts. Participants like Amaka, Kunle, and Ayinla fall within this bracket. Their experiences underscore the importance of both individual agency and social capital in the preparation process.

Minimally Prepared Migrants. At the other end are those with minimal preparation, often characterized by limited language skills and cultural knowledge, and a reliance on ad-hoc support systems upon arrival. This group's experiences resonate with critical realism's notion of individuals navigating within constraining social and structural contexts. Narratives of participants like Ajoke, Olivia, Gbade, Kolawole, Temitope, and Abigael reflect how migrants might not make adequate and/or wholesome preparation for their transnational journeys even if they have voluntarily embarked on the journey. This align with aspirations-capacities

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framework's tenet that the migrant is not entirely rationale in making migratory decisions (de Haas, 2021). This might be due to several reasons, including spontaneity of the journey, as in the case of Olivia. Henry almost did not have any iota of preparation for his migration as he was deceived into the journey and lack information about his destination. These immigrants had little to no preparation before their migration. Their decision to migrate was often driven by immediate needs or circumstances, such as economic hardship or insecurity, and cultural pressure, leaving little room for structured preparation. Their experiences in the host country were often marked by significant challenges, from language barriers to cultural misinterpretations, and legal struggles.

In conclusion, Nigerian immigrants' preparation for cross-cultural transition in Italy and the United States illustrates the complex interplay of individual agency, social structures, and transformative learning processes. Their experiences highlight the importance of language and cultural knowledge, social networks, and emotional and mental preparedness in navigating the challenges of cross-cultural adaptation. This discussion contributes to the broader discourse on migration, transformative learning, and cross-cultural transitions, offering insights into the multifarious nature of these processes. The spectrum of preparedness among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States underscores the complex and varied nature of cross-cultural transitions. This discussion enriches our understanding of the multifaceted processes of preparation, adaptation, and transformation among immigrants, reflecting the interplay of individual agency, social networks, and structural conditions.

Transformative Learning Processes and Outcomes Among Nigerian Immigrants

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This section explores the transformative learning processes and outcomes among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, based on the narratives analysed. The findings from the narrative interviews with Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States reveal significant transformative learning experiences. These experiences encompass cultural adaptation, identity evolution, and development of resilience. Key themes include coping with adversities, cultural integration, language acquisition, and reliance on community support. The stories highlight the interplay of structure and agency in their journeys, illustrating how immigrants navigate and adapt to new sociocultural landscapes.

These narratives contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex processes involved in migration and cultural transition. The use of images to represent immigration experiences provided profound insights. For instance, the selection of the tree image by Italian immigrants symbolized resilience and gradual growth. In contrast, the frequent selection of the dual flags in the United States indicated a stronger emphasis on dual identity, highlighting the deep internalization and personalization of transformative experiences. These visual metaphors align with the extrarational dimension of transformative learning, which includes imaginative, intuitive, emotional, and spiritual aspects (Dirkx, 2001; Tisdell, 2000). They also emphasise the unique and shared aspects of immigrants' experiences in different cultural settings.

Transformative Learning Processes Among Nigerian Immigrants

Several themes emerged regarding transformative learning processes observed among Nigerian immigrants in Italy, including language acquisition and cultural integration, experiencing adversities and challenges, building resilience, reliance on community and support structures, acquisition of new skills. The narratives, like those of Dele and Akin, illustrate that

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learning the Italian language was not just a practical necessity but a transformative journey, reshaping interactions and understandings of Italian culture. The stories of George, Henry, and Yusuf highlight the transformative power of adversity, leading to critical reflection, reassessment, and personal growth. The immigrants, facing discrimination and stereotypes, built resilience, navigating the dualities of integration and maintaining native identity. The reliance on communities, as seen in Olivia and Cordelia's narratives, played a significant role in the transformative journey, offering emotional and social support. Skill acquisition, as in Bimpe's case, represents not just learning but a transformative path connecting to cultural roots and identity.

Transformative learning processes among Nigerians in the United States involve cultural immersion and adaptation, support networks and spiritual anchoring, development of communication and interpersonal skills, acquisition of new skills and knowledge. Immigrants like Goke and William faced cultural shocks and integrated into American society, demonstrating consistent adaptation through challenges. Support networks provided essential guidance, while spiritual practices offered emotional resilience, as seen in Kunle and Similolu's experiences. Immigrants developed communication skills essential for integration, as shown in Abigail's and Goke's narratives. By combining themes from both Italy and the United States and interpreting them through these theoretical frameworks, the analysis offers a comprehensive understanding of the transformative learning.

Cultural Integration and Identity Evolution. The findings highlight the challenges Nigerian immigrants face in integrating into new cultures in Italy and the United States. This mirrors Berry's (2005, 2017) concept of acculturation, where immigrants often negotiate between assimilation and preserving their cultural identity. Combining experiences from Italy

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and the United States, immigrants' cultural integration involves navigating new social norms and balancing their native culture with the host country's culture. This is further understood through critical realism, which posits the coexistence of multiple realities, highlighting how immigrants reshape their identity in diverse cultural contexts. This process can lead to significant personal growth and identity shifts, as described in Kim's (2001) cross-cultural adaptation theory. The impact of migration on aspirations and capabilities of the immigrants can be linked to Sen's (1999) capability approach, highlighting how new environments can expand or constrain individual capabilities and aspirations.

Resilience and Coping with Adversities. The resilience shown by these immigrants, in facing language barriers, discrimination, and economic challenges, aligns with the findings of Tugade and Fredrickson (2004). They suggest that positive emotions can buffer the impact of stress and foster resilience, a theme evident in the immigrants' narratives. The resilience shown in facing language barriers and discrimination is reflective of transformative learning theory, where challenging experiences catalyze deep personal growth. The immigrants' adaptability and resilience, as seen in both Italy and the United States, are interpreted through the lens of Mezirow's perspective transformation, emphasizing the role of critical reflection in overcoming adversities. The framework of critical realism provides a lens to understand the complex interplay of personal agency and structural constraints in migration, as discussed by Archer (1995). This perspective helps in understanding how immigrants navigate and sometimes transform these constraints through their agency.

Community Support and Social Networks. The role of community in providing support and resources is evident in both contexts. This resonates with the aspirations-capacities framework, which acknowledges the role of social structures in enabling or constraining

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individual agency. These social networks are crucial for the immigrants' ability to navigate their new environment, reflecting Putnam's theory on social capital. The importance of community support for these immigrants reflects Putnam's (2000) theory on the significance of social capital. These networks provide emotional and practical support, crucial for navigating the complexities of migration, as discussed by Portes (1998).

The process of transformative learning, as experienced by the Nigerian immigrants, is reminiscent of various strands of the transformative learning theory (Hoggan, 2016; Mezirow, 1997; Stuckey et al., 2022) theory, which emphasises how critical reflection and other activities on experiences lead to a fundamental shift in worldview. The transformative learning process, evident in both Italy and the United States, involves the immigrants' experiences in the new countries, aligning with the transformative learning theory.

Transformative Learning Outcomes Among Nigerian Immigrants

A comprehensive analysis of the transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. reveals various themes, including evolving self-perception, increased open-mindedness, shifts in personal values, socio-economic adaptation, and reflections on both Nigeria and their host countries. It offers rich insights into the multifaceted nature of transformative learning outcomes in the context of immigration.

Evolving Self-Perception. This theme reflects how immigrants' self-identity evolves through their experiences in new cultures. It demonstrates a shift from initial uncertainty to increased self-confidence, aligning with transformative learning theory which emphasises personal growth through new experiences. The transformation in self-perception among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States is a central outcome. They often experience a journey

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from feeling like outsiders to developing a more confident and integrated identity. This echoes Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory, which posits that transformative learning involves a change in one's frame of reference. Through the process of critical reflection, immigrants reassess their roles, capabilities, and self-worth in new cultural contexts (Mezirow, 1997). The change in self-perception also aligns with the aspirations-capacities framework, highlighting how immigrants recalibrate their aspirations and self-concept in response to new opportunities and constraints in the host society (Sen, 1999).

Increased Open-Mindedness. Many immigrants report a broadened perspective on life and tolerance for different cultures, resonating with Mezirow's concept of perspective transformation, where critical reflection leads to a more inclusive worldview. The findings show a significant increase in open-mindedness among Nigerian immigrants, characterized by greater tolerance and understanding of cultural differences. This outcome resonates with the concept of perspective transformation, a core element of Mezirow's theory, where learners expand their viewpoints through critical reflection on their experiences (Mezirow, 2000). The broadened perspectives can be understood through the lens of critical realism, which recognizes the formation of knowledge and understanding as shaped by both subjective experiences and objective social conditions (Bhaskar, 1975).

Shifts in Personal Values and Beliefs. The immersion in new cultures leads to a re-evaluation of personal values and beliefs. This echoes the aspirations-capacities framework, highlighting the role of environmental factors in shaping individual aspirations and beliefs. Immigrants often undergo shifts in their personal values and beliefs, adapting to the norms and values of the host culture while reassessing those of their home country. This transformation is reflective of the classical outcome of transformative learning theory (Cranton & Taylor, 2013).

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Nigerian immigrants' achievement shifts in personal values and beliefs in cross-cultural contexts also relates to Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasises the role of observational learning and social experience in shaping one's behaviour and beliefs (Bandura, 1977). The interaction between individual agency and social structure, central to the aspirations-capacities framework, is evident as immigrants navigate and integrate into new social environments.

Socio-Economic Adaptation. The ability to adapt to new economic realities, acquiring new skills for employment, illustrates the practical aspect of transformative learning. This adaptation is a direct response to the opportunities and constraints in the host country, as discussed in critical realism. The ability to adapt socio-economically in the host countries, often through skill acquisition, employment, and resilience, is a key outcome. This adaptation aligns with the human capital theory, suggesting that education and skill development are crucial for economic success and social integration (Becker, 1964). The aspirations-capacities framework further illuminates how immigrants' aspirations adapt to their new capacities and opportunities in the host country.

Reflections on Nigeria and Host Countries. Comparing life in Nigeria with that in Italy and the United States. fosters a deeper understanding of their native culture and the host country's culture. This comparative reflection is a key aspect of transformative learning, where learners critically assess and integrate new knowledge. Immigrants' reflections on their experiences in Nigeria compared to their host countries highlight a complex process of re-evaluating and integrating diverse cultural understandings. This process can be understood through Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, which provides a framework for understanding how values in different cultures affect behaviour (Hofstede, 1980). This reflective process is a quintessential aspect of transformative learning, where learners critically examine their

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assumptions and integrate new understandings into their worldview (Mezirow, 1991a, 2000).

This finding casts a fresh perspective on the nature of critical reflection in intercultural contexts, which involves challenges and reviewing assumptions that are rooted in both the origin and the host culture (Olatunji & Fedeli, 2022b). The process and result suggest that critical reflection among immigrants is bi-directional.

In summary, the transformative learning outcomes among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States encompass evolving self-perception, increased open-mindedness, shifts in values and beliefs, socio-economic adaptation, and reflective comparisons between home and host countries. These outcomes are intricately connected to transformative learning theory, the aspirations-capacities framework, and other relevant theoretical perspectives, providing a multifaceted understanding of the immigrants' experiences and transformations.

A Comparison of Transformative Learning in Italy and the United States

Similarities and differences emerged from the analysis of the immigrants' narratives. The study's findings illustrate distinct transformative learning processes and outcomes for Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. In Italy, narratives and image interpretations indicated a focus on cultural immersion and self-reflection. For instance, immigrants like Henry (PIT01) and Yusuf (PIT11) chose images symbolizing growth and metamorphosis, respectively, indicating a profound personal transformation influenced by their cultural immersion. In contrast, in the United States, professional experiences leading to skill development and career advancement were prominent. The narratives and images chosen by US participants like Gbade (PUS04) and Emily (PUS06), who selected images representing dual identity and personal

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growth, suggest a focus on professional and educational development, echoing transformative learning outcomes such as enhanced self-awareness and worldview shifts (Stuckey et al., 2013).

These experiences in both countries demonstrate significant changes in perspectives, understanding of dual identity, and behavioural adjustments, embodying the essence of transformative learning in diverse cultural settings. The differences underscore the varied nature of transformative learning experiences among Nigerian immigrants, influenced by the unique sociocultural contexts of Italy and the United States.

Cultural Integration and Adaptation. In both Italy and the United States, Nigerian immigrants undergo significant cultural integration and adaptation. This process aligns with Mezirow's transformative learning theory, which posits that confronting and navigating new cultural norms leads to perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1997). The integration process in Italy is marked by a more pronounced focus on linguistic challenges, reflecting the unique sociolinguistic landscape of the country. In contrast, the United States presents a different set of cultural adaptation challenges, often centred around navigating a more diverse, yet complex, societal structure. Critical realism offers a lens to understand this as it emphasises the interplay between individual agency and structural forces in shaping experiences (Bhaskar, 1975). The distinct socio-cultural and economic environments of Italy and the United States provided unique challenges and opportunities, influencing the nature and extent of transformative learning.

Economic Challenges and Resilience. The economic challenges faced by Nigerian immigrants in both contexts lead to the development of resilience and adaptive strategies. In Italy, there is an emphasis on navigating a rigid job market, often leading to underemployment. In the United States, immigrants face a competitive job market but with more opportunities for

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upward mobility. This resilience can be interpreted through the lens of the structure and agency theory, where individuals exercise agency within the constraints imposed by their environments (Giddens, 1984). The transformative learning process is evident as immigrants reassess and adapt their skills and aspirations in response to these economic challenges. Also, immigrants in both Italy and the United States undergo socio-economic adaptation, acquiring new skills for better integration into the workforce. Adaptation strategies varied, with language and cultural immersion being more pronounced in Italy, while professional advancement and networking were emphasised in the United States. This aligns with the aspirations-capacities framework, as immigrants adjust their aspirations and develop new capacities in response to their new environments. As Oyebamiji and Adekoye (2019) posit, the primary driving force behind Nigerian migration to the United States is the desire to further their careers via obtaining a Western education.

Community Support and Identity Formation. The role of Nigerian communities in both countries is pivotal in the transformative learning process. Immigrants rely on community networks and spiritual practices for emotional and practical support. In Italy, community support is often centred around navigating specific legal, psychological, and social challenges, while in the United States, it is more about cultural assimilation and networking. This reflects the concept of support in Stuckey and colleagues' model of transformative learning (Stuckey et al., 2013; Stuckey, et al., 2022). It also involves the concept of social capital within transformative learning, where community networks facilitate learning and adaptation (Putnam, 2000). The formation of a bicultural or multicultural identity is a crucial outcome of this process, aligning with the critical realism perspective that acknowledges multiple realities and identities. Moreover, the process of integration and identity formation differed, with narratives in Italy

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focusing more on cultural assimilation, while those in the United States highlighted professional and social integration. This reflects the critical realism perspective, acknowledging the role of social and cultural structures in shaping individual experiences (Bhaskar, 2020).

Bi-directional Reflection and Perspective Transformation. Immigrants in both Italy and the United States engage in bi-directional or comparative critical reflection, leading to perspective transformation—a key element of Mezirow’s transformative learning theory. This reflection often involves comparing life in Nigeria with their experiences in the host countries, leading to a re-evaluation of personal values and beliefs. Such reflections are shaped by both personal experiences and the structural conditions of their host countries, illustrating the interplay of structure and agency in their transformative learning journey. This reflection leads to a re-evaluation of personal values and beliefs, a key component of transformative learning, where individuals critically assess and integrate new knowledge (Mezirow, 1991a).

Insights from the Transformative Learning Survey. Despite the different cultural contexts of Italy and the United States, the transformative learning experiences showed notable similarities. Quantitative results indicated Nigerian immigrants engaged in various transformative learning processes across the three domains expounded by Stuckey et al. (2013). Generally, among both groups of immigrants, high average percentages were observed in the 14 transformative learning processes. However, only in the aspects of “Discourse” (96% in Italy, 83% in the United States) was the difference between the two groups found statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. These results reflect the centrality of rational discourse in transformative learning process (Mezirow, 2003). On the one hand, these results resonate with the educational profile of the participants, suggesting Nigerian immigrants’ mental capacity to assess information and engage in evidence-based, open conversations (Stuckey et al., 2013; Stuckey et al., 2022).

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On the other hand, the variance seems to highlight the difference in the intensity of disorientation experienced by Nigerians in Italy and Nigerians in the United States. In regard to transformative learning outcomes, the two groups also had high average percentages (ranging from 72% to 89%) across the four transformative learning outcomes, namely acting differently, self-awareness, openness, and shift in worldview. The most prevalent transformative learning outcomes included enhanced self-awareness and a shift in worldview. While there was no statistically significant difference observed between the two groups at $p < 0.05$, the results clearly support the findings from the qualitative component of this study, underscoring various aspects of transformation among Nigerian immigrants.

Furthermore, results from the first regression model (with 75% explanatory power and $p < 0.05$) showed that critical reflection, spiritual process, imaginal/soul process, duration of stay (years spent) and dialogue/support were found to be significant at $p < 0.05$. Also, the second regression model (but only with 47% explanatory power and $p < 0.05$) analysis underscored that rational domain was an important and significant component of the immigrants' transformative learning. These results echo the classical tenets of transformative learning theory where adults attain perspective transformation through some rational or cognitive processes, whereby learners engage in critical reflection, [rational] discourse, and action about their experiences and assumptions (E. W. Taylor, 2007; Mezirow, 1991a, 2000, 2003; Stuckey et al., 2013). The results also align with other models of transformative learning that emphasise extra-rational domain, which include spiritual, emotional, and imaginal aspects (Dirkx, 1998, 2001; Stuckey et al., 2013; Stuckey et al., 2022; Tisdell, 2000).

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However, findings from this study partially contradict Stuckey et al.'s (2022) major finding where scales from the rational and social critique process domains were found to be significantly and independently associated with transformative learning outcomes. The difference seemingly underscores the peculiarities of the participants in this study, as Africans who leveraged on their adherence to the values of communality and mysticality. The significance of the participants duration of stay (years spent) in the host society emphasises that transformative learning in immigration context is incremental and continuous. Lastly, the ANOVA analysis showed that there were no significant differences in transformative learning experiences between Nigerian immigrants in Italy and in the United States ($p \leq 0.1$). This suggests that while the contexts of Italy and the United States differ, the transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants in these settings share similar patterns and impacts.

In summary, the transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, though unique in their specifics, share common themes of cultural integration, economic resilience, community support, and reflective transformation. These themes are intricately connected to and interpreted through transformative learning theory, critical realism, and the structure and agency theory, offering a comprehensive understanding of the immigrants' learning and adaptation processes in different cultural contexts. Both groups of immigrants experienced disorientation and developed adaptation strategies, yet the challenges posed by the sociocultural and economic contexts of Italy and the United States were distinct. Italian immigrants emphasised language acquisition for integration, while in the United States, emphasis was on leveraging existing English proficiency in a diverse linguistic, educational and professional environment.

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Findings from the quantitative component of the study reinforced complemented the findings from the qualitative component, and largely indicated no statistically significant difference in the transformative learning experiences between Nigerians in Italy and in the United States. Meanwhile, the small sample of the study suggests limits the generalisability of the findings from the quantitative component.

Relationship of Cross-Cultural Transitions to Perspective Transformation among Nigerian Immigrants

This section delves into the relationship of cross-cultural transitions to perspective transformation among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. It offers a cross-case analysis of the transformative learning outcomes experienced by Nigerian immigrants in both countries. It details how cross-cultural transitions have led to significant perspective transformations, including shifts in self-understanding, worldview, and values. Key themes such as language and communication challenges, cultural adaptation, identity reformation, socio-economic integration, and community bonds are explored. These themes are interpreted through transformative learning theory, critical realism, and structure and agency theory, providing a nuanced understanding of how cross-cultural experiences contribute to transformative learning outcomes. The integration of findings from both Italy and the United States, offering a comprehensive view of the immigrants' experiences and transformations. The diverse experiences of Nigerian immigrants, such as adjusting to new cultural norms in Italy and the United States, exemplify the complexity of reality as propounded in critical realism. Critical realism helps in understanding how these realities are socially constructed and experienced differently by individuals (Bhaskar, 1975, 2020).

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The cross-cultural transitions of Nigerian immigrants in Italy involve various aspects of transformative learning, including language and communication challenges, cultural adaptation, identity shifts, economic resilience, community support, and reflective comparison. The significant language barriers they face hinder social integration and employment, aligning with Schumann's (1986) acculturation model which underscores the importance of language proficiency in cultural adaptation. The process of adapting to Italian culture often leads to considerable shifts in identity, reflecting Mezirow's transformative learning theory where new cultural norms trigger a re-evaluation of one's worldview and self-concept. Despite facing economic hardships such as underemployment, these immigrants develop resilience and adaptability, resonating with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory that highlights the role of adversity in forming coping strategies. The reliance on Nigerian communities in Italy for support and guidance illustrates Putnam's (2000) concept of social capital, emphasizing the importance of these networks in adaptation and learning processes. The immigrants' engagement in reflective comparisons between life in Nigeria and Italy is a crucial part of transformative learning, where new knowledge is critically assessed and integrated.

In the United States, Nigerian immigrants' experiences reveal key themes including the use of challenges as catalysts for growth, redefinition of success and aspirations, identity negotiation, and the role of faith and spirituality. Challenges faced in the United States serve as catalysts for personal growth and empathy, aligning with transformative learning theory where difficult experiences lead to critical reflection and perspective change. The American context prompts immigrants to reshape their notions of success and aspirations, illustrating the structure and agency theory. The theme of maintaining and redefining identity in the United States is

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significant, as immigrants balance their Nigerian heritage with American cultural adaptation, resonating with bicultural identity concepts in cross-cultural studies.

Faith and spirituality are crucial for many immigrants, guiding them through challenges and fostering personal growth and community engagement. This aspect highlights the importance of spiritual and cultural values in transformative learning processes. The emphasis on maintaining self-belief amidst changes reflects Bandura's concept of self-efficacy in social learning theory. Additionally, the role of shared experiences and community is crucial in shaping immigrants' perspectives, emphasizing the role of social capital and collective narratives in transformative learning. These themes demonstrate the complex interplay of individual experiences, cultural transitions, and transformative learning among Nigerian immigrants in the United States.

The thematic-narrative analysis revealed that while immigrants in both countries experienced cultural shocks, their coping strategies and transformative experiences were shaped by the specific sociocultural contexts. In Italy, immigrants faced challenges in language acquisition, racial discrimination, and bureaucracy. These adversities prompted introspection and personal growth, emphasizing resilience and adaptability. In contrast, the United States narratives highlighted identity formation complexities and the emotional transitions of adapting to a multicultural society. In Italy, the focus is on language acquisition and cultural integration, critical for navigating the Italian societal context. Examples include immigrants' efforts to learn Italian and adapt to local norms, reflecting theories of linguistic assimilation and cultural adaptation (Berry, 2005, 2017; Schumann, 1986).

In the United States, the emphasis is on leveraging English proficiency and adapting to a diverse cultural environment. This emphasises interpersonal skills in multicultural settings. The

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distinct strategies adopted by immigrants in Italy and the United States reflect their agency in navigating structural constraints. For example, the emphasis on language in Italy and professional advancement in the United States indicates how immigrants leverage their capacities to fulfil their aspirations within the constraints of their environments. Meanwhile, to gain deeper insights into the relationship of cross-cultural transitions to perspective transformation among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, the findings from the analysis are further discussed in the following paragraphs.

Cultural Shock and Adaptation. In both Italy and the United States, Nigerian immigrants experience the initial shock of encountering new cultural norms and practices. This aligns with Mezirow's transformative learning theory, where disorienting dilemmas – such as cultural shocks – act as catalysts for perspective transformation. In Italy, the shock is often associated with language barriers and distinct social customs. In contrast, in the United States, the diversity and pace of life create different challenges. This process leads to a critical reflection and re-evaluation of previous assumptions, a core aspect of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000).

The experience of cultural shock is a common initial response for Nigerian immigrants in both Italy and the United States. This shock, characterized by encountering unfamiliar cultural norms and practices, aligns with Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory. Mezirow (1997) identifies disorienting dilemmas, such as cultural shocks, as pivotal in initiating the process of transformative learning. These experiences challenge existing perspectives and compel individuals to re-evaluate and reconstruct their worldview. In Italy, Nigerian immigrants often encounter language barriers and social customs that are markedly different from those in Nigeria. The Italian language itself presents a significant hurdle, impacting daily interactions and

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integration into society. Additionally, social customs in Italy, which may include different familial structures, social behaviours, and community dynamics, can be strikingly distinct from Nigerian cultural norms. This contrast often prompts a deep self-reflection and adjustment in how immigrants perceive and interact with their new environment, a process that Fenwick (2000) describes as critical to transformative learning.

In contrast, in the United States, Nigerian immigrants are confronted with a diverse and fast-paced society. The multicultural fabric of the United States presents a variety of cultural norms and practices, which can be both enriching and overwhelming. The challenges here may include navigating a complex societal structure, understanding various cultural etiquettes, and adapting to a different pace of life. This diversity necessitates a broader perspective shift, where immigrants must reconcile their cultural identity with a multifaceted social environment. This aligns with Cranton's (2006) perspective on transformative learning, which emphasises the importance of self-awareness and the development of a more pluralistic worldview. In both contexts, the process of adapting to these new cultural realities involves critically reflecting on and reassessing one's previous assumptions and beliefs. This reflection is not merely a passive process but involves active engagement with the new environment, leading to the acquisition of new knowledge and the formation of a revised perspective. This transformative process supports Mezirow's assertion that learning is not just about acquiring factual knowledge but about changing the frames of reference through which we understand the world.

Identity Reformation and Biculturalism. Immigrants in both countries undergo a process of identity reformation, balancing their Nigerian heritage with new cultural identities. This resonates with the theorisation that the integration strategy is the most adaptive in dealing with cultural differences (Berry, 2017). The experience in Italy is often marked by a struggle to

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maintain cultural identity due to more pronounced cultural differences, whereas in the United States, the multicultural environment facilitates a bicultural identity. This reflects the critical realism perspective, recognising the dynamic interplay between individual agency and societal structures.

The journey of Nigerian immigrants in both Italy and the United States involves a significant transformation of identity, as they navigate between their Nigerian heritage and the new cultural identities of their host countries. This process aligns with acculturation theory, which posits that individuals in a new culture adopt different strategies to manage the relationship between their heritage culture and the new culture (Berry, 2005). Integration, where individuals maintain their original culture while participating in the new society, is considered the most adaptive strategy for dealing with cultural differences. In Italy, Nigerian immigrants face more pronounced cultural differences, which can lead to a heightened struggle to maintain their cultural identity. The Italian cultural context, with its distinct social norms, traditions, and language, presents challenges that may make it more difficult for immigrants to seamlessly integrate their Nigerian identity with their Italian experience. This struggle can be understood through the lens of critical realism, which acknowledges the powerful influence of societal structures on individual agency. The critical realist perspective suggests that while immigrants actively work to maintain their identity, they are also shaped by the social and cultural structures of their host country.

Conversely, in the United States, the multicultural and pluralistic nature of society offers a more conducive environment for the development of a bicultural identity. The diverse cultural landscape of the United States allows Nigerian immigrants to find spaces where they can express and maintain their Nigerian heritage while simultaneously adopting aspects of American culture.

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This biculturalism reflects the dynamism of identity formation in cross-cultural settings and is supported by the notion of hybrid identity, as discussed in the works of postcolonial theorists like Homi Bhabha (1994). Bhabha's concept of the "third space" is relevant here, as it describes the emergence of new cultural forms and identities that arise from the interaction between different cultures. This identity reformation process in both Italy and the United States illustrates the complex nature of bicultural or multicultural identity development among immigrants. It underscores how the experience of living between two cultures can lead to the creation of a unique and dynamic identity, reflecting a synthesis of Nigerian heritage and the new cultural elements of the host countries.

Economic Integration and Transformation. Economic integration is a significant theme in both contexts. In Italy, immigrants often face underemployment, prompting them to develop new skills and adapt their career aspirations. In the United States, there is a broader spectrum of economic opportunities, leading to different forms of socio-economic adaptation. This transformation in professional life and economic status can be understood through the aspirations-capacities framework, highlighting how structural opportunities and constraints shape individual capabilities and aspirations (de Haas, 2021; Sen, 1999).

The economic integration and transformation experienced by Nigerian immigrants in both Italy and the United States are critical aspects of their migration journey. These experiences are illustrative of how economic factors can significantly influence and shape the process of adaptation and personal development in new environments. In Italy, the economic challenges often faced by Nigerian immigrants include underemployment and limited job opportunities, especially in sectors that align with their skills or educational background. This situation necessitates a process of skill development and career reorientation. Immigrants are prompted to

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acquire new competencies or enhance existing ones to adapt to the Italian job market. This adaptation resonates with the aspirations-capacities framework, which suggests that individuals' aspirations and abilities are shaped by the structural opportunities and constraints they encounter (de Haas, 2021; Sen, 1999). In the Italian context, the limited job opportunities serve as a structural constraint, influencing the professional aspirations and capacity-building efforts of Nigerian immigrants.

In the United States, the situation presents a different spectrum of economic opportunities. The United States, known for its diverse and dynamic economy, offers a wider range of employment options, allowing immigrants to explore various pathways for socio-economic integration. This diversity of opportunities enables some immigrants to pursue careers that align more closely with their qualifications and aspirations. However, it also presents its own set of challenges, such as navigating a competitive job market and understanding the nuances of professional culture in the United States. The economic transformation in this context is not just about skill acquisition but also involves adapting to new work environments and professional norms. This economic transformation in both Italy and the United States can be further understood through the capability approach (de Haas, 2021; Sen, 1999), which emphasises how individuals' freedom to pursue their well-being is influenced by their social and economic environment. In both contexts, Nigerian immigrants' abilities to achieve their economic goals are shaped by the opportunities and barriers they encounter. Their experiences highlight the dynamic relationship between individual agency – the choices and efforts made by immigrants to adapt and succeed economically – and the structural realities of the host countries' economies.

Community Support and Social Networks. The role of Nigerian communities as support systems is vital in both Italy and the United States. In Italy, the immigrant community

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often provides a buffer against the challenges of cultural adaptation. In the United States, these communities serve as platforms for networking and professional growth. This aspect aligns with Putnam's (2000) concept of social capital and its role in facilitating adaptation and learning in new environments.

The role of Nigerian communities and social networks in both Italy and the United States is pivotal in the migration experience, providing essential support systems that facilitate cultural adaptation, learning, and professional development. This aligns with Robert Putnam's (2000) concept of social capital, which refers to the benefits derived from social networks, including mutual support, information sharing, and trust, all of which are crucial for successful adaptation in new environments. In Italy, the Nigerian immigrant community often acts as a crucial buffer against the numerous challenges of cultural adaptation. For many immigrants, these communities offer a sense of familiarity and belonging in an otherwise foreign environment. They serve as vital sources of emotional support, practical information, and guidance on navigating the complexities of Italian society. This community support is particularly significant in helping new immigrants overcome the initial barriers of language and cultural differences, providing a safe space where they can connect with their heritage while gradually integrating into Italian society. This role of community networks is highlighted in the work of Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993), who discuss how immigrant communities create 'bounded solidarity' that helps members cope with the challenges of adaptation.

In the United States, Nigerian communities extend beyond providing emotional and cultural support to also serving as platforms for networking and professional growth. These communities often facilitate connections and opportunities that are vital for career advancement and economic integration. Networking within these communities can lead to job opportunities,

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mentorship, and the exchange of valuable information about navigating the professional landscape in the United States. This aspect of community support reflects Bourdieu's (1986) notion of social capital, where social networks are seen as valuable resources that individuals can draw upon for socio-economic advancement. Additionally, these community networks often engage in activities that preserve Nigerian culture and traditions, providing a way for immigrants to maintain their cultural identity while adapting to their new environment. This dual role of community networks, in both preserving cultural heritage and facilitating adaptation to the host culture, resonates with the concept of transnationalism, which emphasises the multi-stranded relationships migrants maintain across borders.

Reflective Learning and Perspective Transformation. The process of reflective learning (comparative, bicultural, bidirectional), leading to perspective transformation, is evident in both Italy and the United States. Immigrants reflect on their experiences, leading to a re-evaluation of personal values and beliefs. This process, central to transformative learning theory, involves critically assessing and integrating new experiences and knowledge (Mezirow, 2000). In both Italy and the United States, Nigerian immigrants undergo a significant process of reflective learning that leads to perspective transformation. This transformation is a core principle of Mezirow's transformative learning theory, which posits that individuals revise and reinterpret their experiences through critical reflection (Mezirow, 2000).

In the context of cross-cultural transition, this reflection often involves reassessing deeply held beliefs, values, and perceptions shaped by their original cultural background. In Italy, for instance, the reflective process might be triggered by the challenges of navigating a new language and social norms, which starkly contrast with Nigerian cultural frameworks. Immigrants may find themselves reconsidering aspects of their cultural identity and how they

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interact with the wider society. This reflection can lead to profound changes in self-perception and worldview, a phenomenon described by E. W. Taylor (1994) as the construction of a more inclusive and empathetic understanding of different cultural contexts.

Similarly, in the United States, the diverse and multicultural environment presents a unique backdrop for reflective learning. Immigrants are exposed to a wide array of cultural perspectives, which may challenge their pre-existing beliefs and assumptions. This exposure often leads to a broader understanding of social dynamics and a re-evaluation of personal and collective identities, aligning with Dirkx's (2001) notion of transformative learning as an emotionally driven process of self-reconstruction. Furthermore, the narrative interviews from both countries indicate that immigrants engage in a comparative reflection of life in Nigeria versus their experiences in the host country. This type of reflection is crucial for perspective transformation as it allows for a deeper understanding and appreciation of both cultures, fostering what Brookfield (2000) describes as critical self-reflection on assumptions and a more open and flexible mindset.

In conclusion, the cross-cultural transitions experienced by Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States lead to significant perspective transformations. These transformations are multifaceted, encompassing cultural adaptation, identity reformation, economic integration, community support, and reflective learning. The experiences of cultural shock and subsequent adaptation among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States are emblematic of transformative learning. They highlight the profound impact that encountering and engaging with new cultural environments can have on an individual's perspective, beliefs, and understanding of the world.

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The identity reformation aspect, consistent with Berry's (2005) acculturation theory and the critical realism perspective, highlights the active role of individuals in shaping their identity while being influenced by the cultural structures around them. The economic integration and transformation of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States are multifaceted processes that involve not only the development of new skills and adaptation to different job markets but also a re-evaluation and reshaping of career aspirations. These processes are illustrative of how economic contexts in host countries play a pivotal role in shaping immigrants' professional paths and their overall experiences in new societies.

The community support and social networks among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States play a multifaceted role in their migration experience. In Italy, they are crucial in buffering the challenges of cultural adaptation, while in the United States, they extend to facilitating networking and professional growth. These communities embody the essence of social capital, providing essential resources for learning, adaptation, and maintaining a connection to Nigerian heritage, thereby enriching the immigrants' experiences in their new countries. Lastly, the process of reflective learning and perspective transformation among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States highlights the dynamic and complex nature of cross-cultural transitions. It underscores the transformative power of critical reflection in reshaping personal identities, values, and worldviews, in accordance with Mezirow's transformative learning theory. Based on the foregoing, a model is proposed below to explain the interplay and dynamics of cross-cultural transitions and perspective transformations.

Influence of Personal and Contextual Factors on Preparedness and Transformative Learning

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The section explores how personal and contextual factors impact Nigerian immigrants' readiness and transformative learning experiences in these countries. It delves into aspects such as individual resilience, background experiences, family influence, role of religion, cultural and linguistic challenges, social support networks, and economic considerations. The analysis also touches upon gender roles, educational qualifications, and personal identities like ethnicity, which significantly shape immigrants' experiences. Furthermore, it discusses the critical role of financial support, initial setbacks, and personal motivations in shaping the transformative learning journey of these immigrants in Italy and the United States.

Personal and Contextual Factors on Nigerian Immigrants in Italy

The influence of personal and contextual factors on Nigerian immigrants' preparedness and transformative learning experiences in Italy is highlighted by themes such as individual resilience, the role of family and religion, cultural and linguistic challenges, social and support networks, and the importance of educational qualifications. Additionally, it touches upon the impact of personal identities like ethnicity and gender, economic considerations, and initial setbacks. The narratives from immigrants provide insights into how these factors shape their experiences and learning in Italy, illustrating the complex interplay of personal motivations, support systems, educational backgrounds, and external contextual factors in their adaptation process. These factors collectively shape the transformative learning journey of Nigerian immigrants in Italy, impacting their preparedness and integration into the new culture.

Personal Factors. Individual resilience and adaptability play a crucial role. The study reveals diverse personal experiences impacting integration, with narratives like Henry's and Amaka's emphasizing the complexities. The role of family, particularly in decisions and support,

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is significant. Religious faith acts as a key element in maintaining spiritual growth and coping with challenges. Educational qualifications, such as Olivia's linguistics degree, facilitate smoother adaptation, underscoring the role of personal skills and academic background.

Contextual Factors. Cultural and linguistic challenges are paramount. Immigrants like Bimpe and Simbi face difficulties due to language barriers, affecting their social integration. Social and support networks, such as community organizations and religious groups, provide crucial assistance. Economic considerations, including financial support from Nigerian organizations and personal motivations for migration, significantly influence immigrants' experiences and adaptation strategies.

Personal and Contextual Factors on Nigerian Immigrants in the United States

The influence of personal and contextual factors on Nigerian immigrants' preparedness and transformative learning experiences in the United States includes how individual resilience and adaptability, previous experiences, and background significantly impact their integration and learning. The study also delves into how societal attitudes, acceptance in the United States, and the availability of resources and support systems shape their experiences. These factors collectively influence the transformative learning journey, illustrating the complexities of adapting to life in a new cultural and societal landscape.

Personal Factors. In the United States, Nigerian immigrants' personal factors play a pivotal role in their transformative learning journey. Their individual resilience, adaptability, and previous life experiences significantly influence their ability to integrate and adapt to the new culture. The study highlights the importance of personal motivations, with stories showing how individual goals and aspirations drive the integration process. Additionally, the role of personal

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identity, encompassing aspects like gender and ethnicity, also shapes their experiences in the United States.

Contextual Factors. Contextual factors in the United States, including societal attitudes and the nature of support systems, critically influence Nigerian immigrants' experiences. The study underlines the impact of the multicultural environment of the United States, offering both opportunities and challenges for integration. The availability and accessibility of resources, community networks, and institutional support play a crucial role in shaping immigrants' adaptation strategies and learning experiences. These factors collectively contribute to the complexity of the transformative learning process for Nigerian immigrants in the United States.

Comparing the Influence of Personal and Contextual Factors in Italy and the United States

The study's findings on Nigerian immigrants in the United States reveal the significant impact of personal factors on their preparedness and transformative learning experiences. Individual resilience and adaptability emerge as key drivers for successful integration and adaptation. The role of personal motivations is underscored, with immigrants' goals and aspirations influencing their approach to the integration process. Personal identity factors, including gender and ethnicity, also play a crucial role, shaping their experiences in unique ways. The study highlighted the impact of personal and contextual factors on the immigrant experience. In Italy, factors such as ethnicity and financial support played significant roles in shaping the immigration journey. In the United States, educational qualifications and personal connections were influential. These findings suggest that while personal aspirations and capacities are crucial, the societal context in which immigrants find themselves plays a pivotal role in shaping their experiences.

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In Italy, immigrants often grapple with more pronounced cultural and linguistic barriers, demanding a high degree of resilience and adaptability. Personal motivations and family influences are key in navigating these challenges. Critical realism here underscores the interplay between personal attributes and the structural constraints of Italian society. In contrast, the United States presents a multicultural context whereby personal identity aspects, like ethnicity, shape experiences distinctively. The aspirations-capacities framework is evident, as personal goals interact with diverse opportunities in the United States. This environment facilitates a broader perspective transformation, as per transformative learning theory, where immigrants reassess their understanding of racial dynamics and societal structures. Both contexts highlight the dynamic relationship between individual agency and societal structures, emphasizing the continual adaptation and learning process in cross-cultural environments.

The study's findings on the influence of contextual factors on Nigerian immigrants' preparedness and transformative learning in Italy and the United States reveal key distinctions and similarities. In both contexts, societal attitudes, the nature of support systems, and the multicultural environment significantly impact the immigrants' experiences. In Italy, the language barrier and cultural differences present unique challenges for integration, requiring immigrants to navigate a more homogenous society with distinct social norms. The critical realism framework underscores how these structural conditions interact with individual agency, influencing immigrants' adaptation strategies. In contrast, the United States's diverse and dynamic multicultural environment offers broader opportunities but also complex challenges. The aspirations-capacities framework is particularly relevant here, illustrating how the availability of resources and the nature of societal acceptance shape immigrants' capacities to achieve their goals.

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In conclusion, Italian societal attitudes and immigration policies significantly influenced immigrants' experiences in Italy. In contrast, American cultural diversity and economic opportunities were more prominent in the United States narratives. Personal backgrounds, educational qualifications, and prior experiences significantly shaped the migration journey in both contexts. Both contexts highlight transformative learning experiences as immigrants adapt to new societal dynamics, reassess their perspectives, and develop new understandings of their host countries. These experiences align with transformative learning theory, where personal and contextual interactions lead to profound shifts in perspectives and worldviews. The study thus reflects the intricate dynamics of personal and contextual factors in shaping Nigerian immigrants' transformative learning experiences in cross-cultural environments.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study have implications for conceptualization and application of several theories in the field of migration, cross-cultural studies, adult learning, and transformative learning. Theoretical implications of this study are discussed below, including proposing two models, Cross-Cultural Preparedness (CCP or Good-to-Go Spectrum) Model and Cross-Cultural Perspective Transformation.

Aspirations-Capacities Framework/Structure and Agency Theory and Transformation in Migration

The empirical findings of this study, when viewed through the aspirations-capacities framework lens, provide a rich understanding of the migration experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. The aspirations-capacities framework as a contemporary lens in migration studies provides a nuanced understanding of migrants'

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experiences. This study's findings, drawing on narratives of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, reveal the complex interplay of aspirations, capacities, and structural constraints, resonating with the core tenets of aspirations-capacities framework.

Aspirations and Agency in Migration Decisions. The narratives indicate that the decision to migrate is often driven by a combination of personal aspirations and structural conditions. This aligns with de Haas's (2021) assertion that migration is not merely a response to poverty or conflict, but also a proactive strategy influenced by aspirations for a better life. The aspirations-capacities framework component emphasises the role of personal aspirations in shaping migration decisions, suggesting that individuals weigh their aspirations against their perceived capacities and structural opportunities available in potential destinations (Carling & Schewel, 2018).

Capacities and Structural Opportunities. The findings underscore the importance of individual capacities, such as language skills, education, and social networks, in navigating the structural opportunities and constraints in the host societies. This reflects the aspirations-capacities framework's emphasis on how personal capacities interact with structural factors to influence migration outcomes (Czaika & de Haas, 2013). In Italy, language acquisition was crucial due to the linguistic barrier, whereas in the United States, the focus was more on leveraging educational and professional opportunities.

Navigating Structural Constraints. The experiences of Nigerian immigrants reveal how they navigate structural constraints, including legal barriers, economic challenges, and social exclusion. These constraints shape their migration experiences and adaptation strategies, consistent with the structure-agency dynamics highlighted in aspirations-capacities framework

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Immigrants' strategies to overcome these barriers illustrate the dynamic interaction between their personal agency and the structures of the host societies. Moreover, the critical realism approach, emphasizing the layered nature of reality and the interplay between structure and agency (Bhaskar, 1975), helps in understanding how Nigerian immigrants' experiences are shaped by both their individual actions and the broader societal and economic structures of their host countries. Their agential efforts to acquire new cultural and social capital, and their interactions within different fields (social, economic, legal) in Italy and the United States, reflect this perspective.

Transformative Aspects of Migration. The transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants in both Italy and the United States, as evidenced in their narratives and TLS results, align with the aspirations-capacities framework perspective. These transformations can be understood as the result of immigrants exercising agency within the constraints and opportunities of their new environments, leading to changes in their aspirations and capacities (Mezirow, 2000). This study expands our understanding of the peculiarities of the age of migration (Castles et al., 2014) and the centrality of transformative learning in a migration society (Hoggan & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2022)

This study's findings contribute to the evolving discourse in migration studies by providing empirical evidence supporting the aspirations-capacities framework. It highlights the significance of considering both the aspirational and capacity aspects of migration, along with the structural conditions of host societies. Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States actively engaged in strategies to enhance their capacities, such as acquiring language skills and building social networks. These actions reflect the concept of agency in aspirations-capacities framework, where individuals are not merely passive recipients of structural forces but actively

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engage with and sometimes transform these structures (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Coupled with the findings on the spectrum of preparedness discovered among the participants, agential capital should be considered as important as other kinds of capital, including social capital. This comprehensive approach is crucial for developing policies and interventions that are responsive to the complexities of migration experiences.

Proposing a Model of Cross-Cultural Preparedness – “Good-to-Go Spectrum”

To further examine and explain the topic of preparation for cross-cultural transitions among immigrants, I am proposing the Cross-Cultural Preparedness (CCP) Model (also known as Good-to-Go Spectrum). As earlier discussed, immigrants’ narratives reflected a range or spectrum of preparation levels, and participants in this study have been broadly categorised into three: highly prepared migrants, moderately prepared migrants and minimally prepared migrants. Creating a model for the spectrum of cross-cultural preparedness observed among immigrants involves categorising various levels of readiness based on key factors such as knowledge acquisition, psychological readiness, social network development, and practical logistics. This model can be particularly useful for understanding the diverse experiences of migrants as they transition to new cultural environments. Emerging characteristics and indicators of each level of the spectrum are presented below.

Level 1 - High Preparedness. Characteristics of the high preparedness level include comprehensive understanding of the host country’s language, culture, laws, and social norms; psychological readiness, including stress management and coping strategies for culture shock; established social networks in the host country, possibly through friends, family, or professional contacts; adequate financial preparation and job prospects; and arrangements for housing and

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daily living needs prior to arrival. Indicators of this level include active engagement in cultural learning and language courses, mirroring a concept of bi-directional acculturation (Berry, 2005); participating in pre-departure orientation or integration programs, as suggested by the successful adaptation outcomes in S. X. Chen et al.'s (2008) study; and regular communication with established contacts in the host country.

Level 2 - Moderate Preparedness. Characteristics of the moderate preparedness level include basic knowledge of the host country's language and key cultural aspects; some awareness of legal requirements and societal expectations; limited but growing social networks in the host country; initial financial planning but may require further stability post-arrival; general plans for housing and daily living, subject to refinement upon arrival. Emerging indicators for this level are utilization of online resources and communities for information; and partial reliance on assistance from immigrant support groups or agencies, a common strategy in cross-cultural transitions (Ward & Kennedy, 2001); has some connections in the host country (but lacks a strong support network), highlighting the role of social capital in immigrant integration (Putnam, 2000).

Level 3 - Low Preparedness. Characteristics of the third level of preparedness include minimal understanding of the host country's language and culture; little to no knowledge of legal and societal norms; lack of a social support network in the host country; limited financial planning, and with significant uncertainties post-arrival; no concrete arrangements for housing and daily living. Indicators of low preparedness are relocation decisions made under pressure or due to urgent circumstances, reflecting the challenges in emergency migration situations (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2018); heavy reliance on assistance upon arrival, often through community organizations or ad-hoc support, underscoring the importance

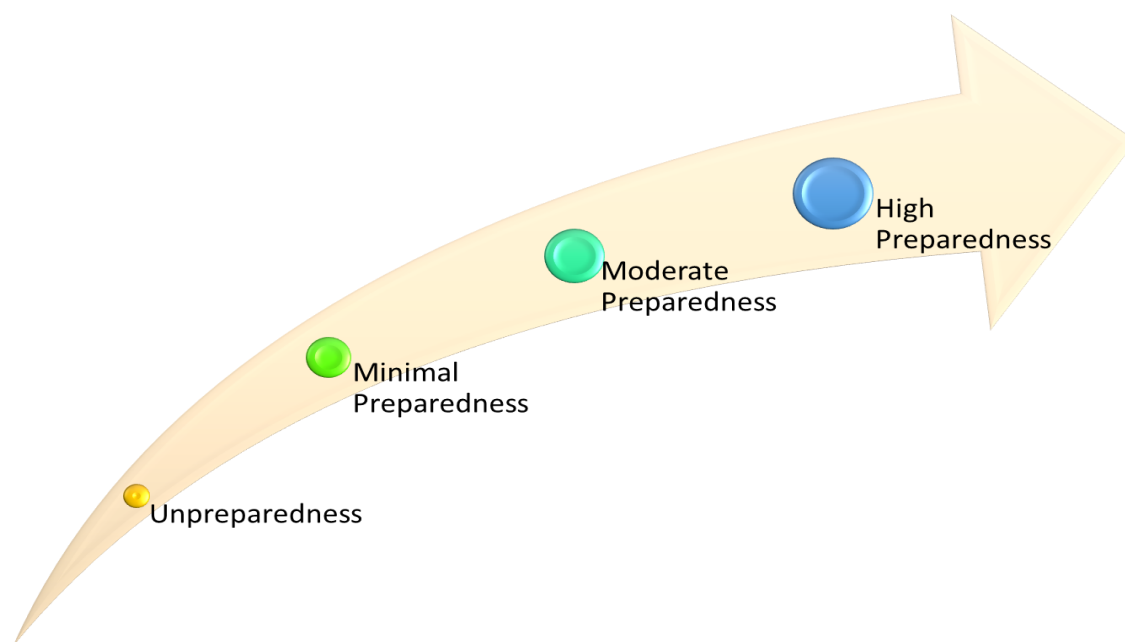
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of social support in acculturation (Sam & Berry, 2010); and significant experience of culture shock and adaptation challenges.

Level 4 – Unpreparedness. The state of unpreparedness is the opposite extreme of the spectrum, the fourth level. Characteristics of this level are no prior knowledge of the host country’s language or cultural norms; unaware of legal obligations and societal expectations; no existing social networks or contacts in the host country; no financial planning specific to the migration process; no arrangements for immediate needs upon arrival. Indicators of the level include arrival due to urgent circumstances, aligning with studies on forced migration (Betts & Collier, 2017); dependency on humanitarian aid, reflecting global trends in refugee support (UNHCR, 2018); and facing significant challenges in basic adaptation and integration.

Figure 5.1

The Cross-Cultural Preparedness (CCP) Model



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The Good-to-Go Spectrum, as Figure 5.1 shows, is grounded in the real and narrated experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. The model also aligns with existing literature on migration, acculturation, social capital, adult learning/education, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding immigrant preparedness and adaptation (Berry, 2005; Betts & Collier, 2017; Putnam, 2000; Sam & Berry, 2010; S. X. Chen et al., 2008; UNHCR, 2018; Ward & Kennedy, 2001). This model can be instrumental in developing targeted interventions and policies to support immigrants at different preparedness levels, ensuring a smoother transition and successful integration into new cultural contexts. This model can be applied in various contexts, such as pre-migration counseling, post-arrival support services, and policymaking to enhance immigrant integration. By identifying the level of preparedness, support services can be tailored to the specific needs of immigrants, ensuring a smoother transition and integration into the host society.

Cross-Cultural Perspective Transformation (CCPT) Model

Based on the findings from the transformative learning component of the study, I am proposing a model titled “Cross-Cultural Perspective Transformation (CCPT) Model,” with the aim of incorporating principles of transformative learning theory in cross-cultural studies and strengthening the application of transformative learning theory in cross-cultural contexts. This model, as Figure 5.2 shows, conceptualises the process through which migrants undergo transformative learning as a result of their cross-cultural experiences. This model visualizes the transformative learning process in cross-cultural contexts as experienced by Nigerian immigrants, based on the findings from the study. The diagram depicts the model in a circular flow to emphasise its dynamic and iterative nature, with each stage leading to the next and ultimately circling back, reflecting continual adaptation and growth. The CCPT Model is

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structured in several stages, integrating key elements from the study's findings and relevant theoretical frameworks:

Stage 1. Encounter with Disorienting Dilemmas. This initial stage of the CCPT Model involves Nigerian immigrants encountering unexpected challenges or “shocks” upon their arrival in the new country. These disorienting dilemmas are crucial triggers for the transformative learning process, as they compel individuals to question and reassess their existing beliefs, values, and assumptions. This concept is central to Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory, which posits that transformative learning often begins with such disorienting experiences.

For instance, in the Italian context, many Nigerian immigrants faced significant language barriers, which hindered their ability to communicate effectively, access services, and integrate into the local community. The challenge of navigating a new language environment, often without prior exposure to Italian, created a sense of isolation and disorientation. This experience forced them to confront and reevaluate their abilities and strategies for communication and integration. In the United States, Nigerian immigrants frequently encountered a fast-paced and culturally diverse society, which differed markedly from their experiences in Nigeria. The diversity in cultural norms, social interactions, and lifestyle expectations in the United States presented a series of disorienting dilemmas. For instance, understanding and adapting to the nuances of American social etiquette, workplace culture, and the multifaceted racial dynamics were significant challenges that prompted deep reflection and adjustment.

These initial encounters with disorienting dilemmas set the stage for the subsequent transformative learning process. They represent the critical moments where the familiar is disrupted, leading to a journey of adaptation, learning, and ultimately, transformation. The

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experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, as highlighted in the study, vividly illustrate this initial phase of the transformative learning process in cross-cultural contexts.

Stage 2. Critical Reflection and Cultural Comparison. This stage involves Nigerian immigrants actively engaging in critical reflection on their experiences in the host country, often leading to a comparison between the cultural norms and values of their home country (Nigeria) and those of the host country (Italy and the United States). This reflective process is a key aspect of transformative learning, as defined by Mezirow (1990, 1998), who emphasises that critical reflection on one's experiences is essential for perspective transformation.

Nigerian immigrants in Italy often reflected on the differences in family structures and social relationships compared to those in Nigeria. For example, the more individualistic nature of Italian society versus the communal and extended family-oriented structure in Nigeria posed challenges in forming deep social connections. Immigrants had to reassess their expectations about community support and social integration, leading to a deeper understanding of both Italian and Nigerian cultural values. In the United States, Nigerian immigrants encountered a diverse, multicultural society, which prompted reflection on issues such as racial identity and social stratification. For instance, the experience of being an African immigrant in a racially diverse but complex society like the United States led to reflections on racial identity and the social perceptions of Africans. This was a stark contrast to the more homogenous racial context of Nigeria and led to critical reassessment of their understanding of race and identity.

These reflections involve not just passive observation, but an active, critical examination of how different cultural norms affect their lives and identities. This stage is essential for

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immigrants to start questioning and reassessing their previously held assumptions and beliefs about themselves and the world around them. It sets the foundation for subsequent stages of the transformative learning process, including adapting to new cultural environments, forming new identities, and integrating new perspectives.

Stage 3. Formation and Role of Community Networks. In this stage of the CCPT Model, Nigerian immigrants actively engage in forming and participating in diaspora communities. These community networks play a critical role in providing support, sharing information, and fostering a sense of belonging among immigrants. This aspect of the model aligns with Robert Putnam's concept of social capital, which emphasises the value of social networks and the reciprocal support they offer (Putnam, 2000).

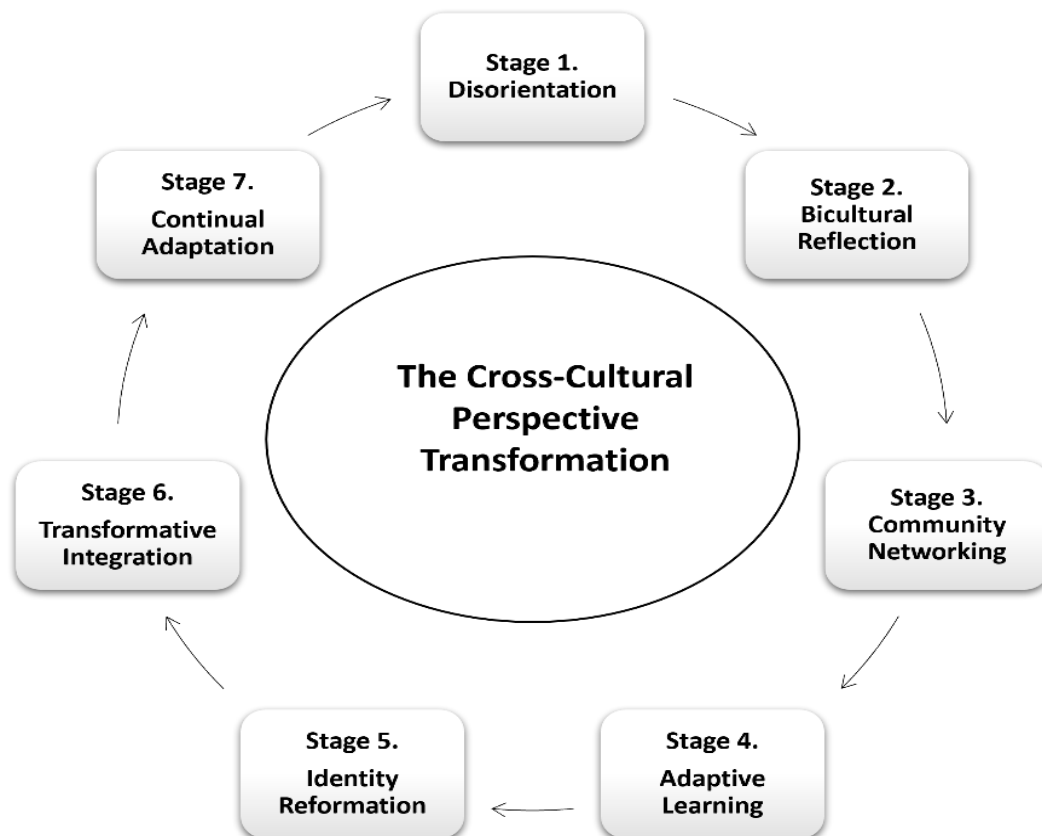
For example, in Italy, the Nigerian diaspora often forms tightly knit communities that act as a crucial support system for new immigrants. These communities provide guidance on navigating the local bureaucracy, finding employment, and understanding Italian cultural norms. For instance, more established Nigerian immigrants in Italy might mentor newcomers, helping them with language barriers and cultural adaptation. These community networks also play a vital role in preserving Nigerian cultural practices and traditions, offering a sense of cultural continuity in a foreign land. In the United States, Nigerian immigrant communities extend beyond providing cultural and social support to also offering platforms for professional networking and economic advancement. For example, Nigerian professional associations in the United States often organize events and workshops that help immigrants develop skills relevant to the American job market.

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These communities not only assist in adapting to the United States culture but also in navigating its more complex and competitive professional landscape. Additionally, they serve as cultural hubs where immigrants can celebrate Nigerian festivals and maintain their cultural heritage. The formation and active participation in these community networks are instrumental in the transformative learning process of immigrants. They provide a safe space where cultural identity is affirmed and preserved, while also facilitating adaptation to the host country's culture. This dual role of community networks in supporting both cultural preservation and adaptation highlights their significance in the transformative learning journey of Nigerian immigrants in cross-cultural contexts.

Figure 5.2

The Cross-Cultural Perspective Transformation (CCPT) Model



Stage 4. Adaptive Learning and Skill Acquisition. This stage of the CCPT Model focuses on the active process of learning and acquiring new skills that are essential for cultural adaptation and economic survival in the host country. This process includes developing language proficiency, gaining professional qualifications, and mastering socio-cultural competencies. It is a critical phase where immigrants transition from merely coping with the new environment to actively thriving in it.

In Italy, Nigerian immigrants often prioritized learning the Italian language as a key skill for effective communication and integration. The mastery of the language is not just about basic communication; it is crucial for securing employment, accessing services, and building social connections. For professional qualifications, many immigrants undertake training or certification courses to meet the Italian job market's requirements. This may involve acquiring new technical skills or adapting existing qualifications to the Italian context. Additionally, socio-cultural competencies, such as understanding Italian social etiquette and norms, are vital for smoother integration into Italian society. In the United States, Nigerian immigrants also engage in language acquisition, although the focus may be more on mastering English accents and idiomatic expressions to blend into the American context. Professional skill development often takes a more diverse form in the United States, given the broader spectrum of employment opportunities. This could include pursuing higher education, obtaining certifications, or developing skills in emerging sectors.

Moreover, socio-cultural competencies in the United States context extend to understanding the nuances of American workplace culture, racial dynamics, and the diverse

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social fabric of the country. The process of adaptive learning and skill acquisition is pivotal in transforming the immigrant experience from one of survival to one of growth and fulfilment. It reflects a proactive approach to overcoming the barriers posed by the new environment and capitalizing on its opportunities. This stage is instrumental in enabling immigrants to navigate their new context effectively, contributing to their overall transformative learning journey.

Stage 5. Identity Reformation and Biculturalism. This stage of the CCPT Model represents a significant shift in the immigrants' self-concept, where they begin to develop a bicultural or multicultural identity. This involves integrating aspects of their Nigerian heritage with elements of the culture in their host country, be it Italy or the United States. This process with is an integration strategy, which suggests that the most adaptive approach to acculturation involves maintaining one's original culture while engaging with the new culture (Berry, 2005).

Nigerian immigrants in Italy often navigated a path between retaining their Nigerian cultural practices and adopting Italian customs. This might involve blending Nigerian food traditions with Italian culinary habits or combining Nigerian social norms with Italian communication styles. The process of celebrating Nigerian festivals in Italy, for instance, while also participating in local Italian community events, exemplifies this bicultural identity development. This identity reformation is not just a passive blending of cultures but involves active negotiation and selective adoption of cultural elements that resonate with their evolving self-concept. In the United States, the multicultural environment presents Nigerian immigrants with a rich tapestry of cultures to engage with. This leads to the development of a multifaceted identity where Nigerian traditions are maintained alongside the adoption of various aspects of American culture, and potentially influences from other cultures present in the United States. This might manifest in diverse ways, such as adopting American professional norms while

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maintaining Nigerian family values or blending Nigerian religious practices with American social customs.

The development of a bicultural or multicultural identity is a dynamic and ongoing process. It reflects the immigrants' ability to navigate and bridge two or more cultures, leading to a richer, more complex self-identity. This stage is crucial for the overall transformative learning journey, as it signifies a move beyond mere adaptation to a deeper integration and redefinition of the self in a cross-cultural context. The experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, as highlighted in this study, vividly illustrate this process of identity reformation and the emergence of biculturalism.

Stage 6. Perspective Transformation and Integration. This stage represents the culmination of the transformative learning process for immigrants, as defined by Jack Mezirow. It is where the immigrants achieve a profound shift in their understanding and worldview, shaped by the array of cross-cultural experiences they have encountered. This transformation involves not just a change in knowledge or skills, but a fundamental shift in the way immigrants perceive themselves, their home culture, and the culture of the host country.

For instance, for Nigerian immigrants in Italy, perspective transformation might manifest in their views on societal structures, individualism versus collectivism, and their place in the global community. For instance, an immigrant who initially struggled with the individualistic nature of Italian society might come to appreciate the value of personal independence and self-reliance, while still valuing the communal bonds characteristic of Nigerian culture. This indicates a significant shift from viewing individualism and collectivism as mutually exclusive to understanding them as complementary aspects of a more holistic worldview. In the United

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States, perspective transformation among Nigerian immigrants can be seen in their understanding of racial dynamics, social mobility, and multiculturalism. An immigrant might arrive with certain preconceptions about American society based on media portrayals or hearsay but, through personal experiences, come to develop a nuanced understanding of the complexities of American culture and society. This might include recognizing the challenges and opportunities of living in a racially diverse society and reevaluating their views on success and personal achievement in a multicultural context.

This stage of perspective transformation and integration is critical as it signifies a deep, internalized change that goes beyond surface-level adaptation. It reflects the essence of transformative learning, where individuals critically examine and revise their previous assumptions in light of new experiences and insights. For Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, this transformation paves the way for a more integrated and harmonious existence within their host countries, while also maintaining a connection with their cultural heritage. The achievement of this perspective transformation is a testament to the immigrants' resilience and adaptability in navigating the complexities of cross-cultural transitions.

Stage 7. Continual Adaptation and Growth. This stage underscores the ongoing nature of the transformative learning process for Nigerian immigrants in both Italy and the United States. It moves beyond the initial adaptation and perspective transformation to a sustained period of continuous learning, growth, and development. This stage is characterized by a dynamic interplay between maintaining ties to the Nigerian culture and further adapting to and integrating within the host culture. It recognizes that cross-cultural adaptation and learning are not finite processes but rather lifelong journeys.

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In Italy, continual adaptation and growth can be seen in how Nigerian immigrants progressively refine their skills, cultural understanding, and social networks. Over time, they may become more involved in local community activities, take on more complex roles in their workplaces, or pursue further education to advance their careers. This ongoing process also includes nurturing and passing on Nigerian cultural traditions to their children, ensuring that their heritage continues to be a part of their evolving identity. In the United States, continual adaptation and growth for Nigerian immigrants often involve navigating the ever-changing landscape of American society. This might include staying abreast of technological advancements, adapting to new social and political climates, or exploring new career pathways that emerge within the dynamic American economy. Furthermore, as part of their growth, immigrants often find ways to give back to both their local American communities and their communities in Nigeria, perhaps through entrepreneurial ventures or community service.

The concept of continual adaptation and growth aligns with the idea that learning and personal development are lifelong processes. For Nigerian immigrants, this stage reflects their resilience and ongoing commitment to personal and professional development within their host culture. It also highlights the importance of maintaining a connection to their Nigerian roots, creating a unique and enriched life experience that spans two cultures. This stage of the CCPT Model encapsulates the essence of the immigrant journey as one of perpetual learning, adjustment, and growth, acknowledging the ever-evolving nature of living in a cross-cultural context.

In sum, the CCPT Model emphasises the dynamic and iterative nature of transformative learning in cross-cultural contexts. It recognizes the complex interplay between individual agency and structural conditions in shaping the transformative learning experiences of

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immigrants. This model can serve as a framework for understanding how immigrants navigate, adapt, and transform through their cross-cultural experiences.

Personal and Contextual Influence on the CCPT Model. As expounded above, the Cross-Cultural Perspective Transformation (CCPT) Model, enriched by the findings from the study on Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding transformative learning experiences in immigration contexts. By integrating both personal and contextual factors into the CCPT Model, we gain a deeper insight into how individual attributes like resilience, adaptability, and personal motivations intersect with societal elements such as cultural norms, language barriers, and support systems. This holistic approach offers a nuanced view of the complex journey undertaken by these immigrants, highlighting the dynamic interplay between personal agency and structural influences in cross-cultural environments.

Incorporating personal and contextual factors into the Cross-Cultural Perspective Transformation (CCPT) Model could manifest in the following ways:

1. **Encounter with Disorienting Dilemmas:** Personal factors like resilience impact how immigrants perceive initial cultural shocks. Contextual factors, such as the host country's language and social norms, create these dilemmas.
2. **Critical Reflection and Cultural Comparison:** Immigrants' personal backgrounds influence their reflection process. Contextually, societal attitudes in Italy and the United States shape the content of these reflections.

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3. **Formation and Role of Community Networks:** Personal factors like family ties influence community engagement. Contextually, the nature of immigrant communities in Italy and the United States varies, affecting support mechanisms.
4. **Adaptive Learning and Skill Acquisition:** Personal aspirations drive the learning of new skills. Contextually, the availability of educational and linguistic resources varies between Italy and the United States.
5. **Identity Reformation and Biculturalism:** Personal identity elements like ethnicity play into identity reformation. Contextually, the multicultural environment in the United States versus the more homogenous Italian context influences this process.
6. **Perspective Transformation and Integration:** Personal experiences and contextual interactions in Italy and the United States lead to perspective transformation.
7. **Continual Adaptation and Growth:** Personal growth continues within the context of ongoing societal changes in both host countries.

In conclusion, this section has explored the intricate interplay of personal and contextual factors influencing the preparedness and transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. The study reveals how individual resilience, adaptability, and personal motivations, in concert with cultural norms, societal attitudes, and support systems, shape the unique journeys of these immigrants. This analysis, grounded in critical realism, the aspirations-capacities framework, and transformative learning theory, underscores the complex dynamics of cross-cultural adaptation and learning, providing valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of the immigrant experience. The possible incorporation of the factors in the CCPT Model.

Integrating the CCP Model to the CCPT Model

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The Good-to-Go Spectrum (CCP) model expounded earlier categorises cross-cultural preparedness of migrants into four levels. The model can be related or integrated into the CCPT model by aligning CCP's stages with the CCPT's phases. For instance, the "High Preparedness" level in the Good-to-Go Spectrum aligns with the initial stages of the CCPT model, where immigrants encounter disorienting dilemmas but are better equipped to handle them. The lower levels of preparedness correspond to later stages in the CCPT model, where transformative learning occurs as immigrants adapt and grow within their host culture.

The Good-to-Go Spectrum could be integrated into the CCPT Model in the following ways:

1. **High Preparedness and Encounter with Disorienting Dilemmas:** Immigrants with high preparedness (strong language skills, cultural knowledge) may experience fewer disorienting dilemmas upon arrival. This aligns with Mezirow's theorisation of transformative learning initiation which includes the "efforts to understand a different culture" (Mezirow, 1991a, p. 168). Their advanced preparation helps mitigate the shock of new cultural environments.
2. **Moderate Preparedness and Critical Reflection and Cultural Comparison:** Those with moderate preparation (as with those in high preparation) may engage more deeply in critical reflection and cultural comparison, facilitating perspective transformation through reflective learning. In this sense, preparedness relates to the "setting the stage" component of the process of learning to become interculturally competent, a transformative learning model posited by E. W. Taylor's (1994). Setting the stage refers to "what the participant brings to each new intercultural experience that contributes to a context of 'learning readiness'" (E. W. Taylor, 1994, p. 162).

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3. **Low Preparedness and Role of Community Networks:** Whereas this study aligns with E. W. Taylor (1994) that migrants come to the host culture with “an array of prior experiences reflected in former critical events, personal goals, education, and previous intercultural experiences” (p, 161) the current study has demonstrated that migrants’ prior or preparation experiences vary and are in levels. Immigrants with low preparedness rely heavily on community networks, resonating with Putnam’s (2000) social capital theory, to compensate for their initial lack of readiness. This reliance aligns with the CCPT model’s stage where support systems play a critical role in aiding adaptation and learning in the new culture.
4. **Adaptive Learning and Skill Acquisition:** All levels of preparedness might involve engagement in adaptive learning and skill acquisition, essential for cultural adaptation and economic survival, echoing Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory. However, while migrants adaptive learning and skills acquisition may not be more than instrumental, they could also be a part of their transformative learning process, as this study has demonstrated.
5. **Identity Reformation and Biculturalism:** The level of preparedness may influence the pace and nature of bicultural identity development, aligning with Berry’s (2005) acculturation theory.
6. **Perspective Transformation and Integration:** Regardless of initial preparedness, all immigrants may undergo perspective transformation, a central theme in Mezirow’s transformative learning theory. The perspective transformation would be easily interpreted as a successful integration in an intercultural context.

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7. **Continual Adaptation and Growth:** Long-term, each preparedness level may contribute to continual adaptation and growth in line with transformative learning principles.

By mapping the Good-to-Go Spectrum onto the CCPT model, we can see how varying levels of preparedness impact the transformative learning journey of Nigerian immigrants, influencing each stage of their cross-cultural adaptation and perspective transformation. This integration allows for a more nuanced understanding of how preparedness levels impact the transformative learning journey of immigrants in cross-cultural contexts. It also offers insights into the importance and impact of initial preparedness levels of migrants.

In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the cross-cultural transitions and transformative experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. The triangulation of data from narrative interviews, TLS questionnaires, and image elicitation provides a comprehensive understanding of the transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants. These experiences, examined through the lenses of critical realism, the aspirations-capacities framework, and transformative learning theory, reveal a complex interplay of individual agency and structural conditions. The study underscores the dynamic, multifaceted nature of cross-cultural preparedness, cross-cultural transitions and the transformative power of immigration experiences. It highlights the dynamic nature of these experiences, shaped by a combination of personal aspirations, capacities, and the sociocultural context of the host country.

The findings underscore the resilience, adaptability, and growth of Nigerian immigrants, reflecting the complex interplay of structure and agency in their cross-cultural journeys. The transformative learning theory, coupled with critical realism and the aspirations-capabilities framework, offers a robust theoretical lens to understand these experiences, revealing both universal and context-specific aspects of immigration. The comparative analysis of the

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immigration experiences of Nigerians in Italy and the United States reveals several commonalities and distinctions. Both groups emphasised the importance of preparation, resilience, and the transformative nature of their journeys. However, the emphasis on language and cultural learning in Italy contrasted with the focus on academic pursuits and career progression in the United States. Such differences underscore the influence of the host country's sociocultural and economic context on immigrants' experiences.

Chapter Summary

The study embarked on an in-depth exploration of the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, focusing on their preparation for cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning processes. A multifaceted methodological approach was employed, integrating narrative interviews, the TLS, and image elicitation. The theoretical underpinnings included critical realism, the aspirations-capacities framework, and transformative learning theory. Key findings from the study are synthesized below, reflecting the study's objectives.

- 1. Cross-Cultural Preparation and Transition:** The study revealed varied levels of preparation among Nigerian immigrants for their life in Italy and the United States. Preparation ranged from extensive to minimal, impacting their integration and transformative learning experiences. In Italy, the emphasis was on overcoming language barriers and cultural integration, while in the United States, it was more about leveraging educational and professional opportunities. These findings illuminate the diverse strategies employed by immigrants in different sociocultural settings and highlight the crucial role of language and cultural knowledge in facilitating cross-cultural transitions.

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2. **Transformative Learning Processes and Outcomes:** Significant transformative learning experiences among Nigerian immigrants in both Italy and the United States were identified. The study found high engagement in transformative learning processes, particularly in rational discourse, reflecting the importance of open discussions and reflections in perspective transformation. The transformative experiences showed notable similarities across both countries, despite different cultural contexts. These findings underscore the universality of transformative learning processes in immigration experiences.
3. **Personal and Contextual Factors in Immigration Experiences:** The study highlighted how personal and contextual factors shape the cross-cultural preparedness and transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants. Factors such as language skills, educational background, and social networks were crucial in navigating the structural opportunities and constraints in Italy and the United States. The study's findings resonate with the aspirations-capacities framework, demonstrating the interplay between individual agency and societal structures in shaping immigration experiences.
4. **Comparative Analysis of Nigerian Immigrants in Italy and the United States:** A comparative analysis revealed commonalities and distinctions in the immigration experiences of Nigerians in Italy and the United States. Both groups emphasised the importance of preparation, resilience, and transformative learning in their journeys. However, the focus varied significantly between the two countries, reflecting the influence of the host country's sociocultural and economic context on immigrants' experiences.

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Moreover, the empirical findings underscore the relevance and applicability of the aspirations-capacities framework and structure and agency theory in understanding migration dynamics. The narratives of Nigerian immigrants reveal a complex negotiation of personal aspirations, capacities, and structural constraints in both Italy and the United States. This study not only contributes empirical evidence to the existing theories of migration but also innovatively proposes models that encapsulate the complexities of cross-cultural preparedness and perspective transformation. The CCP and CCPT Models offer valuable frameworks for understanding the multifaceted nature of immigrant experiences and the transformative learning processes they undergo in new cultural environments. These models can be instrumental in guiding future research and policy development in the field of migration and cross-cultural studies.

In conclusion, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of the cross-cultural transitions and transformative experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. It highlights the dynamic nature of these experiences, shaped by a combination of personal aspirations, capacities, and the sociocultural context of the host country. The findings underscore the resilience, adaptability, and transformation of Nigerian immigrants, reflecting the complex interplay of structure and agency in their cross-cultural journeys. The integration of critical realism, the aspirations-capacities framework, and transformative learning theory provides a robust theoretical lens to understand these experiences, revealing both universal and context-specific aspects of immigration.

CHAPTER SIX**Conclusion**

This study was a voyage of an in-depth exploration of the Nigerian immigrants' experiences in Italy and the United States, traversing through various facets of their journeys. Chapter One laid the foundation, outlining, among others, the study's purpose and objectives, research questions, and significance, setting the stage for a comprehensive analysis. Chapter Two delved into the existing literature, offering a critical review of relevant theories and previous research in the fields of migration studies, cross-cultural transitions, and transformative learning. Chapter Three described the methodology, detailing the multiple-case mixed-methods narrative approach employed to gather and analyse data from narrative interviews (with embedded image elicitation) and the TLS questionnaire. Chapter Four presented the results and findings, offering an in-depth analysis of the data and highlighting the rich, multifaceted experiences of the immigrants. Chapter Five discussed these findings, integrating them with theoretical frameworks and drawing out their theoretical implications. Each chapter contributed a vital piece to the puzzle, building towards a comprehensive understanding of the Nigerian immigrant experience in cross-cultural settings.

As this comprehensive study on the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States draws to a close, it is crucial to reflect on the journey undertaken and the insights gained. This concluding chapter encapsulates the essence of the research, revisiting the key findings, theoretical contributions, implications, and recommendations. It also acknowledges the limitations of the study and proposes avenues for future research. The overarching aim of this chapter is to synthesize the various elements of the study, providing a coherent summary and

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pointing towards the broader significance of this research in the fields of migration studies, cross-cultural studies, transformative learning, and adult education.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

The purpose of this multiple-case mixed-methods narrative study was to explore the preparation, cross-cultural transition, and transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. I sought to understand the nature of these immigrants' preparation (or lack thereof) for cross-cultural transition, the transformative learning processes and outcomes they experienced, the relationship between cross-cultural transitions and perspective transformation, the impact of personal and contextual factors on their experiences, and a comparative analysis of their experiences in both countries.

An integrative research design, including case study research, mixed-methods research design, and narrative inquiry, was deployed as the methodological approach of the study. The participants included 27 Nigerian immigrants, 14 in Italy and 13 in the United States, selected using criterion sampling technique. Data were generated through narrative interviews, which included the selection and interpretation of images, and Transformative Learning Survey. Thematic and narrative analysis techniques, and quantitative data analysis were deployed. The participants of the study were limited to Nigerians who moved from Nigeria to Italy when they were adult biologically (as self-reported) or legally (documented as 18 years or older) and were living in Italy or the United States legally (documented). Summary of findings from the thematic-narrative analysis and quantitative analysis are presented below.

Preparation for Cross-Cultural Transition

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The study revealed a spectrum of preparedness among Nigerian immigrants in both Italy and the United States. In Italy, immigrants faced challenges with language barriers and cultural integration, while in the United States, the focus was more on leveraging educational and professional opportunities. The findings suggest that the level of preparation significantly impacts immigrants' ability to adapt and integrate into their new environments. This underscores the importance of comprehensive preparation, including language acquisition, cultural knowledge, and the establishment of social networks.

Transformative Learning Processes and Outcomes

The study found significant transformative learning experiences among Nigerian immigrants in both countries. High engagement in transformative learning processes, particularly in rational discourse, was observed, reflecting the importance of critical reflection and open discussions in perspective transformation. These experiences were similar across both countries, highlighting the universality of transformative learning in immigration experiences.

Cross-Cultural Transitions and Perspective Transformation

The study's findings demonstrate a strong relationship between cross-cultural transitions and perspective transformation among Nigerian immigrants. Encountering new cultural norms, language barriers, and social structures led to significant shifts in self-understanding, worldviews, and values. This process was evident in both Italy and the United States, although the specific challenges and adaptations varied according to the unique sociocultural contexts of each country.

Influence of Personal and Contextual Factors

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Personal and contextual factors significantly influenced the cross-cultural preparedness and transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants. Factors such as language skills, educational background, and social networks played a crucial role in navigating structural opportunities and constraints in both Italy and the United States. The study highlights the interplay between individual agency and societal structures, emphasizing the importance of considering both in understanding migration experiences.

Comparative Analysis of Experiences in Italy and the United States

A comparative analysis of Nigerian immigrants' experiences in Italy and the United States revealed commonalities and distinctions. Both groups emphasised the importance of preparation, resilience, and transformative learning in their journeys. However, differences in focus - language and cultural learning in Italy vs. academic pursuits and career progression in the United States - reflected the influence of each host country's sociocultural and economic context on the immigrants' experiences.

In conclusion, this study provided a comprehensive understanding of the cross-cultural transitions and transformative experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. It highlighted the dynamic nature of these experiences, shaped by a combination of personal aspirations, capacities, and the sociocultural context of the host country. The findings underscore the resilience, adaptability, and transformation of Nigerian immigrants, reflecting the complex interplay of structure and agency in their cross-cultural journeys. The integration of critical realism, the aspirations-capacities framework, and transformative learning theory offers a robust theoretical lens to understand these experiences, revealing both universal and context-specific aspects of immigration.

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Implications and Recommendations

This section outlines the implications and recommendations arising from the study on Nigerian immigrants' cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning experiences in Italy and the United States. The findings provide insights into preparation for cross-cultural transitions, transformative learning processes and outcomes, the relationship between cross-cultural transitions and perspective transformation, and the influence of personal and contextual factors on these experiences.

Overview of Theoretical Implications

Theoretical implications of the study's findings have been comprehensively discussed in the previous chapter. The study contributed to the field of migration studies by providing empirical evidence supporting the aspirations-capacities framework and transformative learning theory. The study reinforced the importance of considering both individual aspirations and capacities, along with structural conditions in migration experiences. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics, focusing on diverse migrant populations and contexts. The findings contributed to the understanding of transformative learning in migration contexts. Researchers are encouraged to further investigate the role of critical reflection and rational discourse in transformative learning among immigrants. Also, the study's alignment with critical realism highlights the complex interplay between individual agency and societal structures. This perspective should be utilised in future studies to explore the layered nature of migrants' experiences.

Moreover, the study proposed innovative models—the Cross-Cultural Preparedness (CCP) Model and the Cross-Cultural Perspective Transformation (CCPT) Model—to encapsulate

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the complexities of cross-cultural preparedness and perspective transformation. These models offer valuable frameworks for understanding the multifaceted nature of immigrant experiences and transformative learning in new cultural environments.

Practical Implications

Practical implications of this study include:

1. **Migration Policies and Programmes:** Policymakers should consider the diverse preparedness needs of immigrants, including language training, cultural orientation, and social support systems. For instance, the CCP Model (Good-to-Go Spectrum) offers insights into how the preparedness levels of immigrants can be measured (e.g., using a questionnaire), and thereby acknowledging the resources that immigrants bring to the host society.
2. **Educational Institutions:** Educational programmes for immigrants should incorporate elements of transformative learning to facilitate their adaptation and integration into new cultural settings. For instance, adult educators should be mindful of the disorientation that immigrants have gone through and how they make meaning of them.
3. **Community and Social Services:** Community organizations and social services should develop targeted programmes to assist immigrants in building social networks and accessing resources that support their integration and adaptation.

Policy Recommendations

1. **Language and Cultural Training:** Governments should implement comprehensive language and cultural training programmes for immigrants to facilitate their integration.

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2. **Supportive Legal Frameworks:** Policies should be developed to create supportive legal and social frameworks that enable immigrants to leverage their capacities and fulfil their aspirations.
3. **Community Engagement Programmes:** Initiatives to promote community engagement and social inclusion of immigrants should be prioritised, helping to build bridges between immigrant communities and host societies.

The study provides valuable insights into the cross-cultural transitions and transformative learning experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. Its findings have significant theoretical, practical, and policy implications, offering a foundation for future research and informing the development of more effective support systems for immigrants. By understanding and addressing the unique challenges and opportunities faced by immigrants, societies can foster more inclusive and supportive environments that facilitate successful integration and mutual enrichment.

Impact Statements

This study could have broader and long-term effects on individuals, community, and the global world at large.

Impact on Individuals

Broader effects of the findings from this study on individuals include:

1. **Enhanced Understanding of Immigrant Experiences:** The study provides deep insights into the personal journeys of Nigerian immigrants, fostering a broader understanding and empathy among host communities. By highlighting the challenges and

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transformative experiences of these immigrants, it can influence how individuals perceive and interact with the immigrant community.

2. **Empowerment of Immigrants:** The findings can empower immigrants by validating their experiences and struggles. The study's focus on transformative learning and personal growth can inspire immigrants to actively engage in their own cross-cultural transition and adaptation processes.
3. **Improved Mental Health and Well-being:** By identifying the factors that contribute to successful cross-cultural transitions, the study can guide immigrants in managing the stresses associated with migration, potentially improving their mental health and overall well-being.

Community Impact

Broader effects of the findings from this study at the community level include:

1. **Strengthened Support Systems:** The study's findings can encourage communities to develop more effective support systems for immigrants, such as language programmes, cultural orientation workshops, and social networking opportunities, thereby fostering a more inclusive community environment.
2. **Increased Cultural Awareness and Difference:** By understanding the diverse experiences and backgrounds of Nigerian immigrants, communities can appreciate and embrace cultural difference, leading to more harmonious and culturally rich local environments.

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3. **Enhanced Community Services:** Insights from the study can inform community services and organizations in tailoring their programmes to better meet the specific needs of immigrant populations, improving service delivery and community engagement.

Societal Impact

Broader and long-term effects of the findings from this study at the societal level include:

1. **Informed Policy Making:** The study provides empirical data that can inform policymaking in the areas of immigration, integration, and multiculturalism. It offers a foundation for developing policies that acknowledge and address the complexities of immigration experiences from cross-cultural and learning perspectives.
2. **Promotion of Social Cohesion and Integration:** The understanding gained from this study can contribute to societal efforts aimed at promoting social cohesion and integration. Recognizing the challenges, capitals, and transformative experiences of immigrants can facilitate more empathetic and inclusive societal attitudes.
3. **Long-term Economic and Cultural Benefits:** By facilitating successful integration and capitalizing on the diverse skills and perspectives of immigrants, societies can reap long-term economic and cultural benefits. The study highlights the potential contributions of immigrants to host countries when adequately supported.

Global Impact

Ultimately, this study's findings have potential long-term effects at the global level community level, including:

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1. **Enhanced Global Understanding of Migration:** The study contributes to the global discourse on migration, offering insights that can be applicable in various international contexts. It underscores the universal aspects of the migration experience and the importance of cross-cultural understanding.
2. **Influence on International Migration Policies:** The findings can influence international migration policies, emphasizing the need for cooperative and holistic approaches to migration management that consider the well-being and potential of immigrants.
3. **Promotion of Global Solidarity and Empathy:** By shedding light on the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, the study promotes a sense of global solidarity and empathy towards migrants, encouraging a more compassionate and humane approach to migration issues worldwide.

Contributions to Bodies of Knowledge

This study is an enrichment of several bodies of knowledge, including migration studies, cross-cultural studies, adult education and lifelong learning, social sciences and interdisciplinary fields. The study also adds methodological contributions to relevant bodies of literature.

Migration Studies and cross-Cultural Studies

This study adds to the literature of migration studies and cross-cultural studies in the following areas:

1. **Empirical Insights into Immigrant Experiences:** The study provides rich empirical data on the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, contributing to a deeper understanding of migration dynamics. It extends the body of

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knowledge in migration studies by exploring the interplay of individual, cultural, and societal factors in the migration process.

2. **Expansion of the Aspirations-Capacities Framework:** By applying the aspirations-capacities framework to the context of Nigerian immigrants, the study contributes to the refinement and expansion of this framework. It demonstrates how individual aspirations and capacities interact with structural opportunities and constraints in the context of migration.
3. **Application of Transformative Learning Theory in Migration:** The study contributes to the application of transformative learning theory in the field of migration, exploring how cross-cultural transitions facilitate perspective transformation among immigrants.
4. **Understanding Cross-Cultural Transitions:** The study offers new insights into how individuals navigate cross-cultural transitions, contributing to cross-cultural studies. It highlights the complexities of adapting to new cultural environments and the transformative potential of these experiences.
5. **Comparative Analysis of Cultural Contexts:** By comparing the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States, the study contributes to a better understanding of how different cultural contexts impact the adaptation and integration processes of immigrants.

Contribution to Adult Education and Lifelong Learning

This study is a relevant addition to the literature in the field of adult education and lifelong learning in the following ways:

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1. **Integration of Transformative Learning and Adult Education:** The study bridges transformative learning theory with adult education and lifelong learning, highlighting the ongoing learning processes that occur during migration. It underscores the importance of adult education in facilitating successful cross-cultural adaptation.
2. **Implications for Educational Practices and Policies:** The findings have implications for educational practices and policies aimed at adult immigrants, contributing to the development of more effective educational strategies that support their adaptation and growth.

Contribution to Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Contributions

The interdisciplinary nature of this study makes its report a useful piece in the databases of various fields in social sciences:

1. **Insights into Structure and Agency Interplay:** The study contributes to social sciences by providing empirical evidence of the interaction between structure and agency in the lives of immigrants. It enriches the discourse on how individuals navigate and transform societal structures.
2. **Enhanced Understanding of Globalization and Social Change:** By exploring the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in a global context, the study contributes to an understanding of how globalization impacts individual lives and prompts social change.
3. **Bridging Multiple Disciplines:** The study's interdisciplinary approach, combining insights from migration studies, education, psychology, and sociology, contributes to a more holistic understanding of migration phenomena.

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4. **Model for Future Interdisciplinary Research:** By successfully integrating different theoretical frameworks and methodologies, the study serves as a model for future interdisciplinary research in migration, education, and social sciences.

Methodological Contributions

This study contributes to social research methodology in two ways:

1. **Innovative Use of Mixed-Methods Narrative Approach:** The study demonstrates the effectiveness of using a mixed-methods narrative approach in exploring complex phenomena like migration. It contributes to methodological discussions on the integration of qualitative and quantitative data in social research.
2. **Development of New Analytical Models:** The introduction of the Cross-Cultural Preparedness (CCP) Model and the Cross-Cultural Perspective Transformation (CCPT) Model represents a significant methodological contribution, providing new tools for analyzing and understanding migration experiences.

In summary, the study makes significant contributions across various fields, offering new perspectives, theoretical insights, and methodological approaches to understanding the complexities of migration, cross-cultural adaptation, and transformative learning.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study border on several methodological considerations (such as issues of sample and generalizability as well as data analysis and interpretation), cultural and contextual factors, theoretical considerations, practical implications, and time and monetary constraints.

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Methodological Considerations

Methodological limitations of the study include:

1. **Specific Demographic Focus:** The study primarily focused on Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. While this provides detailed insights into this group's experiences, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other immigrant populations or those from different cultural or geographical backgrounds.
2. **Limited Sample Size:** The sample size (27), particularly in the quantitative component limited the breadth of experiences and perspectives captured even at the cross-case level. This is because, usually, small sample comparison does not afford strong hypothesis tests in cross-case analysis (Goertz & Mahoney, 2013). A larger and more diverse sample might provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena studied.
3. **Reliance on Self-Reported Data:** The study heavily relied on self-reported data, especially in narrative interviews and questionnaires. This approach can introduce biases such as selective memory, social desirability, and subjective interpretations of experiences.
4. **Cross-Sectional Design:** The cross-sectional nature of the study means it captured a snapshot of the immigrants' experiences at a specific point in time. Longitudinal research would be required to understand how these experiences and perceptions evolve over time.
5. **Subjectivity in Qualitative Analysis:** Qualitative data analysis, particularly thematic analysis, involves a degree of subjectivity. Different researchers might interpret the same data differently, which could influence the study's conclusions.
6. **Integration of Mixed-Methods Data:** While the study aimed to integrate qualitative and quantitative data, the actual synthesis of these data types can be challenging. There might

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be limitations in fully capturing the complexity and nuances when combining different data sources.

7. **Limited Reflexivity:** Although I included a positionality statement in the Chapter One, this study had the potential to be more reflective, especially at the level of data analysis and discussion of findings, considering my background and overall positionality in relation to the topic and the participants. Using internal reflective devices such as self-reflexive writing could have enriched my reporting by laying bare my transformative migratory trajectory and biases.

Cultural and Contextual Factors

Cultural and Contextual Factors may have limited the study in the following aspects:

1. **Cultural Interpretation Biases:** Given the cross-cultural nature of the study, there's a risk of cultural interpretation biases, where my cultural backgrounds and perspectives might influence the interpretation of data from immigrants' host cultural contexts.
2. **Contextual Variability:** The specific socio-political and economic contexts of Italy and the United States during the study period might have influenced the findings. These contexts are dynamic and can change over time, affecting the relevance and applicability of the results in other time periods or contexts.

Theoretical Considerations

The study scope was limited in the aspects of the theoretical frameworks used:

1. **Limited Theoretical Perspectives:** While the study employed frameworks like the aspirations-capacities framework and transformative learning theory, other relevant

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theories and models might offer additional or alternative insights into the experiences of immigrants.

2. **Interpretation within Theoretical Constraints:** The interpretation of data was inherently influenced by the chosen theoretical frameworks, which may limit the exploration of phenomena that fall outside the focal theories.

Practical Issues

There are issues with applying the practical implications of the study that may include:

1. **Application to Policy and Practice:** The direct applicability of the study's findings to policy and practice may be limited due to its specific focus and the contextual nature of the results.
2. **Recommendations Based on Findings:** The recommendations provided are based on the study's findings and may not encompass all potential strategies or solutions relevant to the issues explored.

Time and Monetary Constraints

Challenges related to availability of time and resources that I encountered include:

1. **Duration of the Study and Technical Challenges:** Conducted as a doctoral research project, the study was subject to the time constraints typical of a doctoral programme. Moreover, during the data analysis, my personal computer suddenly got irrevocably damaged, and this led to the loss of some portions of the research work, which had to be redone. The time limitation impacted the depth and breadth of the research, including the duration of data collection and analysis phases. Longer-term studies might reveal more

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comprehensive insights and capture the evolving nature of immigrants' experiences over time.

2. **Budgetary Constraints:** As a doctoral student-led study, the research was conducted within a limited budget. This constraint affected the scope of the study, particularly in terms of the geographical spread of participants and the methods of data collection (e.g., inability to conduct more in-person interviews).

These limitations should be considered when interpreting the study's findings and recommendations. They also provide avenues for future research to build upon and extend the work presented in this study. However, the limitations and challenges encountered during the study did not undermine the rigour of the methodological approach adopted for the study. For instance, the study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data. This triangulation of data sources enhances the reliability of the findings, as it allows for cross-verification and a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena studied. Despite limitations in sample size, the study successfully included a diverse group of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. This diversity in participants' backgrounds and experiences as well as the narrative analysis added to the reliability of the findings, as it captured a broad spectrum of immigrant experiences, and with rich, detailed, and nuanced perspectives.

The research process was subject to academic scrutiny, including supervision by experienced scholars. This oversight added an additional layer of quality control and credibility to the research. Moreover, I had unlimited access to certain resources, such as extensive databases and advanced analysis software that eased the study's methodological choices and depth of analysis. Also, I have provided a detailed description of the methodology, allowing for a clear understanding of how data was collected, analysed, and interpreted. This thoroughness and

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clarity supported the reliability of the findings. In sum, despite the constraints of time, monetary resources, and other limitations inherent in my doctoral research, the study's findings are reliable due to its methodologically rigorous approach, diverse and representative participant selection, thorough validation measures, and transparent reporting. These aspects collectively strengthened the trustworthiness and credibility of the research outcomes.

Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the forgoing, several areas for future research have been identified. These suggestions aim to build upon the foundational work of this study and explore new dimensions of immigrant experiences and transformative learning.

Longitudinal Studies

Longitudinal studies may build on this study in the following ways:

1. **Tracking Changes Over Time:** Future research could involve longitudinal studies that track the experiences of Nigerian migrants over an extended period. This approach would provide insights into how their cross-cultural adaptation, transformative learning experiences, and perspectives evolve with time.
2. **Impact of Long-term Residency:** Investigating how long-term residency in host countries influences the integration, identity, and sense of belonging of Nigerian immigrants would be valuable. This could also explore the long-term effects of transformative learning experiences on their lives.

Comparative Studies Across Different Immigrant Populations

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Wider comparative studies may be useful in future research in the following aspects:

1. **Broader Immigrant Experiences:** Expanding the research to include other immigrant groups from different countries or continents would allow for a comparative analysis of cross-cultural experiences and transformative learning processes.
2. **Cultural and Geographical Variations:** Studying Nigerian immigrants in other countries, or immigrants from other African countries, could provide a broader understanding of how different cultural and geographical contexts impact the immigrant experience.

In-depth Exploration of Specific Themes

A more focused exploration should be carried out on some specific themes and findings from the study, including:

1. **Language Acquisition and Transformative Integration:** A focused study on the role of language acquisition in the integration process and its impact on transformative learning would be insightful, especially comparing experiences in English-speaking versus non-English-speaking countries.
2. **Economic Integration and Career Development:** Research into how Nigerian immigrants navigate career development and economic challenges in different cultural contexts could provide valuable information for policy development and community support programmes.

Focus on Intersectionality and Diversity

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Some ways to gain more and deeper insights into the subject matter explored in this study include:

1. **Intersectional Analysis:** Studies focusing on the intersectionality of the immigrant experience, considering factors such as gender, race, socio-economic status, and education level, would provide a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by immigrants.
2. **Diverse Immigrant Experiences:** Research into the experiences of diverse groups within the Nigerian immigrant community, such as women or youth, could reveal important insights into the varied nature of immigrant experiences.

Expanding Theoretical Frameworks

Future studies may explore the topics of this study with fresh theoretical perspectives, including:

1. **Integration of Additional Theoretical Perspectives:** Future studies could integrate additional theoretical frameworks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the immigrant experience, such as intersectionality to examine how race, gender, and class intersect with the migration experience.
2. **Testing and Refinement of Proposed Models:** Further exploration and testing of the Cross-Cultural Preparedness (CCP) Model and the Cross-Cultural Perspective Transformation (CCPT) Model in different contexts and with diverse populations would contribute to their refinement and applicability.

Policy-Oriented Research

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Considering the significance of policy in migration issues and adult education, future research may explore:

1. **Impact on Migration Policies:** Research aimed at understanding how the findings of this study can inform and shape immigration policies, integration programmes, and support services for immigrants in various countries.
2. **Community Engagement and Support Networks:** Investigating the role and impact of community engagement and support networks in the adaptation and transformative learning processes of immigrants could provide insights for community organizations and policymakers.

Use of Advanced Methodologies

Ways advanced methodologies may build on this study include:

1. **Employment of New Research Technologies:** Utilizing advanced research methodologies and technologies, such as data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI), to analyse large datasets could uncover patterns and trends in immigrant experiences and transformative learning processes.
2. **Qualitative Research Methods:** Further qualitative studies, including ethnographic research, could provide a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrants and the nuances of their cross-cultural transitions and transformative experiences. Such research could deploy more elements and devices of reflexivity.

These suggestions for future research direction aim to further enrich the understanding of immigrant experiences, cross-cultural preparedness, cross-cultural adaptation, and transformative

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learning, building on the foundational work of this study and expanding its scope to a broader range of contexts and populations.

Chapter Summary

Finally, this study has provided a nuanced exploration of the cross-cultural experiences and transformative learning processes of Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. Through its mixed-methods narrative approach, the research has illuminated the complexities of migration, the interplay of structure and agency, and the profound impact of cross-cultural transitions on individuals' lives. Broader and long-term effects of the study on individuals, community, society, and the world at large have been stated. While acknowledging the limitations inherent in its scope and methodology, the study offers significant contributions to academic discourse and practical applications. The recommendations and future research directions proposed in this chapter aim to extend the conversation and encourage further exploration in this vital field of study. Ultimately, this research not only deepens our understanding of the immigrant experience but also enriches our perspective on the dynamic processes of cultural adaptation and personal transformation in an increasingly interconnected world.

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APPENDIX I

G2G Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Good to Go “G2G” Research Project

Project Title: Good to Go? Preparedness for Cross-cultural Transition: A Journey of Transformative Learning among Nigerian Immigrants in Italy

Researcher: Taiwo Isaac Olatunji

G2G SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

[Hint to Interviewer: Watch out for any turning point or life-changing experience the participant had before leaving Nigeria, on their way to Italy, or after they arrived in Italy.]

Setting the stage (and migratory trajectory)

1. How would you describe your life in Nigeria before coming to Italy?

Probe: What motivated you to leave Nigeria?

2. What was your journey from Nigeria to Italy like?

Prompts: Year of arrival, mode of entry/transport, transit period, co-traveller, the role of kin, the first point of contact in Italy

Learning for the migration (Pre-departure, transit, and post-arrival phases)

3. Describe what you did in preparation for your residence and integration in Italy.

Probe: What did you learn about migrating to and residing in Italy?

4. Describe how you came to realise the need to learn new knowledge, skills, and values.

Prompts: The Italian language, Italian civics, and politics, intercultural skills for studies or jobs, etc.

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Disorienting dilemma

5. Describe what it was like when you first landed in Italy. How was the next several days and weeks?

Probe: What surprised you the most, and what disturbed you?

6. What were some of the biggest challenges that you faced in the process of becoming an immigrant in Italy?

7. What else would you like to share about your preparation to live within the Italian culture?

Socio-demographic

8. Tell me about yourself.

Prompts: Ethnicity, age, family status, occupation/work, educational qualification, immigrant status, Italian language

APPENDIX II

G2G In-Depth Interview Guide

Good to Go “G2G” Research Project

Project Title: Good to Go? Preparedness for Cross-cultural Transition: A Journey of Transformative Learning among Nigerian Immigrants in Italy

Researcher: Taiwo Isaac Olatunji

G2G IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE*Transformative learning processes*

1. a. You mentioned a significant event that you experienced when you were moving to/settling in Italy [refer to a specific experience the participant had mentioned]. Could you tell me more about the experience and how you managed the situation?

OR

b. You mentioned some significant event that you experienced when you were moving to/settling in Italy [refer to some specific experiences the participant had mentioned]. Which of these experiences would you say affected you the most? Could you tell me more about the experience and how you managed the situation?

2. What has changed about your life since you went through that experience?

3. What did you do to make sense of the most significant event or life-changing experience of your migration to Italy?

Probe I: Tell me if you engaged in some arts-based activities (such as music, poetry, fiction, painting, sculpture, and theatre).

Probe II: Describe some support you received from some persons and/or organisations?

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Prompts: Family, friends, colleagues, religious leaders, professional counsellors/therapists, NGO, a government social/migration office

Probe III: What role did your emotions (of happiness, sadness, joy, anger, etc) play in the process?

Probe IV: How would you describe the intuitive and spiritual aspects of dealing with the experience?

4. What was your thought process like when you were making sense of the most significant event or life-changing experience of your migration to Italy?

Probe I: Tell me if you made certain decisions on what and what not to do as you were going through the change process.

Probe II: How did you reflect on your situation?

Probe III: Did you have a dialogue with some person who helped you to consider various alternatives and evidence in relation to the struggle? If yes, tell me about this.

5. What radical steps did you take in the process of making sense of the significant, life-changing experience?

Probe I: Tell me if there was a point you challenged your Nigerian socio-cultural authority, laws, or norms. What about challenging some Italian authority, law, or norms?

Probe II: Tell me if you engaged in some activities that are aimed at making the world a better place, particularly for immigrants?

Probe III: In what ways have you challenged how Nigerian immigrants are represented or treated?

Probe IV: What could you say about the advantages and disadvantages of being an immigrant in Italy compared to being an Italian?

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Transformative learning outcomes

6. In what ways have you been behaving differently as a result of revising your perspective, values, and beliefs in the context of your migration from Nigeria to Italy?

Probe: You can think about what changes in how you interact with others in your everyday life. What new skills do you have?

7. What is your observation about how your self-awareness has increased as a result of dealing with the significant event?

Probe: So, what has changed in terms of how you see yourself (your identity, purpose, personality, responsibility)?

8. To what extent have you become more open to seeing issues from other people's points of view since you moved to Italy?

Probe: How do you see the world now different from how you used to see the world?

9. Resulting from your cross-cultural experiences in Nigeria and Italy, tell me how the way you think about life has changed.

Prompts: Philosophy, religious beliefs, and/or socio-political views

Bringing it home to preparedness to live in Italy

10. What would you consider the biggest lesson(s) you have learned from your immigration experience and status?

Probe: Think about our discussion so far and the growth you have had mentally and spiritually.

11. Having been in Italy for some time, how would you rate your preparation for life in Italy, especially by making sense of the significant event?

Probe I: What did you do well and if you had a chance what would you do better?

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Probe II: What factors or issues beyond you affected how you learn from the significant event?

12. Is there anything else you would like to tell me before we finish the interview?

13. If your journey to and life in Italy could be explained with an image, which image would you choose? [Present the selected metaphoric images] Why this image?

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APPENDIX III

G2G-IT Interview Images



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APPENDIX IV

G2G-US In-Depth Interview Guide**Good to Go “G2G” Research Project**

Study Working Title: Good to Go? Cross-cultural Transition: Journeys of Transformative Learning among Nigerian Immigrants in the United States

Principal Investigator: Taiwo I. Olatunji

G2G-US IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me about your journey from Nigeria to the United States.
2. How did you prepare for living in the United States? (For example, what did you do in terms of visa application, getting information, receiving supports, etc?)
3. What kinds of things did you learn in order to migrate and live in the United States successfully?
4. Describe the support, if any, that you received from individuals and organisations before, during, and after moving to the United States.
5. How were the next several days (weeks, and months) after you reached the United States? (What did you like the most? What surprised you the most? What disturbed you?)
6. What were some of the biggest challenges that you have faced (or that you are still facing) as an immigrant in the United States? (How have these challenges changed over time?)
7. How did you managed the situation in order to make sense of your experience?
8. Now that you are living in the United States, what has changed about how you view Nigeria and your culture?
9. What has changed about how you view the United States now compared to how you used to

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view the country when you were in Nigeria?

10. What has changed in your life since you went through your migration experience?

11. In what ways have you known more about yourself? (What have you learned about yourself? How have your ideas about yourself changed?)

12. To what extent have you become more open to seeing issues from other people's points of view since you moved to the United States?

13. How has the way you see life changed in terms of philosophical, religious, and/or political views?

14. What would you consider the biggest lesson(s) you have learned from your migration experience?

15. Looking back, what did you do before or after moving to the United States that has proved to be most helpful for your immigration success? What would you do better?

16. If your journey to and life in Italy could be explained with an image, which image would you choose? *[Interviewer shows 12 images AND asks if the participant would prefer to present a personal image or artifact.]* Why this image?

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APPENDIX V

G2G-US Interview Images



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