Identity Denial and Borrowing among Forced Migrants in Host Countries: A Discursive Psychological Perspective

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Abstract

This article explores identity formation, change and use of multiple identities among forced migrants. The research, a longitudinal study lasting two years between 2009 and 2011, was conducted through interviews with, and observation of, five migrants. The use of the longitudinal study was geared at compensating for the limited sample size. The findings led to the conclusion that identity could be an individual construct since individuals may have the capacity to decide who they aspire to be and shape themselves in particular selves. The research found that choices may not be free but conditioned by social and environmental factors. For migrants, identity formation is therefore constrained by the need to maintain the native identity as well as espouse [or borrow] host and imagined identities in order to integrate into societies and manage the effects of displacement and loss. The research suggests that identity manipulation could be a social and psychological survival tactics, commanding further inquiry.

Keywords: identity, denial, migrant, situatedness, social integration

1. Introduction

Pittinsky, Shih and Ambady (1999) argue that individuals have multiple social identities which carry certain commonly held assumptions or stereotypes about the group that individuals belong to, e.g., being an Asian woman is associated with the perception that one is polite, works hard and has high levels of number skills. Using the experimental method (quantitative), Pittinsky, Shih and Ambady researched 121 Asian women to test the degree to which people embraced social identities by implicitly accepting positive stereotypes. These authors thought that the participants in their research did not stick to a fixed identity but reoriented their affect depending on contexts. Though set in a different paradigm (positivism/ psychological social psychology), the findings are helpful to the discursive approach since both studies address multiple identities. Pittinsky, Shih and Ambady's (1999) article was gender-focused and considered only one ethnic group. This means that the findings are only directly applicable to this group. It is obvious that psychological phenomena are culturally biased; what is applicable to one culturally constructed community may not apply to others. Additionally, purely experimental quantitative methods may not capture meanings that actors attach to their actions. This article involved male and female narratives (qualitative) that emphasised the search for meaning.

From similar perspectives, Sanders (2002) argues that there are connections between ethnic closure, i.e., self-seclusion, and the expression and maintenance of ethnic identity. The author uses a qualitative methodology to examine different studies into self-identification and outsiders. How ethnic identity develops and its subjective nature are scrutinised in the work. Sanders's study is a critique of other studies but examined research from a discursive perspective whereby participants' own perception of the world and their ensuing narratives enabled different authors to theorise from discourses. Sanders emphasises the situated nature of ethnic discourses. The discursive perspective is evident in research by Glazer & Moynihan (1963) who found that different ethnic identities were maintained by different generations of African-Americans because the narratives changed as new generations became removed from their origins. Sanders's study is informative as it captures many studies done on identity. Though it recognises the plurality of identities and their cultural construction, no further empirical data were collected to support this. The conclusions were reached purely based on second-hand sources. A limitation of Sanders's study is that it did not consider one aspect of identity, the body which, though relevant to a phenomenological perspective, can be closely associated with people's discourses of own identities. The

present article provides empirical evidence and draws somehow on a phenomenological perspective to establish the degree to which its core arguments could be reconciled with discursive perspective.

Reynolds and Wetherell (2003), using discursive perspective and a qualitative methodology, interviewed single women to examine how they embrace and live with singleness which is not an adaptive identity, i.e., an identity associated with stereotypes that do not predict desirable performance in certain social contexts. The authors found that singleness is pathologised by others and leaves women in a struggle to fight the perception that it is dysfunctional. The interviews helped generate narratives which gave a voice to single women to assert their identity as one of choice. Such research supports the argument that identity is situated in time and space. One key limitation of Reynolds and Wetherell's work is the focus on women. With the complexity of contemporary society, identities transcend gender divisions. Therefore single men are also pathologised, often associated with stereotypes like 'pervert', 'paedophile', and could share experiences of single identity with women. The present article considers both men and women's identity.

Increasing research evidence supports the situatedness of identity and its embeddedness in wider social realities. While individuals can express chosen identities, the apparent personal choices may often be constrained by societal requirements. That is why in schools, for instance, bad behaviour or good behaviour could be contagious due to peer pressure. Lin (1986) argues that experiences of exile generate psychological and social disruptions in people affected. This implies that migrants have to make adjustments to life in exile, which may challenge original identities and lead to the development of new ones, whether this is 'forcibly' or 'deliberately' adopted. Finlay and Landbridge (2007), supporting this current, argue that the body is part of an 'identity project' where people in contemporary society are more likely to shape their bodies to fit the self they desire. This suggests that individuals, more than ever, are in control of their identity; they can manipulate the body which, for the authors, is critical for expressing self. However, another view considers identity as resulting mostly from social interactions, social processes, and giving rise to social identity theory. In this latter perspective, identity formation is linked to social categorisation, intergroup discrimination, social identities and social comparisons (Brown, 2000). Within social identity theory, the issue of status hierarchies is of heightened importance and this is relevant to the circumstances of forced migrants in host countries where they face 'status inconsistency' (Lin, 1986), i.e., coming from positions of high status in the native country and finding themselves in lower social categories in exile and vice versa.

However, Hollway (2007) provides a powerful contrasting examination of social selves and individual selves as part of identity formation and expression in order to reconcile the two poles – individual construct vs. group process. Hollway's point is that while individuals can have relative control over identity, choice can often be unconscious and linked to childhood upbringing and socio-cultural influences. There is therefore an issue of fit which can be addressed only in relation with society. The critical question this research poses is therefore: To what extent do some forced migrants, people who have left their native lands under coercive circumstances, gain psychological and social benefits from denying socio-cultural and national identities and adopting new ones in the host country? Using data provided by interviews with and observation of forced migrants in south London, the research objectives are to (1) Establish whether the interviewees use multiple identities in exile, (2) Identify whether there is a degree of societal coercion when some forced migrants borrow other forms of identities or if identity choices have a solely individual orientation, (3) Establish whether using multiple identities is helpful in the social integration process in exile for the forced migrant population.

The central hypothesis is that the forced migrants use multiple identities for social action and integration. Such a hypothesis is built on the psycho-sociological principle of adaptability, which implies that, to survive in a new place, people's behaviour and attitudes have to mutate in order to ensure adequate environmental navigation.

2. Method

2.1 Method

This article is the result of a longitudinal study and is located within the discursive psychological perspective. This is aligned with the author's ontological position, which is that identity is not an objective reality but constructed through discourse by social actors. The plurality of social identities is a testament to this fact; the same social actor can take different identities, sometimes differing and antagonistic, depending on the temporal and spatial context. Sometimes the social actors are conscious of this identity (Hollway, 2009) which they construct through discourse (and the manipulation of their bodies). However, at times, identity may be attributed by others' discourses (Hollway, 2009: 128). The choice of the discursive perspective in this research project is rooted in Foucaudian thought that the world is only made meaningful through discourse (Foucault, 1972). The assumption of the research is that self can best make intelligible its position in the social world. Narratives were

gathered through interviews with five migrants, which helped the researcher to read and understand the dynamic identities since 'meanings are not fixed but are found and evolve in culturally and socio-politically meaningful and historically mutable discourses and discursive practices' (Burns, 2006: 6).

2.2 Procedure

Data collection involved a longitudinal study which required interviewing five unrelated participants who were forced migrants – people who left their countries under coercive circumstances such as war or persecution - who arrived in the United Kingdom over three years ago. Forced migrants often experience traumatic situations (Bloch, 2002) that in, some cases, the subjects wish to keep personal and confidential. By following the progress of the participants, over two years, the researcher made time to listen, probe and discuss issues in-depth. The researcher is of the view that joint interviews could cause interference of one story with another and lead to superficiality in data gathering. Qualitative interviews are designed to generate data that can be analysed to study meanings (Bryman, 2008). This data generation in the case of investigating identity among displaced people could be effective through interactions between the researcher and the participant so that the researcher could be immersed in the participant's social world. In addition, the research considers the stories of three male and two female participants who may have detailed accounts that could be gender-specific. The limited sample size is justified by the need to study the experiences of the participants in-depth on a protracted length of time, i.e., using a longitudinal approach.

The longitudinal study between February 2009 and February 2011 meant that the researcher had an agreed arrangement with the participants whereby they would provide information to the researcher at regular time intervals. Every two months the researcher would telephone the participants and ask questions such as: "Do you remember instances over the past two months when you had to pretend to be someone you were not?" The bi-monthly phone calls were necessary to establish whether identity denial and borrowing was inherent to the migrants' lives in the host country. For half of the time (four calls to each participant), the participants had nothing new to report but the other half of the time they reported using different identities. This regular monitoring exercise followed the initial in-depth interview with the participants where key themes about their use of different identities were first explored. Main initial interview themes were as follows: "Did you ever have to use a different identity, i.e., say you are someone you were not? Did you ever have to deny your true identity, e.g., your national identity? What was the rationale for doing so?" The participants were asked to give examples of such identity denial and borrowing and explain whether they gained anything from this.

Participant selection was via a snowball sample. The researcher approached an acquaintance, a former work colleague who introduced the first participant (female) who, through her network, led the researcher to another respondents meeting the three-year UK residence criterion and so on. However, the participants were totally unrelated. It was suggested to the first contact that the researcher wanted someone who was not related to them (e.g., husband or sibling) and preferably from a different country. This was in view to minimise bias and collect a variety of experiences.

2.3 Ethical Issues

Four ethical issues applied to this research: confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent and data safety. Confidentiality and anonymity were critical to address since participants had personal stories whose disclosure to others could affect their confidence as social players in the community or willingness to participate in future research in the field. The interviewees made statements connected to previous statements to the way of life and religious practices, which were in contrast with standard norms of practice in the new communities. Thus, the researcher has labelled participants with different names, calling the male participants Frank, John and Roger, and the female participants Gina and Lisa.

Informed consent was critical. Since the participants had intimate personal stories of rape, torture and humiliation, the researcher briefed them thoroughly about the research, the expectations he had of them, and how the data would be used and discarded after the study. The participants were reassured about confidentiality and anonymity. They were adults who had been living in Britain for over five years at the time of the start of the data collection; it was assumed that they had gone through psychological healing processes following exile and could freely narrate their lived experiences.

Data security was not perceived as critical but it was, nevertheless, attended to. Since confidentiality and anonymity were dealt with, risk to data security was low. However, for enhanced data safety, tapes were securely stored and only the researcher had access to the information collected. Transcripts and tapes were irreversibly cleared twelve months after the research was completed.

3. Results

At the analysis stage, it was decided to read the data from three discursive angles which meant the determination of Interpretative repertoires, Ideological dilemmas and Subject positions.

3.1 Interpretative Repertoires

Following the examination of interview data obtained from the participants, four interpretive repertoires were constructed: (1) Identity denial and borrowing as search for dignity (2) Identity denial and borrowing as situated choices (3) Identity denial and borrowing as social integration strategy and a psychological healing process.

3.1.1 Identity Denial and Borrowing as Search for Dignity

The participants left their country of origin to escape the violation of their dignity as human beings and fled in search for a discovery of a new place as autonomous social actors. This is well supported by the narratives of Frank and Gina as shown in extracts A and B. Here the participants talk about their experience of ill-treatment, humiliation and violation that led them to leave their original cultural sphere - primary foundation of identity - to come to a new place:

Extract A. Frank: 'I fled Sudan because of the ethnic and religious conflict. And I had to run for my life. ... I wanted to be far and safer. You know South Africa itself is not safe [Frank transited through South Africa on his way to the UK]; forced migrants are not well treated there'.

Extract B. Gina: '... My uncle was shot and died alongside his three children. Only his wife survived but then it was terrible. She was raped several times by soldiers'

Once in exile, identity denial and borrowing in search for dignity became more explicit and consciously decided. The participants claimed that they were uneasy about the pity that people felt for them in the new community. In other cases, they received treatment sometimes less favourable than the 'normal' person and in other instances they received treatments that they found patronising. Extracts C and D provide an account of the participants Roger and Lisa's narratives:

Extract C. Roger: 'When I say I am British and try to speak with a British accent I get a different treatment. They don't treat me much as a foreigner. They can have longer discussions with me... When women see you as a foreigner, automatically they think you want to be with them for immigration reason. When you say you are British, they trust you more...'

Extract D. Lisa: '... when people in my church knew I was a refugee, there was a huge sense of pity. Some people offered me clothes and even small amounts of money. I felt uncomfortable. Some others kept their distance. I hate being the constant focus of attention ... I prefer that people don't know my refugee background. That's better and I live with more dignity and pride'.

3.1.2 Identity Denial and Borrowing as Situated Choices

When the participants were asked to say who they thought they were, the participants largely pointed to some identity-related contexts. It was clear that they were aware of their multiple identities but were equally clear that these selves were situated, i.e., expressed in different contexts. For instance the participants claimed a certain national or linguistic identity in a social setting and another in a different setting. These fluctuations occurred for the purpose of commanding respect and dignity as explained in repertoire 1, or socialisation as presented in repertoire 3. Extracts E and F reproduce parts of the respondents' words:

Extract E. Frank: 'I think who I am depends on situations. ...you can't be the same everywhere. ... when you meet some people and you say you are Sudanese then they change their attitude towards you. They straight away see you as a foreigner'.

Extract F. John: 'Changing who I am allows me to fit in particular environments and be accepted. I get accepted in most communities because I tend to do what they do. ...that sometimes means to try to speak like them, you know the Jamaican accent. You are also obliged to eat different food and go to peculiar places'.

3.1.3 Identity Denial and Borrowing as Social Integration Strategy

Both participants concealed their national identity and refugee identity at times, which was one of their personal strategies. That was part of personal strategies to seek integration in the host society. In denying and borrowing identities, they get accepted in other communities and enhance the integration process. The participants acknowledged concealing true identities and espousing false ones to open social and economic doors in the host country. These choices are exemplified in the participants' narratives as reproduced in extracts G and H:

Extract G. Lisa: 'But if I'm isolated because others don't accept me because they think I'm not making

efforts to fit in, that's not good for my health. ...This is where I'm living now and I don't know for how long and it's important to connect with people'.

Extract H. Roger: 'When you say you are British, they trust you more and think you are serious about the approach and future relationship. ...But you want other people to connect; I think that's important. I suppose you have to (...) adjust'.

The next section describes the ideological dilemmas the participants faced, which had to be resolved as part of the search for reconciliation of conflicting but sometimes overlapping and intertwined identities.

3.2 Ideological Dilemmas

Ideological dilemmas are contradictions between participants' deep cultural, socio-political assumptions or beliefs and choices they make in real life. The ideological dilemmas that the participants faced in this study were manifolds. The first was related to the ethical dilemma of truthful disclosure of identity or concealment. The second level of ideological dilemmas presented deeper psychosocial contradictions linked to deeply rooted religious values and hurts (e.g., rape) that had to be dealt with. The third level concerned the issue of pride in national identity vs. utilitarist denial of it and pretence of false belongingness.

Both participants agreed that it was perhaps wrong to make false representations of themselves to people with whom they intended to build long term community and intimate relationships, but the alternative (telling the truth) was more damaging to their personal lives. The participants seem to be caught in-between two cultures. As Frank argues:

(Extract I.) 'I believe that if I didn't show myself as a British person, I would not have the job I have had. ...if I say 'm British in a Sudanese community, my fellow Sudanese will reject me because they might think I am a renegade and I deny my own culture. ... You'll not be accepted everywhere with your heavy African accent'

Frank believes that being a Muslim, and at least openly showing it, is not compatible with British life for a newcomer refugee. He disowned in some situations the Muslim self and justified his position in the following terms:

Extract J. '...deep down I knew if I had shown her (a girl he met) that I was a devout Muslim she wouldn't go out with me because she likes to have a drink. You know socially a drink is important for Western people'.

In the same perspective, Gina did not feel comfortable talking about her experience of witnessing rape and being subject to humiliations. She marked several pauses in her narrative, mostly when speaking about these aspects such as in:

Extract K. 'Only his wife [her uncle's wife] survived but then it was terrible. She was raped several times by soldiers' (pause).

These are the painful experiences that she found hard to relate. She wanted to confide in people in the host community (tell the truth about herself and her experience); but at the same time, as she argues, that was not possible for several intertwined reasons.

Extract L. 'I didn't want anyone else to know (that she was a refugee) ...because when people knew in my church I was a refugee, there was a huge sense of pity... I felt uncomfortable with that.'

The next section describes participants' subject positions throughout the interviews and the research.

3.3 Subject Positions

Subject positions define self-proclaimed identity or labels attributed by others which subjects can express through discourse. The participants adopted different subject positions which exemplified varying identities and attitudes adopted in the socialisation process. Frank and Gina saw themselves as forced migrants, which was self-constructed but also forced upon them by the host society. Awareness of their experience of fleeing their countries and cultures led to the acceptance of dispossession. However, the subject position as refugees was also forced upon them by the host country which attached particular meaning to such a status (usually seen as disadvantaged). Extracts M and N show how the participants constructed this position or how it was bestowed on them.

Extract M. Frank: 'I came from Sudan. ...You know I'm a refugee. I fled Sudan because of the ethnic conflict. And I had to run for my life. ...I am talking to you as a refugee. ...As a refugee and someone from Africa you want to be proud. ...But being a refugee changes all this'.

Extract N. Lisa: 'I come from Sierra Leone. We tried to bring dad over when we were safe in Britain. I'm a

refugee. ...I don't think I'd go back to Sierra Leone' (Self-constructed subject position as a refugee). In other circumstances this subject position was forced upon her and negated by others as Gina explains in extract O below:

Extract O. Lisa: 'Knowing I was from there (Sierra Leone) would equate to people knowing that I was a refugee. ...I didn't want people to always ask me what happened. Why did you have to leave...'

The participants adopted subject positions as 'still' members of native communities. As Frank and Gina explained:

Extract P. Frank: 'Some other times I say I am Sudanese. ...my fellow Sudanese will reject me... In Sudanese communities, I speak with my real Sudanese accent. ...I've been a Muslim all my life in Sudan. This is part of my culture'

Extract Q. Lisa: 'I come from Sierra Leone. It's a long time now though memories are still there. That's where I was born and I still have memories of there and the culture. ...Many people in my own Sierra Leonean community think...'

The interviewees finally adopted a subject position as artificial members of the host community. This position was often taken in order to gain access to host communities and to strive for acceptance. However the participants asserted authoritatively their belongingness to the host community, whose identity they tended to borrow. Extracts r and s show how the migrants borrowed host identities:

Extract R. John: 'Sometimes I say I am British. ...when I say I am British I try to speak with a British accent. ... here I mix with English people too'.

Extract S. Gina: '...I'm British now. I get accepted in most communities because I tend to do what they do ... In this sense, I become like one of them. ...that sometimes means to try to speak like them; you know the Jamaican accent...'

What meaning can be attached to the participants' views? The following discussion attempts to critically reflect on the data generated through the interviews and the observation of the participants over the two year duration of the longitudinal study.

4. Discussion

The central question of this research is that of identity which the respondents struggle to answer for themselves and the society in which they now live. Louw-Potgieter (1988), studying Afrikanner identity, found that self-categorisation and external labelling represent the driving force of identity management, which leads to some ambivalence among identity seekers such as the respondents in this longitudinal study. The research documents how the five forced migrants justified the use of multiple identities, which often meant denial of original or other concurrently held legitimate identities and borrowing new ones.

The participants acknowledged having denied real identities at some point in the host country, i.e., Britain, to escape negative imposed identities and lead relatively normal lives. It is documented that the label 'refugee' is stigmatising (The Times, 1999). Since the 1990s, labels applied to forced migrants in the British press referred to them as 'scroungers, bogus asylum seekers, spongers', etc. Such categorisation prejudices forced migrants (Joly, Kelly and Nettleton, 1997: 118). The denial and borrowing of identities by the migrants was an attempt to formulate strategies to protect themselves from hatred, obvious discrimination and deeper rejection. One such strategy was to deny their original national identities in the public domain and borrow identities that could 'open' doors to them, in their own words. Already in the early days of exile, the migrants appropriated various national citizenships and cultures perceived to be more advantageous to be associated with. They, at the same time, maintained native selves when operating in the private domain.

The denial and borrowing of new identities worked out for the respondents in many instances. To protect borrowed identities, the forced migrants did not mention to peers or community members their migrant status. Though it was acknowledged that there was an ethical aspect involved - an ethical dilemma – the participants felt that there was no option but to ensure the maintenance of some dignity in the host community. Migrant status was therefore perceived as a shameful position while British-ness was a positive position that the respondents employed and enjoyed the privileges associated with. Positions varied according to their relative societal worth. In native communities, participants reasserted belongingness but with other communities they borrowed British-ness. When seeking employment or intimate relationships in outside communities, identity denial and borrowing were predominant. The participants thought that such positions and actions would create possibilities and help to avoid social shame but simultaneously increase acceptance as members of host communities

(Sanders, 2002).

Overall, the participants did not think that they were denying original national identities. However, the glorification of the new citizenship identity implied that they accepted some superiority of British national identity over their own. This was imposed on these forced migrants, particularly with the restrictions on the rights for new migrants, services and the humiliation that the respondents felt subjected to. In some cases the acquisition of British citizenship formed the basis for social, cultural and psychological identity change. For instance, the forced migrants described how they tried hard to speak with British West Indian accents to feel more British so that other people would not realise that they were 'foreigners'.

As the forced migrants stayed longer in the host community, cultural identities became hybrid. Denial and borrowing of identity appeared in major areas of social life: language, religion and values. The ambiguity of identity was profound for the forced migrants as they had spent over five years in the host country, which generated ambivalent identities, i.e., part-time players in both cultures. In some instances, the participants favoured identity 'change' which was seen as inevitable. In fact, Brand, Ruiz and Padila (1974) and Berry (1986) argue that people in a new cultural environment would often have a relatively clear preference for an identity associated with the dominant group.

Concerning language, participants pointed to the need to 'correct' accents to mirror more British ones, i.e., the new borrowed identity; this was geared at achieving acceptance and socialisation. Mitchell and Myles (1991: 167) identified 'unequal encounters' between first and second language while El-Solh (1991) found that younger generations of Somalis in London were conscious that they had to strive to speak the native language of their parents but many of these young people spoke the Somali language tainted 'with a British accent' (El-Solh, 1991: 544). That is the point that Berry (1983: 32) makes, arguing that "following contact, a language shift occurs that is more likely to take place in the non dominant group", in this case the migrant groups.

While religious identity may be a means of socialisation and combating social isolation, in the long term the dominant culture model tends to apply. Brand, Ruiz and Padilla (1974) found a tendency among minority groups for an identity associated with the dominant group. While respondents tried to maintain their religious identity, particularly Frank, with his Muslim background there was a tendency for religious fervour to erode over time. Frank had 'social drinks' in compliance with norms that are customary in the dominant culture [situatedness] (Pittinsky, Shih and Ambady, 1999). The justification provided by Frank for a decrease in religiosity aligns with Gordon's (1964) Anglo-conformity assimilation model which argues that it is about host conformity; migrants 'must' become like the natives and accept dominant cultures. With the demand of the host culture "effectively hampered and even crippled, forced migrants struggle to survive and adapt" (Nguyen et al., 1980). Sometimes survival commands a strategic response often meaning temporary suspension of native values (Lin, 1986) as expressed in the participants' experiences. Value changes cause problems and struggles within the forced migrants' selves.

Identity denial and borrowing is not limited to major social, legal and cultural items such as citizenship and religion. Over the longitudinal study period, the regular checks on the participants revealed that the identity game was inherent and pervasive in the migrants' lives. For instance, economic identities were also borrowed when these presented advantages for social navigation and promotion. Frank, despite living on social welfare benefits at some point during the research investigation, admitted categorising his profession as being a civil servant, which was a past and long gone professional identity in the country of origin. However, in order to gain access to a social network and reignite a dignified life the participant 'resurrected' an economic identity that was no more. Similarly, Gina put on the hat of a business woman despite being forced to accept unskilled work or unemployment at some period during her life as a migrant.

5. Conclusion

The research has revealed that migrants live in the host country under the umbrella of plural, consciously elaborated or forced identities. The general assumption in the social sciences posits that these plural identities may be unconsciously experienced. However, the finding of this investigation indicates that, in the case of the migrants studied in this research, lived identities are equally consciously constructed, chosen, used and discarded. The denial and borrowing of identity is situated not only in a social but also a psychological context (Hollway, 2007). Repudiating and appropriating identities are part of the process of making sense of social, economic and cultural realities in the foreign country and the construction of a 'self' that is opportunity-driven but equally dignity-orientated and fit for new social roles. The process is not limited to the early period following migration to a new society but it is protracted until the subjects are confident that they are well established in the new environment, which can take years. When confidence in the new culture is attained, the old self or cultural and

national identity becomes less of an embarrassment and can be resurrected with pride. Negating their original selves and pursuing new ones appears to be inextricably associated with the subjects' appraisal of their current position in the light of the former; through that, they establish a superiority-inferiority paradigm which weighs in favour of the identity domain that is perceived as superior and generator of opportunities at a particular time and in a particular context. The context-dependent nature of the creation of selves means that there are no fixed identities (Pittinsky et al., 1999) and that the appropriation of a specific self is situated and takes place in space and time. The study of identity from a discursive perspective enables the researcher to appreciate the multiple contours of self and how it ought to be approached from numerous angles. Such a paradigm is highly necessitated when we seek to comprehend and make intelligible the dynamic that goes on in the identity-seekers' psyche; this leads to identity denial and borrowing. The conclusions of this study may be limited due to the small sample size, thus, necessitating further research. However, this article has uncovered some evidence that identity manipulation in migrant communities could be a survival tactics that is under-researched.

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