

MANDINGO PARENT EXPERIENCES AND LANGUAGE USE: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

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Annet Asio Romain

This study examined first-generation Mandingo parents' lived experiences in maintaining their native language with children 3–7 years old. A review of previous studies showed parents of dual language learner students had a positive attitude toward maintaining their native languages (M. Lee et al., 2015) and supporting bilingual programs in elementary school (Morgan, 2015). A phenomenological analysis method was used to gain an understanding of the participants' lived experiences concerning language use with children ages 3–7 years inside and outside the home. The participants were selected using three criteria: they had to be first-generation Mandingo-speaking immigrants, they had to be willing to participate, and they had to use Mandingo with their children at home. Results showed the Mandingo-speaking parents positively perceived language use and experiences with their children inside and outside the home. At the center of language learning within the Mandingo community was the broad worldview of the African philosophy of personhood (Fairfax, 2017). This philosophy is a moral code demonstrated through a person's character and actions. Based on the study's findings, I propose a study to compare the experiences of first-generation parents with those of second- or third-generation Mandingo-speaking immigrants. Such a study would

establish more insight into the universal and unique factors surrounding learning and maintaining a native language within the immigrant community.

DEDICATION

To the cherished memory of my grandfather John Rose Okipi who provided a literacy-rich environment in our home and developed in me a deep yearning for learning. Grandpapa you are deeply missed. To my tatas (grandmothers) Amoding Rose Okipi and Betty Kulume Okipi who constantly drilled in me the importance of being an independent woman. Ajok aishom (it's good to learn) they would always tell me.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

The U.S. population is becoming increasingly diverse and past research revealed an influx of immigrants has been the cause of demographic shifts in the United States since the 1980s (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). The increase in immigration in the United States has led to 44.7 million foreign-born nationals constituting about 14% of the U.S. national population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The Pew Research Center reported 2.1 million of these individuals are from Africa, with most settling in Texas, New York, California, Maryland, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Virginia (Anderson, 2017). In addition, a 2011 report by the Department of City Planning estimated that about 39% of African immigrants had settled in New York over the past decade (Roberts, 2014). Cable News Network (CNN) reported that many immigrants, most of whom are from the Gambia, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, and Mali, called Harlem home (Duthiers & Chen, 2013). Noticeably, there is a thriving Senegalese community with restaurants and colorful shops, known as “Little Senegal” or Le Petit Senegal, located in Western Harlem (Birch-Jeffrey, 2019). In a 2014 report by *The New York Times*, besides gravitating toward Little Senegal, 10% of the African population is also believed to have settled in the Western Bronx (Roberts, 2010). Harlem’s racial makeup is 9.5% White, 63% African American, 0.3% Native American, 2.4% Asian, and 0.3% other races. Among the group of African Americans who call Harlem home, 39% are African immigrants from West African countries such as the Gambia, Mali, Guinea, and Senegal (Birch-Jeffrey, 2019).

The increase in immigration seems to coincide with a 50% increase in the population of racial/ethnic minority students in U.S. public schools since the year 2000

(Riser-Kositsky, 2019). Between fall 2000 and fall 2017, the percentage of Hispanic public-school students increased from 16% to 27% (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012). In contrast, the percentage of White public-school students decreased from 61% to 48% and the percentage of Black students decreased from 17% to 15% during the same period (NCES, 2012). As the demographics in public schools continue to change, the population of students who speak a language other than English also increases (Riser-Kositsky, 2019). The children of foreign-born immigrants are reflected in the 50% increase in racial/ethnic minority students in U.S. public schools since 2000 (NCES, 2012). Most of these students are dual language learners (DLLs) who are either native language (NL) speakers or heritage language (HL) speakers. This diverse and growing population of students with various linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic statuses comes from a background of over 400 languages (Riser-Kositsky, 2019). Mandingo speakers are among the students who are speakers of languages other than English.

Origin of Mandingo

Mandingo is a West African ethnic group mainly found in southern Mali, eastern Guinea, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, northern Ivory Coast, and The Gambia (“Mandingo language,” 2021). They speak the Mandinka or Mandingo language, a dialect of the western Manding and Mande languages. Mandingo is considered a lingua franca (any language used for communication between people who do not share a native language) in much of West Africa because it is used to ease communication among many Mandinka/Manding/Mandingo tribes that are spread across the West African region. The

Mandingo population is spread out in a large geographical area in Africa where it has acquired numerous dialectic variations of its language (Pruitt, 2022).

In most cases, Mandingo is either the principal language or a native language of a country. In Mali, Mandingo is a branch of the Mande languages and is similar to Bambara. In Guinea, it is a Malinke branch spoken with only five instead of seven vowels (Vydrin et al., 2000). In Sierra Leone, it is a two tonal language with a high and low pitch. However, a variety spoken on the borders of The Gambia and Senegal is non-tonal and uses a pitched accent influenced by Wolof. In the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso, it is known as Dyula, which constitutes the linguistic and cultural nucleus. All the Minding languages are closely related to each other. Therefore, being mutually intelligible with Mandingo is closely related to understanding Bambara, Malinke, Soninke, and Dyula (Williamson & Blench, 2000). This is evident in the Mandingo-speaking immigrant community in Harlem. Immigrants are constantly coming in contact with people from other West African countries who speak a variation of Mandingo. The ability to understand these variations gives these individuals a sense of belonging because the language is binding them together. At the center of language learning within the Mandingo community is the broad worldview of African philosophy of personhood (Fairfax, 2017). This philosophy is a moral code demonstrated through a person's character and actions within the community and is abstractly linked to a person's very existence (Fairfax, 2017). The Mandingo principle of a *banerado* or *banyeredo* is evident in the African philosophy of personhood. *Banerado* means a "good person." A good person is described as hardworking, kind, and giving to the community. In line with the African philosophy of personhood, the principle of *banerado* encourages an

interconnected relationship between an individual and the community. The conformed individual norms and ideals of moral virtues or personhood such as generosity, kindness, compassion, benevolence, respect and concern for others are believed to be demonstrated within the community (Gyekye, 1992). In order for personhood to be an acceptable form of humanity, it has to be embodied within the community through a person's character toward others (Obioha, 2014). Otherwise, without a reflective infrastructure and an enforcer of these values, crime and violence, abuse, neglect, selfishness, and materialism will invade the community (Obioha, 2014). However, what African children learn through interactions with their caregivers and community members about personhood may not correspond to the ways of talking and behaving that are valued in U.S. schools (Zentella, 1997). Yet, African children with culturally different practices as described in the Mandingo principle of *banerado* are among the DLLs who are attending U.S. public schools.

The increase in the number of DLLs in U.S. classrooms has also brought the challenge of ensuring teachers meet the diverse learning needs of their students with a less varied teaching force (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011) and inadequate teacher training (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). The cultural practices DLLs bring to U.S. schools are misunderstood, academically underestimated, and devalued (Zentella, 1997). The changing dynamics of the student population pose a challenge because DLLs are expected to master grade-level academic content while simultaneously developing English proficiency (Snyder et al., 2017). A typical response by public-school leaders as a way to address this problem is creating bilingual programs. In the year 2014, 7.1% of public schools participated in bilingual education programs to meet the high demand

orchestrated by this overwhelming increase in the number of DLLs in U.S. public schools (Snyder et al., 2017). Although public-school leaders are trying to mitigate the problem, very little is known about perspectives on language use and learning among immigrant parents and their children.

Research shows some parents have a positive attitude toward maintaining their native languages. M. Lee et al. (2015) and Morgan (2015) cited a positive attitude toward bilingual programs by the parents of DLLs during their studies. This response could be attributed to the potential benefits of academic intelligence implied by dual-language programs. Fluent bilingual children are cited as having high self-esteem, abstract thinking skills, and academic success (M. Lee et al., 2015). Gort and Sembiante (2015) also observed that the translanguaging (a naturally occurring phenomenon involving back and forth unregulated communication guidelines) practices of code-switching, translation, bilingual recasting, and language brokering draw on children's linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge. They argued that DLL children appear comfortable when engaged in complex and flexible languaging practices with their teachers when translanguaging is encouraged. Zhao et al. (2017) would agree that flexible languaging experiences foster complex vocabulary and word reading ability among English language learners (ELLs) during the early years.

The limitations in the studies done in the past include a focus mainly on speakers of other languages, primarily Spanish-speaking parents with their children. There is scarce information relating to parents of children who speak African languages. Mandingo parental involvement could be an asset in supplementing bilingual educational programs and classroom practices because early childhood teachers are less diverse and

less trained in culturally linguistic responsive techniques (Sawyer et al., 2017). Establishing Mandingo parent perspectives can help link the parents' funds of knowledge with teachers' needs for instructional support for Mandingo DLLs. However, these collaborative efforts can only form once Mandingo parents' beliefs support their native language are established. Therefore, this study was designed to examine Mandingo parents' lived experiences in maintaining their native language with children 3–7 years old.

As an immigrant and a mother of two young children, language use and learning experiences have directly affected my life. In 2016, I traveled to my country, Uganda. Having stayed in the United States for a while, I was evidently homesick and yearned to see my family and most of all indulge in my language, *Ateso*. It gave me some sense of comfort even when I would hear it over the phone when talking to my grandparents. I was always attuned to speaking my language at a very young age because my grandfather, an educator, advocated traditional language speaking in the house. I was also excited to see my little cousins, nieces, and nephews I had left back home. They were grown and unrecognizable not only for their size but also for their choice of language. They spoke English with an occasional insertion of Luganda words, a local language from the city. They smiled and acted lost when I spoke to them in *Ateso*. To me, this was unacceptable and unrealistic to speak English with my own family. I decided to have an uncomfortable conversation with my family regarding the choice of language that the children were using at the time. My aunties assured me that in my next visit, the unborn children would speak *Ateso*.

I returned to the United States disappointed and pondering the bleak future of my language. I worried about my own children not possibly understanding my mother tongue. I made the decision to speak Ateso with my children although my husband is from Haiti and we mainly speak English. As a result, my daughter did mix Ateso, English, and a few creole words when she was younger. However, I was approached by my daughter's daycare "teacher" who informed me of the detrimental effects of mixing all these languages. I asked the teacher about her opinion in mitigating the "language mixing problem." The teacher informed me that I should speak only English with my daughter because the African language was making my daughter confused. Therefore, my experiences as a dual language speaker seeking to maintain my mother tongue have informed my decision to investigate and discuss language use lived experiences of first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents in New York City.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study was designed to examine the lived experiences of first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents who reside in the Harlem neighborhood in New York City. The study involved a phenomenological method to collect and analyze data from Harlem's pool of Mandingo-speaking immigrant parents. The focus was on parental perspectives on language use, learning, and maintenance with children 3–7 years old. According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2016), perspectives can be defined as opinions, reactions, or settled ways of thinking about parenting or child development. Perspectives are also related to the cultural beliefs found in everyday experiences within a particular group of people (The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). In maintaining the Mandingo language, I

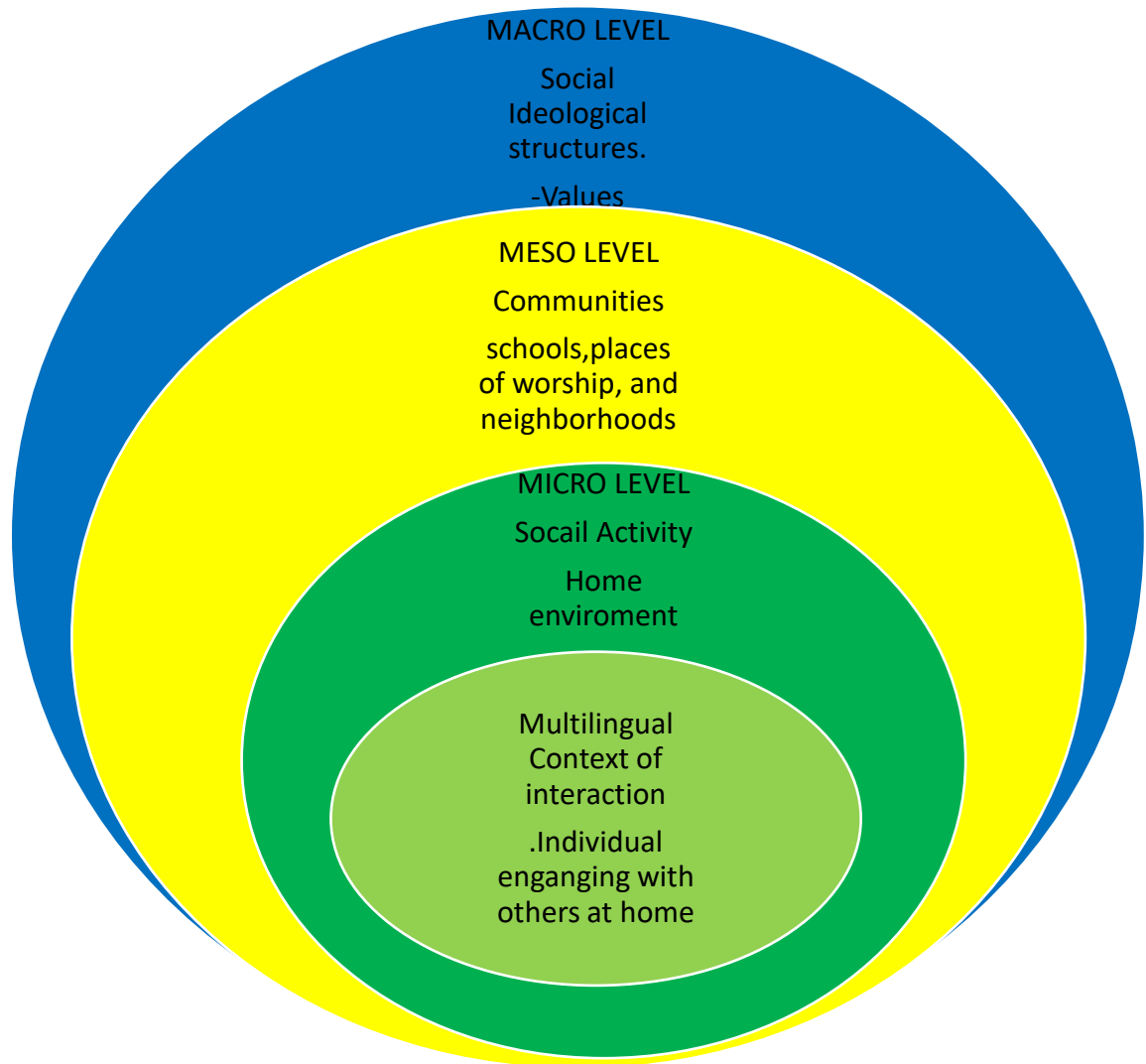
looked at the participants' experiences with language use and maintenance both within and outside the home within the context of the United States and their countries of origin. I specifically looked at language socialization practices used within the homes and embodied communicative practices accepted by members of the Mandingo community. In this case, the African principle of *banerado* dominated the community-specified way of engaging in situated and embodied communicative practices and broader community values, beliefs, and ideologies (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011).

Language Socialization Theory

Figure 1 depicts how language socialization theory is examined through three levels of interactions within society: the micro, meso, and macro. The micro level shows communication patterns between children and their parents in the home setting. The meso level shows that communicative competence is realized when novice members of a community group can participate in speech events that are socially recognized within the broader community, such as schools, places of worship, and neighborhoods. The macro level depicts how language is affected by environmental changes and participant agency, or the power to act and make choices (Moore, 1999). It puts emphasis on the complexity of structured webs of social, political, public, and economic systems and how they control the local community's practices, identities, settings, and beliefs (Heath, 1980).

Figure 1

Language Socialization Theory (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011)



A tenet within language socialization theory is that language is learned through social interactions between the less experienced (i.e., novice) members and more professional (i.e., expert) members of a community across a lifespan (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). This theory has roots in anthropology, education, applied linguistics, human development, and second and heritage language socialization (Adenekan, 2020). Its initial focus was on how children socialize through language and how they use language

with the more experienced adults in their community (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). However, language socialization theory has become an evolving, non-linear, dynamic, complex, and multidirectional paradigm (Guardado, 2018). Heritage language scholars view language socialization as a convenient and principled way of studying language beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies in speech communities; communication behavior strategies in families; and language usage patterns (Guardado, 2018). Therefore, language socialization is the primary vehicle for transmitting cultural values and beliefs and plays a crucial role in shaping the worldviews of individuals and communities. For minority immigrant Mandingo parents living in a multilingual setting in Harlem, language is socialized through beliefs, values, ideologies, and world conceptions. This socialization process involves shaping children's particular identities, drawing them to identify with a community of speakers, and expecting them to interact competently and appropriately with the broader society (Guardado, 2018).

Language is the primary means by which families help young children become members of a cultural community at the local level. At this level, children are socialized through language and socialized into the use of language (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). The primary functions of language socialization and acquisition include the ability to engage in languaging practices (Moore, 1999) and communicative competence (Hymes, 1972). Practices are the meaningful actions that occur routinely within a group, such as listening and speaking, and community ideologies toward children. These practices are shared daily by the social group, and, over time, they become normalized expectations in everyday life (Moore, 1999). Communicative competence is realized when novice members of a community group can participate in speech events that are socially

recognized in broader society (Hymes, 1972; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). This study involved the use of a language socialization lens to examine the process involved in Mandingo language use at the micro level by looking at communication patterns between children and their parents in the home, school, and religious settings; at the meso level by looking at interactions between the children and the expert interlocutors at the Mosque, family gathering events, and family members at the country of origin.; and at the macro level by looking at how language ideologies were influenced by sociopolitical structures both in countries of origin in Africa and in multilingual settings in New York City (Guardado, 2018).

Language is a social practice affected by environmental changes and participant agency or the power to act and make choices (Moore, 1999). Language socialization and worldview are centralized on the notion of bidirectionality and learner agency (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). The idea of bidirectionality yields the fact that the intellectual trajectories of children and novices do change with time. The complexity of structured webs of social, political, public, and economic systems tends to control a local community's practices, identities, settings, and beliefs (Heath, 1980; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). It is assumed that once children start to understand their surrounding environment, a transformation of practices occurs with both the novice and expert interlocutors (Guardado, 2018).

In this study, the macro lens examined was language learning and maintenance within the sociopolitical structures in the United States. In this case, the educational system, which represents the sociopolitical structure, affected how the participants used language with their children at home. The language policies, including English-only

policies in the United States, meant the children had fewer opportunities to practice Mandingo. Instead, they were surrounded by English-speaking peers and teachers, and hence they spoke less Mandingo outside their homes. In some cases, language practices during interactions at home were heavily influenced by mixing English and Mandingo. As the parents spoke Mandingo, the children responded in English.

Audio and video recorded Zoom interviews were used as the data collection method to document the participants' lived experiences in maintaining their native language with their young children. The interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach was used to describe any linguistic strategies used by the Mandingo parents to regulate their language with their children at the micro and macro levels.

Significance/Importance of the Study

Parental involvement in helping children maintain their dual languages can be a supplemental resource for teachers with less training in teaching children from diverse backgrounds (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Research shows bilingualism is an advantage for children who speak a language other than English. For example, translanguaging practices such as code-switching, translation, bilingual recasting, and language brokering can draw on children's linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge (Gort & Sembante, 2015). Complex vocabulary and word reading ability can also be encouraged in the early years when teachers use translanguaging (Zhao et al., 2017). Communication and family ties are strengthened when a native language is maintained (Liang, 2018). Therefore, parents' funds of knowledge can be a supplemental resource for schools to mitigate the problem of inadequate teaching staff trained in culturally responsive teaching (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Although numerous studies have been conducted on parental

perspectives toward maintaining dual languages, African immigrants in the United States are scarcely represented in the body of research. There is not enough research on West African immigrant Mandingo-speaking parents' experiences in preserving their native language. This study is essential because Mandingo-speaking parents' perspectives on their lived experiences will inform all the other African immigrant parents in the United States. In addition, Mandingo parental perspectives could be an asset in supplementing classroom practices because early childhood teachers are less diverse and less trained in culturally linguistic responsive techniques (Sawyer et al., 2017). Establishing Mandingo parent perspectives can help link the parents' funds of knowledge with teachers' needs for instructional support for Mandingo DLLs (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). As the population of African immigrants increases in the United States, this study will become a source of pertinent information in preparing immigrant parents. African parents will therefore have a source of information on maintaining native languages with young children and school-age children.

Research Questions

This study involved the use of a phenomenological method to examine first-generation Mandingo parents' lived experiences in maintaining their native language with their 3–7-year-old children in New York City.

Research Question 1: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents describe their experiences in learning and maintaining a native language?

Research Question 2: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining their native language with young children at home?

Research Question 3: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining their native language with young children outside the home?

Definition of Terms

Dual language learners (DLLs). Children who are learning and developing proficiency in more than one language during early childhood (Partika et al., 2021).

Native language (NL) speakers. People who grew up in countries speaking and learning in a language other than English (Nishanthi, 2020).

Heritage language (HL) speakers. Those individuals whose family members speak at least some native languages and who have little to no education in the native language spoken at home ((Valdés, 2001)

Lingua franca. Any language used for communication between people who do not share a native language (N. Murray, 2012).

Mother tongue. The first language one learns as a baby. It is the language that one grows up knowing (Nishanthi, 2020).

Translanguaging. A naturally occurring phenomenon involving back and forth unregulated communication guidelines (Rymes, 2013).

CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was designed to examine language use in the homes of first-generation immigrant Mandingo-speaking parents in Harlem and their lived experiences in maintaining their native language with children 3–7 years old. The literature review focuses on language maintenance, ideologies, and power; language maintenance within the community; and language maintenance and home practices.

Language Maintenance, Ideologies, and Power

Language Maintenance

Language maintenance is attained when individuals come into contact with one another (Woolard, 1991). The bid to maintain a language occurs when people who speak a minority language struggle to assert their native language in the face of the more dominant language (Okpanachi & Abuh, 2017). Woolard (1991) suggested three alternatives can occur when two or more languages come into contact. First, the languages may be maintained with no change. Second, there may be a shift of some form in the languages. Third, one of the languages may lead to non-use, called language loss or language death. Edwards (1997) stated language maintenance is when the minority group maintains its language under unfavorable conditions that might support a language shift. In this paper, language maintenance is defined as a situation where a group of first-generation immigrant parents attempts to retain patterns of language use in a multilingual setting.

Language Maintenance Ideologies

Language ideologies are beliefs, values, and feelings about individuals' and communities' languages (Guardado, 2018). Language ideologies are also defined as held

notions about languages, speakers, and fluid practices (Adenekan, 2019; Silverstein, 1979). In terms of the heritage language literature, ideologies are seen as fluid understandings, justifications, ideas, and judgments that linguistic minorities hold about their language (Guardado, 2018). Therefore, language ideologies are constantly constructed and reconstructed in fluid interactions in multilingual settings at the micro and macro levels. Adenekan (2020) pointed out that beliefs about how language is used determine what is accepted as the proper usage of a particular language because they are deeply rooted in the cultural, political, social, and economic histories of people (Adenekan, 2019).

Devaluing language ideologies has led to marginalization and negative subconscious attitudes based on racist and social Darwinist ideologies among people in different settings (Wolff, 2017). Social Darwinist ideology is based on the idea that there are essential evolutionary differences between human societies, with some societies being more advanced than others (Wolff, 2017). This ideology encouraged colonialists to validate their imperialistic ideals of creating confidence and worthlessness within the colonized nations. Specific languages become superior and other languages are considered inferior (Wolff, 2017). Bourdieu (1991) referred to this as the linguistic marketplace where some products are valued more than others. In postcolonial African countries, racist and social Darwinist positions of inferiority complex are evident in how communication, formal education, social-cultural modernization, and economic development are conducted through “superior” languages. Ouane and Glanz (2010) pointed out that devaluing language ideologies has caused African languages to be downgraded as traditional, local, disordered, and subordinate, whereas colonial languages

such as English, French, and Portuguese are praised as messianic modernizers or unifiers. English and French are preferred languages in colonized countries because language is easily manipulated and exploited by those in power for the purposes of inclusion and exclusion (Adenekan, 2019). Therefore, hegemonic countries tend to monopolize the use of English and French against other languages. As a result, Indigenous African languages are disappearing as colonial languages become embraced by African people as unifiers (Kamwangamalu, 2016).

Ademowo (2016) agreed that, ultimately, African elites and postcolonial educational policies have either ignorantly or deliberately been aimed at making Africans view their languages as inferior and less competent while holding colonial languages in high esteem. In an analysis of the use English and Indigenous languages in select African countries, Adedeji (2015) stated English being considered the official language in all English-speaking former colonies in Africa has played a role in relegating local languages even in the press. Bifuh-Ambe (2020) argued that English has been used as a weapon in searching for employment, class, privileges, press, and education for a long time. The weaponization of English could have contributed to negative attitudes toward Indigenous languages as English became elevated as the language of class and privilege. Kamwangamalu (2016) stated the placement of former colonial languages in higher domains is still apparent among African elites who have negative attitudes toward using their Indigenous languages. African languages are not treated equally in the continent's linguistic marketplace. Therefore, former colonial languages are more attractive than are Africa's heritage languages. In an effort to use language as a powerful effect, some African languages have gained privilege over others. One such language is Mandingo,

widely spoken in the western part of Africa because many languages are getting lost every year. Consequently, lingua franca languages such as Mandingo and inherited colonial French and English have intruded into the African family domain. Consequently, African languages are traditionally preserved as the Indigenous languages quickly disappear (Kamwangamalu, 2016).

These monolingual tendencies are evident at a national state level in institutional and everyday practices (Blackledge, 2000). For example, in the United States, the official-English debate shows political identity about who is “Americanized” enough to fit into the idea of a true American (Blackledge, 2000). To explicitly become a U.S. citizen requires proficiency in the English language as literacy tests are introduced to immigrants (Blackledge, 2000). The policy and practice of bilingual education also show an element of the dominant ideology of monolingualism (Shannon, 1999). Because the educational system supports the monoglot ideology, even the best intentions of the bilingual education system support linguistic heterogeneity (Blackledge, 2000). The programs have primarily been designed to help linguistic minority students only until they have sufficient command of the English language to leave their home and community languages behind (Shannon, 1999). In host country communities where immigrants are the minority, language maintenance is affected by the language policies put in place by those in power, such as the English-only policies in the United States. It is safe to say that language maintenance in colonized countries is driven by hegemonic powers, leading to ideologies that favor the colonizers’ language as opposed to Indigenous languages.

Language Maintenance and Power

The power of language is described as the ability of that language to gain control over a multiplicity of domains, which include the political, socioeconomic, religious, and other functional human preoccupations (Adenekan, 2019). As Woolard (1991) noted, language ideologies are not about language alone, but they are always socially situated and tied to the question of identity and power in society. Because language is a social practice by which power relations are established and sustained, the idea of national unity has elevated the culture of standardization (Silverstein, 1996). A culture that implies a standardized language should be a monoglot standard variety in public discourse leads to clarity, logic, and unity (Silverstein, 1979). However, formal language ideology encapsulates racial, ethnic, and cultural discrimination (Lippi-Green, 1994); marginalization (Guardado, 2018); and negative subconscious attitudes (Wolff, 2017). The main intention of this ideology is to suppress language variations of all kinds as homogeneity is being promoted and advanced as a model of standard written language. Language ideologies are constantly constructed and reconstructed in fluid interactions at the micro and macro levels in multilingual settings (Guardado, 2018).

Colonialist and European hegemonic powers have long used language to confuse African people and the rest of the world. African language ideologies have significantly been stunted by the uncertainty that is hard to eliminate and caused by political motives and dominant hegemonic powers (Ouane & Glanz, 2010). Negative consequences caused by these policies have resulted in low-quality education and marginalization of the content (Ouane & Glanz, 2010). For instance, the colonial language policies in African countries have led to the current social–linguistic divide between standardized English

language and non-standardized Indigenous languages. Language standardization divisions in mainstream development and nation-building based on ideological positions advocate for official monolingualism (Wolff, 2017). Consequently, this has led to Africa's marginalization, reinforced by exclusion from knowledge creation and production worldwide. Ironically, Africans consume uncritical information and knowledge produced elsewhere through languages unknown to most populations (Ouane & Glanz, 2010).

In dominant countries such as the United States, the majority group controls the idea of language standardization in society and tends to decide on the community's ideal model, defined as monolingual, mono religious, or mono ideological (Mallikarjun, 2018). As a result, the multilingual concept becomes incompatible and unfitting into the monoglot standard. The reinforcement of English as the official language in the United States and the need for people to speak English in public places is an ideology that could be a politically motivated xenophobic inclination (Adenekan, 2019). For instance, the 2016 U.S. presidential elections gave renewed nationalistic favor for a continuous English-only movement in the United States (Adenekan, 2019).

Language Maintenance Within the Community

Communities provide a feeling of belonging through a shared commitment to being together in a group (Guardado, 2018). The role of the community in supporting children's language socialization is diverse and is affected by many ideological beliefs. In multilingual minority communities, an extended family unit ideology is a common feature in helping with children's language socialization, language use, and maintenance (Liang, 2018). This ideology provides community members with a sense of belonging,

including interacting in social situations to share and express ideas and feelings (Liang, 2018). In other instances, conversations with role models, extended family members, and peers support children's language socialization and maintenance in minority communities (Xu & Huang, 2019). Guardado (2018) pointed out that the extended family is a critical cultural orientation for many immigrant populations in developed countries, including Hispanic, Asian, African, and other immigrant communities.

Immigrant Community

Communicative competence within the Asian community is realized through an extended community ideology that is represented in grassroots groups such as churches, language schools, extended families, and authentic conversations with the older generations. These grassroots groups significantly enhance children's identity social and cultural development through naturalistic language interactions. A strong case was provided in a study by Liang (2018), who reviewed 17 internet studies of parental perceptions of heritage language maintenance practices in the United States and Canada. Nine studies from this larger study, whose participants were from Asian communities, revealed they tended to associate heritage language with ethnic identity. For example, parents consider their children as either Korean or Chinese and, thus, they should learn and speak the language of their parents (B. Y. Lee, 2013; Liang, 2018). Chinese immigrant parents expressed a similar opinion (Liang, 2018). Yang (2017) also conducted a case study of two Korean mothers whose children attended a Korean language program at a Korean school in the United States. In examining the Korean parents' language attitudes and perceptions regarding their children's native language maintenance and ESL education in the United States, the parents emphasized that

maintaining a native language played a significant role in building a child's national identity as Korean (Yang, 2017). This perception seemed to be supported by parents' actions of enrolling children in diverse Korean culture-oriented environments or activities, such as Korean heritage language school, Sunday school at Korean church, and informal gatherings. The parents formed or supported the transmission of language and culture to their children through extended family members in the grassroots groups within their communities.

Xu and Huang (2019) examined how authentic conversation provided a social-cultural resource for developing Chinese learners' cultural competence with a heritage language in Australia. Using the language socialization framework and intergenerational interaction model, the researchers observed how local communities acted as practical resources in transmitting cultural competence through discourse practices. The participants were three older speakers of Chinese as their first language and three 16-year-old English Chinese heritage speakers. A naturalistic interaction between these three pairs was conducted to illustrate how the expert older speakers socialized the novice learners of Chinese into acquiring Chinese cultural knowledge through the related lexical items. The study results showed knowledgeable speakers played a decisive role in guiding learners to attend to the underlying culturally appropriate ways of understanding, being, and behaving. This interaction model proves beneficial for developing socially and culturally competent members within minority communities.

The literature on Asian parents also shows participants promote heritage language maintenance to facilitate communication and respect among family members and the community. The grandparents are the primary target at home because they do not speak

English or are limited in their English ability (Liang, 2018). Parents with limited English abilities are the second target for maintaining a native language (Kwon, 2017). Therefore, heritage language is preferred to be spoken among family members because parents can hardly communicate with their children cohesively (Liang, 2018). For instance, it is hard for parents with lower English proficiency to understand their children's assignments and school arrangements regardless of the parents' intentions (Liang, 2018). Some parents believe a heritage language is necessary for conveying deeper feelings (B. Y. Lee, 2013). Brown (2011) added that it is impolite not to speak a heritage language to senior family members according to the traditions of some ethnic groups in Korea (Liang, 2018). To some parents, learning a native language should be an obligation for their children because American children learn foreign languages at school; therefore, Korean children should learn the Korean language (Kwon, 2017).

M. Lee et al. (2015) conducted a narrative approach study of 13 Spanish-speaking parents in the Hispanic community to examine parental preferences in raising Spanish-English bilingual children. Results revealed participants relied on extended family relatives and school programs to provide communicative competence to young children. These family members and extended family were seen as role models, and, therefore, children were expected to show respect by communicating in Spanish. Several parents expressed a strong belief that speaking Spanish is a meaningful way to preserve their heritage and connect with older family members. Children cannot understand cultural norms by not speaking Spanish and may lack positive Hispanic values. Some parents referred to speaking their language as providing a "strong foundation" for their children (Liang, 2018). Also, Sawyer et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative study of 14 Spanish-

speaking parents of 13 preschool-age children and 17 teachers from three early childhood centers in Pennsylvania. The researchers examined parent and teacher beliefs in supporting dual language learning. Many parents described the importance of retaining the home language because the home language is a salient feature of cultural identity or keeping up with the culture. Olivos and Lucero (2020) surveyed 363 parents to examine Latino parental satisfaction in four Oregon dual language immersion (DLI) schools. A total of 133 surveys conducted in Spanish showed two parents at one of the schools highlighted the strong connection between language and culture. The parents asserted that the DLI program made it possible for their children to maintain their roots and open the doors to their home countries. However, Latino-speaking participants did have mixed feelings about the need to maintain Spanish in connection to their ethnic identity. Liang (2018) reviewed 17 internet studies of parental perceptions of heritage language maintenance practices in the United States and Canada. Some participants associated Spanish with many negative impressions such as crimes, rudeness, and school suspension, sentiments other participants did not typically share in other studies.

Personal experiences also have been shown to be a determining factor in maintaining a native language among foreign-born parents. Immigrant parents with positive personal experiences in the host country raise their children to be bilingual. In contrast, those with negative experiences are less likely to raise their children speaking a heritage language (Sawyer et al., 2017). Also, the location at the time of immigration affects language maintenance. According to Torres and Turner (2017), results of a study of 11 students from a public university in North Florida revealed the challenges of maintaining Spanish in different communities. Some participants who lived in cities such

as Miami and Fort Lauderdale expressed the tendency to quickly lapse into Spanish when communicating with friends because Spanish is predominant in these areas (p. 845).

Parental efforts to teach a native language at home are also affected by numerous obstacles, such as using a subset of skills that includes daily interactions, household duties, and family activities to maintain a native language (Wessels, 2014). Parents also face serious discipline issues with native language use as their children grow older (Brown, 2011). Furthermore, embarrassment among children seems to yield negative attitudes toward speaking a heritage language (Torres & Turner, 2017).

Language socialization and communicative competence within the African tradition are expressed through the broad worldview of African philosophy. This philosophy is a moral code demonstrated through a person's character and actions within the community and is abstractly linked to a person's very existence (Oyebade & Azenabor, 2018). The sense of community in African culture is guided by two philosophical understandings of personhood known as *Ubuntu* in South Africa (Mhlambi, 2020) and *omoluwabi* in Nigeria and Ghana (Oyebade & Azenabor, 2018). *Ubuntu* is a sub-Saharan philosophy that emphasizes the relationship between a person and the community (Mhlambi, 2020), and *omoluwabi*, a philosophical and cultural concept of the Yoruba people, emphasizes courage, hard work, humility, and respect (Oyebade & Azenabor, 2018). Both philosophical ideas are widely held and practiced throughout African cultures to guide harmonious interactions in different African communities. For instance, Doma (2021) pointed out that *Ubuntu* focuses on the importance of community or group harmonious interaction, which has a concept expressed in Nguni/Ndebele aphorism as *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*. This roughly translates into English as "persons

are persons through other persons” (Doma, 2021). Therefore, maturity in the ethical code of *Ubuntu* is demonstrated by fulfilling one’s social duties and responsibilities to others (Mhlambi, 2020).

Similarly, community importance in the philosophy of *omoluwabi*, in the Nigerian and Ghanaian cultures, asserts that a person of honor believes in hard work and gives to the community (Oyebade & Azenabor, 2018). It is thought that an *omoluwabi* is a well-rounded good person who shows virtues like moderation, truth, diligence, courage, and wisdom. The broad thinking is that a good character is comparable with being a person (Fairfax, 2017). For instance, in Akan and Yoruba communal thoughts, a good character equals a person, and a lousy fellow is *Kii S e’niyan* (a mere caricature) for the Yoruba (Oyebade & Azenabor, 2018). Based on these understandings, members of African minority immigrant communities tend to lean on this moral code to work harmoniously within and outside their communities when socializing and maintaining language with their children in the United States. For instance, African immigrant communities have formed and thrived with the *Ubuntu* and *omoluwabi* concepts to help each other acclimate to a new environment (Oyebade & Azenabor, 2018). The African immigrant community members have developed a fictive kinship, mainly based on the same ethnic or national communities (Swigart, 2001). A good example are the Somalian and Guinean communities in Philadelphia and Delaware that use fictive kinship to service their members (Swigart, 2001). Most importantly, members in these communities act as role models and representatives of family members left back home. For example, they provide counsel to young people, moral and financial support, free babysitting services, and celebrations (Swigart, 2001).

The Mandingo community believes in the philosophy or principle of being *banerado* or *banyeredo*, which means “good person.” A good person is described as hardworking, kind, and giving to the community.

School Community

Language socialization researchers view schools as spaces where children acquire communicative competence and develop citizenship of multiple communities (García-Sánchez & Nazimova, 2017). Students may face national and group subjectivities, belonging differences, and marginality in a school community. B. Y. Lee (2013) carried out a case study of seven Korean immigrant parents and their children in which they explored Korean immigrant mothers’ cultural perspectives of heritage language maintenance and how they influenced their children’s cultural identities and heritage language maintenance. The researchers explored how cultural perspectives influenced cultural identities and heritage language maintenance. The interviews showed the Korean school children had a strong connection between their words and heritage. For instance, they insisted on supplying their heritage names when spoken to in Korean and indicated they would provide their English names if they were told to in English. When asked if they were Korean or American, all the children answered that they were Korean, including those born in the United States. They stated they considered themselves Korean because they could speak Korean and looked Korean. A Korean teacher and co-ethnic friends could have influenced this strong attitude toward heritage language and ethnic identity. This study was limited by the small sample size, socioeconomic background, and a one-time interview with the participants, meaning results cannot be generalized to a larger population.

Gort and Sembiante (2015) conducted a 2-year ethnographic study to investigate emergent bilingual preschoolers' language and literacy practices. The study was conducted in a Spanish/English dual program in a socially, economically, linguistically, and culturally diverse community in South Florida, Miami-Dade County. It was evident in the study that teachers' translanguaging practices of code-switching, translation, bilingual recasting, and language brokering drew on children's linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge. The researchers noticed the children comfortably engaged in complex and flexible languaging practices with their teachers when translanguaging was encouraged. Zhao et al. (2017) pointed out that a comfortable languaging atmosphere promotes the ability for English language learners to learn complex vocabulary and word reading ability in the early years. In Zhao et al.'s study of 4- to 5-year-old Spanish-English bilingual children enrolled in three Head Start programs in Texas, the children were given a pretest and a posttest assessment to examine the relationship between vocabulary skills and word reading ability. The results showed Spanish vocabulary's cross-linguistic effect predicted English word reading halfway through the prekindergarten year. Both studies showed teacher interaction is a motivation for learning among DLLs in bilingual programs.

Makoni (2018) conducted an exploratory study on how older third-generation American-born Africans (ABAs) construct their identities and learn African languages as heritage languages. Seventy participants taking African languages in colleges in New York City were recruited through snowball sampling. Long interviews and focus group discussions were carried out to gain qualitative data. The participants were then asked about their motives for learning African languages and their perception of proficiency in

an African foreign language in a predominantly English-speaking space. The findings showed ABAs felt a sense of belonging when learning an African heritage language. This positive heritage identity translates into an awareness of heritage languages' cultural and symbolic value and the potential for economic capital in the global market. Besides, an imagined "home" location gave ABAs an identity resistance in which they used words such as "there" and "here," giving a distinction of themselves as Africans and not as African Americans or African-African (Makoni, 2018).

Students may face marginalization in schools, thereby affecting their communicative competence in heritage languages. In a study conducted by Kiramba et al. (2020), the authors examined the cross-cultural educational experience of 30 African immigrant youth in U.S. schools. The findings revealed many participants struggled with cultural and linguistic differences, stereotypes, and marginalization in the school environment. This was coupled with low expectations from teachers and adjustment to new schooling practices. Sierk and Catalano (2020) described how unconscious language ideologies may be to blame for the marginalization of African children because these ideologies inhibit change that could improve conditions for new student populations. Their study's critical discourse analysis drawn from ethnographic data in a more extensive study used participant observations and semi-structured interviews to document new students' experiences in two non-urban school communities. They found language ideologies that use language to mask issues of race and ethnicity were represented as positive "us" and negative "them." School leaders can develop the linguistic and cultural practices and ways of knowing unique to new student populations rather than using language as an excuse for continued inequity. Cunningham (2020) pointed out that

teachers' attitudes influence local policies and classroom practices. Their study of a mixed discourse of teachers in northern England about their views on responsibility for language maintenance and attrition showed teachers hold parents and children responsible for maintaining and deterioration of languages beyond English. Teachers hold varying attitudes on language maintenance, with some perceiving it as necessary and others not. However, few participants claimed any significant sense of personal or institutional responsibility for home language maintenance. Parents are construed as denying their children the chance to develop their home languages, and children are negatively appraised for not taking the opportunities to use them. Teachers need to be empowered to challenge the societal ideologies embedded in language policies, and the education system should play a role in home language development to help prevent language shift.

Teachers and parents have expressed some concerns about helping and supporting children who speak languages other than English. In one study, teachers of Spanish-speaking DLLs reported limited access to materials and resources such as books was a determining factor in supporting the use of home language during literature classes (Spies et al., 2017). Inadequate knowledge of second language acquisition has also been shown to lead to misconceptions on the part of both teachers and parents. For example, in a study of 17 teachers and 14 parents of preschool children in Pennsylvania, 47% of teachers and 7% of parents believed learning a second language confuses a child or that young children can quickly learn a language like magic (Spies et al., 2017). Some teachers were quoted as saying, "Children just learn" or "it is magic" (p. 716). This kind

of understanding may limit the ability to maintain a native language among first-generation immigrant children.

Multilingual Community

Translanguaging is a naturally occurring phenomenon involving back and forth unregulated communication guidelines. The approach involves people's use of communication to get along daily without any specific rules for language (Blackledge & Creese, 2018). Translanguaging is believed to be a transformative process that finds space in linguistic diversity contexts that enable multilinguals to easily alternate between two or more languages without social or political limits. The assumption is that translanguaging is focused on developing skills in different functions served by other languages rather than total mastery of each language and everyday language (Canagarajah, 2011). However, as translanguaging gains momentum, there have been calls for some guidance in using translanguaging to communicate to a broader audience.

Plurilingualism. Plurilingualism is the ability to switch and mix multiple languages with purpose or without total mastery of any of the languages involved during a conversation (Piccardo, 2013). The plurilingual approach allows for exposure to a target language and strengthens second language learners' English communication and academic skills (Gorter & Cenoz, 2013). The assumption is that plurilingualism allows for maximum exposure to multiple languages, enabling the communicator to draw upon metalinguistic awareness and personal experiences. Creating synergy between languages can raise awareness and increase self-esteem in ways that optimize learning and increase agency and self-efficacy.

Code-Mixing. Code-mixing is the unintentional blending of two or more language varieties within a single utterance (Muysken & Smith, 1995). The approach involves mixing various linguistic units such as words and phrases from two different grammatical systems in a single statement. It is a hybrid drawing from distinct grammar and emphasizes the formal aspects of linguistic competence occurring in communities where two or more languages are operated (Ramzan et al., 2021). In general, code-mixing is labeled as intra-sentential switching. The speaker mixes languages with a shared family within a sentence, such as English and Spanish (Ramzan et al., 2021). The assumption is that mixing languages inspires role identification, registers recognition, and eliminates the need for clarification and explanation.

Code-Switching. Code-switching is defined as a communicative phenomenon of alternating languages, dialects, or accents. Code-switching ranges from accommodation, avoidance, and cultural identity expressions (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Code-switching can also be defined as a process in which multicultural individuals alternate conversations within a single utterance, conversational exchange, or communicative display such as gestures and body language (Istifci, 2019). The assumption is that bilingual code-switchers and monolinguals accomplish the same conversational functions with different means at their disposals. Therefore, having two distinct languages rather than one continuum of styles throws the factors that operate on monolingual style shifting into sharper focus. The social process is continuous across all language situations (Gardner-Chloros, 2009).

Language Maintenance and Home Practices

The family domain is at the center of heritage language continuity. However, at times, developing and maintaining a language within the family context can be affected by crucial policies. According to Guardado (2018), some unsuccessful home language practices lead to language loss. Some use strategies that encourage the development of ethnic identity, oral language proficiency, and the continuation of family and cultural values. García-Sánchez and Nazimova (2017) pointed out that maintaining and developing language use or practices within immigrant families is significantly affected by the host country's cultural ideologies. These hegemonic language ideologies and politics of recognition and belonging have to be negotiated by immigrants daily.

Heritage language development in children in immigrant families can be encouraged through daily language socialization both within the home and at school using a heritage language. Chen et al. (2018) performed a study to identify how elements of language socialization contribute to heritage language proficiency among elementary-aged Chinese American immigrant children. Behavioral observations and parent reports were used to assess language socialization practices across various domains (e.g., spoken language, media exposure, values, social relationships, and activities). The two-wave longitudinal study of Chinese American children of immigrant parents included 258 participants ages 7–11 years old in language socialization processes. Adult heritage language use at home, parental attitudes toward heritage language, and child participation in heritage language classes or extracurricular activities were assessed using parent reports and behavioral observation at Time 1 (first to second grade). Children's heritage language proficiency (Cantonese or Mandarin) was evaluated using vocabulary and

literacy tests at Time 2. Structural equation modeling showed adult Chinese language use with children at home predicted children's higher Chinese receptive and expressive vocabulary 2 years later. Children's participation in Chinese language extracurricular activities predicted their higher Chinese receptive and expressive vocabulary and higher Chinese word reading. By contrast, parental valuing of the Chinese language and children's exposure to Chinese media did not predict children's Chinese proficiency. The findings support heritage language use at home and heritage language classes in promoting heritage language development in children in immigrant families. Meddegama (2020) examined three 4-family member groups in a Malayali community based in Yorkshire, England. The author demonstrated a harmonious convergence between everyday language practices and the assumption that a home is a stronghold for heritage language use (Meddegama, 2020). The author used semi-structured interview responses, observational field notes, and audio-recorded family conversations to obtain data from naturalistic conversations. The results showed cultural values and practices formed a pillar to support Malayalis' attempts to preserve their Malayalam heritage.

Strong family ties are crucial to children's heritage language maintenance (Liang, 2018). In a quantitative study involving 250 participants conducted by Luo and Wiseman (2000), children who constantly interacted in a heritage language with an adult developed a positive attitude toward the language and stronger bonds with the adults and vice versa. Kwon (2017) interviewed six Japanese and Korean immigrant mothers living in New York City, New Jersey, and North Carolina. All the mothers pointed out that their children's connection and frequent cross-border contacts with intergenerational families in their countries were fundamental reasons and motivations for maintaining a native

language. Liang (2018) stated high cohesion leads to high language use, and low cohesion leads to low language use within mother-child or grandparent-grandchild relationships. Therefore, supporting and enhancing a child's first language can facilitate communication and respect among family members, strengthening family ties as adults act as role models or experts (Liang, 2018).

Unmotivated children seem to eventually lose interest in maintaining their native languages. Liang (2018) documented some of the significant challenges parents have encountered with using heritage language at home. These challenges include dominant English language use instead of heritage languages, teenage resistance to attending heritage language schools, and parents' lack of time. These challenges lead to the loss of interest in using heritage languages among parents and teenage children. Liang noted most teenagers face peer pressure from their English-speaking counterparts regarding heritage languages. M. Lee et al. (2015) also identified resistance from children to speak Spanish as a barrier facing bilingual education. M. Lee et al. noted most teenagers are uncooperative due to being embarrassed to speak Spanish because they believe it to be un-American.

Summary of Literature Review

The literature review on language use began by establishing a generalized public understanding of language ideologies and language maintenance across the social-political spectrum. Next, it covered language maintenance within immigrant communities in the United States and its role in supporting children's language socialization. The communities reviewed in this study included the immigrant school community, which provided educator and student opinions on maintaining a native language. However, the

role of community in supporting children's language socialization is diverse and is affected by many ideological beliefs. The immigrant community's common feature is the extended family unit ideology, which is used in helping with children's language socialization, language use, and maintenance. Last, home practices and language maintenance within the immigrant family domain were discussed as the center of heritage language continuity. These home practices are crucial in showcasing native language maintenance through children's language socialization practices within the home. However, language maintenance ideologies are affected by the dominant hegemonic powers established by the majority group who control the idea of language standardization in society and tend to decide on the community's ideal model: monolingual, mono religious, or mono ideological (Mallikarjun, 2018). This chapter reviewed the relevant literature surrounding vital issues within language maintenance experiences and language use within immigrant families in the United States. The main limitation in these studies is that they focused more on Asian and Hispanic parents, though some studies focused on parents who speak other languages. Therefore, the focus of the current study was to examine first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents' views on language use and maintenance for their children in the United States.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

This qualitative study was designed to examine first-generation Mandingo parents' lived experiences in maintaining their native language with children 3–7 years old in New York City. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents describe their experiences in learning and maintaining a native language?
2. How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining their native language with young children at home?
3. How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining their native language with young children outside the home?

To ensure readers have a thorough understanding of how the research was conducted, this chapter includes details of the methods used for the interviews, data collection, data analysis, and transcript integration.

Research Design

This qualitative study was guided by a phenomenological research method, which calls for a researcher to make connections based on descriptions of a shared phenomenon by a group of participants (Moustakas, 1994). I chose the IPA design because of its subjectivity and ability to allow me to dig deeper into the participants' minds (Heinonen, 2015; S. J. Murray & Homes, 2014; Pringle et al., 2011). Heinonen (2015) stated an IPA is used to look at embodied experiences set in place and time by others. Therefore, my respect for time concerning participants' past and present experiences during each interaction helped establish understanding (Pringle et al., 2011). This research design was most appropriate for this study because it mainly focused on presenting the participants'

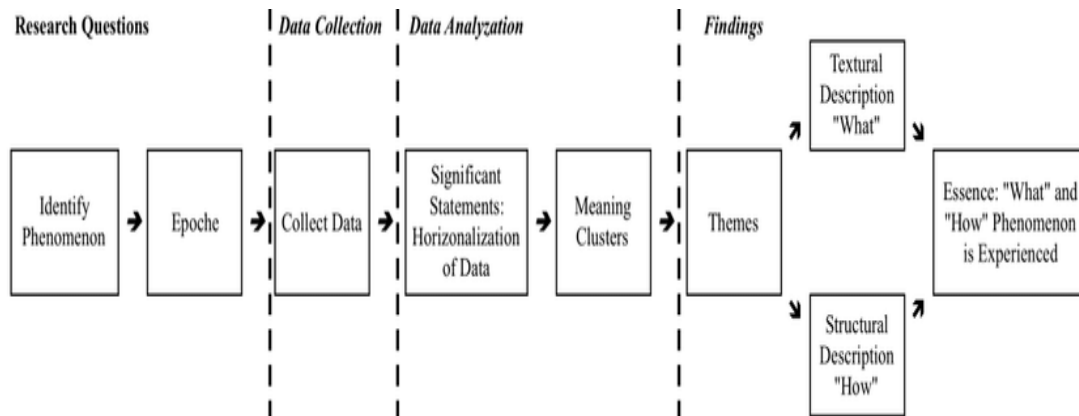
perspectives and understanding how their experiences connected to the present and past in relation to the environment (Sorsa et al., 2015). In addition, an IPA design allows for diversity in processes and procedures (Pringle et al., 2011).

The phenomenological method was guided by language socialization theory (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011), which involved looking at interlinking linguistic and cultural development processes and how these processes vary across cultural contexts. This theory emphasizes how social interactions within changing environments between children/novices and expert interlocutors can influence development and behavior. This study involved using phenomenological analysis to understand immigrant Mandingo-speaking parents' lived experiences concerning language use with children ages 3–7 years inside and outside the home. Therefore, the phenomenological design involved interviewing, coding, analyzing, and drawing conclusions about the meaning the participants assigned to the phenomenon.

Figure 2 shows the phenomenological research study method process. The method starts with reviewing data and formulating the research questions and illustrating the topic. Next, ethical principles of human science research are taken into account and participants are fully informed about how their privacy will be respected. To collect data, phenomenological researchers typically use long interviews in an informal, interactive process using open-ended comments and questions. Organization and analysis of data begin with every statement relevant to the topic as having equal value. The units are clustered into common themes that are then used to develop a textural description of the experience. From this, an integration of texture and structure into the meanings and essence of the phenomenon is constructed.

Figure 2

Phenomenological Design (Moustakas, 1994)



Research Site

The study site is a destination spot for most African immigrants when they arrive in New York City. It is a section within the Harlem community known as Little Senegal or Le Petit Senegal, which is a strip of blocks around West 116th Street. It includes a growing number of hair salons, tailors, and small businesses that are a testament to the influx of African immigrants to Harlem (Duthiers & Chen, 2013). Harlem is a neighborhood in the northern section of Manhattan. It is bounded roughly by Frederick Douglas Boulevard, St. Nicholas Avenue, and Morningside Park on the west; the Harlem River and 155th Street on the north; Fifth Avenue on the east; and Central Park North on the south. The neighborhood's racial makeup is 9.5% White, 63% African American, 0.3% Native American, 2.4% Asian, and 0.3% other races. Among the group of African Americans who call Harlem home, 39% are African immigrants from West African countries such as Gambia, Mali, Guinea, and Senegal (Birch-Jeffrey, 2019). Mandingo is a West African ethnic group mainly found in Southern Mali, Eastern Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Northern Ivory Coast, and The Gambia. Mandingo is a language

commonly spoken in these West African countries (Vydrin et al., 2000). This location was chosen because of the professional relationship I had with most parents as a former teacher. As a participant-observer, I was an outsider collecting data through digital recordings, interviews, and observational notes. Six first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents with young children and school-aged children (i.e., 3–7 years) participated in the interview process over a 6-week period. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the study took place via Zoom teleconferencing. I performed 60-minute one-on-one recorded semi-structured interviews with participants and took observational notes during the interviews.

Participants

All participants in this study were assigned a pseudonym to protect their privacy, rights, and confidentiality (Creswell, 2015). The participants were West African immigrant parents who have young children between the ages of 3–7 years and speak Mandingo with their children. The participants were selected using three criteria: they had to be first-generation Mandingo-speaking immigrants, they had to be willing to participate, and they had to use Mandingo with their children at home. The use of purposeful sampling and the sample guided the availability of considerable information (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I met with the participants virtually via Zoom remote interviews after developing an interview protocol (See Appendix A) based on reviewing the relevant literature about parents' perspectives and experiences toward maintaining a native language. The domains for the primary questions focused on the Mandingo participants' lived experiences in preserving their native language with children 3–7 years old. In addition, some questions directed toward children were asked toward the

end of the semi-structured interviews. In this case, only one 7-year-old child was interviewed.

Selection of Participants

Based on three criteria, the purposeful sampling and snowball methods were used to recruit a select group of Mandingo-speaking parents. The participants spoke Mandingo with their children at home, were willing to participate, and had children 3–7 years old. Snowball sampling is a form of purposive sampling. This technique involves finding research subjects and asking them to provide the researcher the name of another person who provides the name of a third, and so on (Terrell, 2012). Purposeful sampling guided the selection of participants in this study. This method was appropriate because the Mandingo-speaking parents were not in one place but were in the same area. In addition, African immigrants tend to form close networks, and Mandingo-speaking parents from West Africa are among them. For example, Little Senegal in Harlem is full of Mandingo-speaking parents who have set up shops and saloons. Therefore, Mandingo-speaking parents assisted me in recruiting other Mandingo-speaking parents by reaching out to a select group. Gall et al. (2007) stated a snowball method or chain sampling involves asking well-situated people to recommend cases to study. A snowball sampling method involves recruiting participants recommended by another participant and is especially helpful when targeting populations that are hard to identify (Snijders, 1992).

Procedure

I conducted a pilot test with two peers to ensure the study's clarity and effectiveness, consistency, and connections based on open-ended and validated interview questions that the research committee had approved. The pilot test also informed any

necessary revisions to the interview questions and was passed through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval before moving forward (Arain et al., 2010).

After obtaining IRB approval, I solicited participants through word of mouth using the snowball method in the first week of the study. To select specific participants, I identified a Mandingo-speaking parent in Harlem through personal contacts. Participant A identified two other Mandingo-speaking parents with young children. Participant B identified other Mandingo-speaking friends and family members. Through these contacts, a total of 15 Mandingo-speaking participants were identified. During the screening process about availability, willingness to participate, and maintaining Mandingo at home, 10 participants were identified who fit the aforementioned criteria. However, after purposely identifying 10 participants, four participants all from Mali dropped out because they did not want to sign the consent forms. I was then left with six participants and phone calls were made to explain the full scope of the research and logistics. Determination of the meeting date and time was made with the selected sample.

In the second to fifth weeks of the study, the qualifying participants electronically consented to the study. I collected consent forms from the participants that were stored in a password-protected folder and online drive on my computer before the data collection began. The data collection process involved conducting semi-structured interviews via Zoom or an audio recording using a call recording app. After the first interview, the data were transcribed and reviewed by the research team before continuing with the study. Once the data were collected, I transcribed the data using the Otter app, interpreted the interviews, and organized the data for the research study. I used a modified Van Kaam method structured by Moustakas (1994) to analyze the data. These data formed the

descriptions and interpretations that isolated the participants' challenging language experiences in the coding and themes identified. Manual coding was used to interpret and organize the data for the study.

Data Collection

To gain specific information from the parents, I conducted semi-structured one-on-one interviews with six participants. The parents were asked questions to understand how they viewed the maintenance of the Mandingo language by detailing their experiences using Mandingo language and how social-cultural ideologies have changed over time when analyzed through the language socialization theoretical lens. Identification of individuals who were solicited through snowballing included demographic data, willingness to participate, and availability to partake in the study. This took about 2 weeks and phone calls were used to screen the potential participants to be included in the study. In total, six participants were selected to represent the overall demographics of the Mandingo-speaking population. Next, semi-structured interviews were virtually conducted and recorded via Zoom video conferencing and a call recorder audio app using a cellphone. The interview questions were prepared ahead of time. Participants were allowed to respond to the best of their ability and most provided detailed responses freely. I adhered to a consistent interview protocol with each participant. The protocol included an introduction, opening questions, probes, and closing instructions (Creswell, 2015). The interviews were transcribed using Otter (a text to transcription service) verbatim, after which the transcripts were reviewed for any discrepancies with language and changes were made where necessary. The transcribed data were then manually analyzed.

Figure 3

Data Collection and Analysis (Moustakas, 1994)

Research Question	Data Collection	Data Analysis
RQ1: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents describe learning and language maintenance?	Semi-structured interviews Open-ended questions with one participant at a time for 60 minutes (Recorded on Zoom)	Modified Van Kaam method Manual coding to look for patterns Otter for text transcription
RQ2: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining their native language with young children at home?	Semi-structured interviews Open-ended questions with one participant at a time for 60 minutes (Recorded on Zoom)	Modified Van Kaam method Manual coding to look for patterns Otter for text transcription
RQ3: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining native language with young children outside the home?	Semi-structured interviews Open-ended questions with one participant at a time for 60 minutes (Recorded on Zoom)	Modified Van Kaam method Manual coding to look for patterns Otter for text transcription

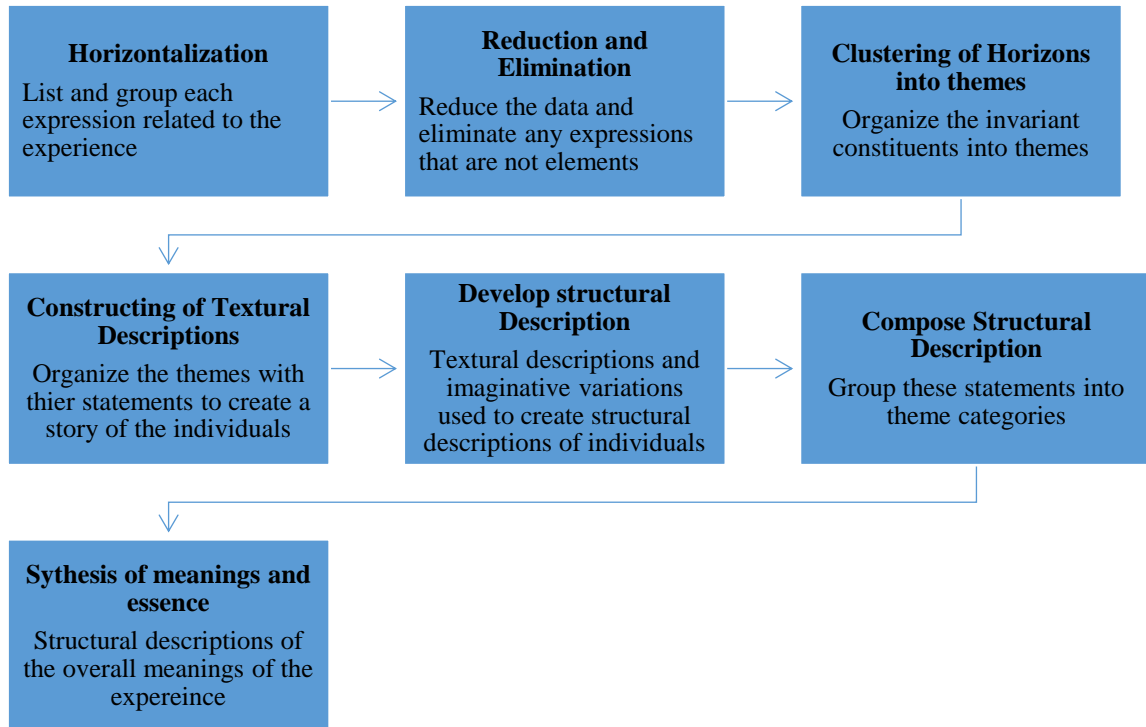
Data Analysis

The data analysis process was initiated during the data collection phase (Miles et al., 2014). The audio recordings from the interviews were transcribed and then coded. The initial coding yielded a total of 223 codes that were then grouped into 10 different categories and narrowed down to six categories. I manually coded the data by arranging the codes in alphabetical order. The codes were then linked based on their relationship to other codes. For example, codes such as “just like home,” “I like it here,” and “feels like home” were linked on the basis of reflecting having a sense of belonging. The six groups or categories formed the basis from which themes were developed. Closely related

groups were merged into a single group. This process of analyzing the data involved “the movement from narrow units of analysis such as significant statements to broader units of analysis such as units of meaning, and giving of detailed descriptions” (Creswell, 2015, p. 187). In analyzing the data collected, I reduced the information gathered from the interviews into significant statements after which I categorized them into themes. Therefore, the data were first collected and then reduced to identifiable patterns, categories, or themes. The themes that emerged provided the basis for the detailed description of the phenomenon. Upon completion of this phase of data analysis, I developed a textural description of the experiences of the participants with their language learning and maintenance as well as structural descriptions of their experiences in terms of their language use and learning with children 3–7 years old. Finally, I developed a composite of the textural and structural descriptions to relay the general essence of the lived experiences of the immigrant Mandingo-speaking parents in learning and maintaining their native language with their young children. Nine themes emerged that constituted my interpretation of the participants’ lived experiences of language use. The seven-step modified Van Kaam Method was applied as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Moustakas Modified Seven Steps of the Van Kaam Method of Data Analysis (Moustakas, 1994)



- Horizontalization. I treated all responses from the participants as equal and vital. I transcribed and read all answers several times to gain a general sense of the data collected, and made brief notes related to the phenomenon (Creswell, 2015). I then openly coded the transcripts by grouping them according to what the participants provided as their experiences.
- Reduction and elimination. I analyzed all codes from the horizontalization phase to decide upon what information should be included in the study. Confusing and overlapping expressions were narrowed down and listed as categories called invariant constituents (Mason et al., 2017).

- Clustering of horizons into themes. Information was narrowed down into categories called invariant constituents.
- Constructing individual textural descriptions. I used the above-generated themes, codes, and direct statements from the transcribed interviews to create descriptive themes that reflected the participants' lived experiences as first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents.
- Constructing individual structural descriptions. I combined individual textural descriptions with imaginative variations and suspended all previous experiences and biases so the structure of the participants' experiences could be described from various perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).
- Constructing a textural-structural description. I combined the individual textural descriptions and individual structural descriptions to build a vivid thematic description of the experiences (Mason et al., 2017).
- Synthesis of meanings and essence. I developed a final composite description representing the essence and meaning of the lived experiences of Mandingo-speaking parents (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In keeping with language socialization theory, when analyzing the interview data and notes, I looked for ways in which language was taught and learned through naturally occurring interactions with and around children within the home. I also analyzed the ways in which both the immigrant and American community norms were expressed around children outside the home. In addition, I focused on the use of language with and around children. I looked at how personal experiences in the home and interactions within the neighborhood influenced Mandingo-speaking parents' language use with their

children. Attention was given to how I viewed the ideology embedded within this research project.

Table 1 shows the data representation in this phenomenological study. After organizing the data into files, I read through the transcripts and made notes. To form codes, I examined the data to determine the personal experiences of the participants depending on the patterns that emerged during the data description. The data were then examined at the individual level for the performance of structural, textural analysis, and thematic analysis.

Table 1

Representing Data in Phenomenology

Data analysis and representation	Phenomenology
Data organization	Create and organize files for data
Reading	Read through the transcripts and make notes, form codes
Describing the data into codes and themes	Describe personal experiences Describe the essence of the phenomenon
Classifying data into codes and themes	Develop significant statements Group statements into meaningful units
Interpreting the data	Develop a textural description: “What happened” Develop structural description: “How”
Representing and visualizing the data	

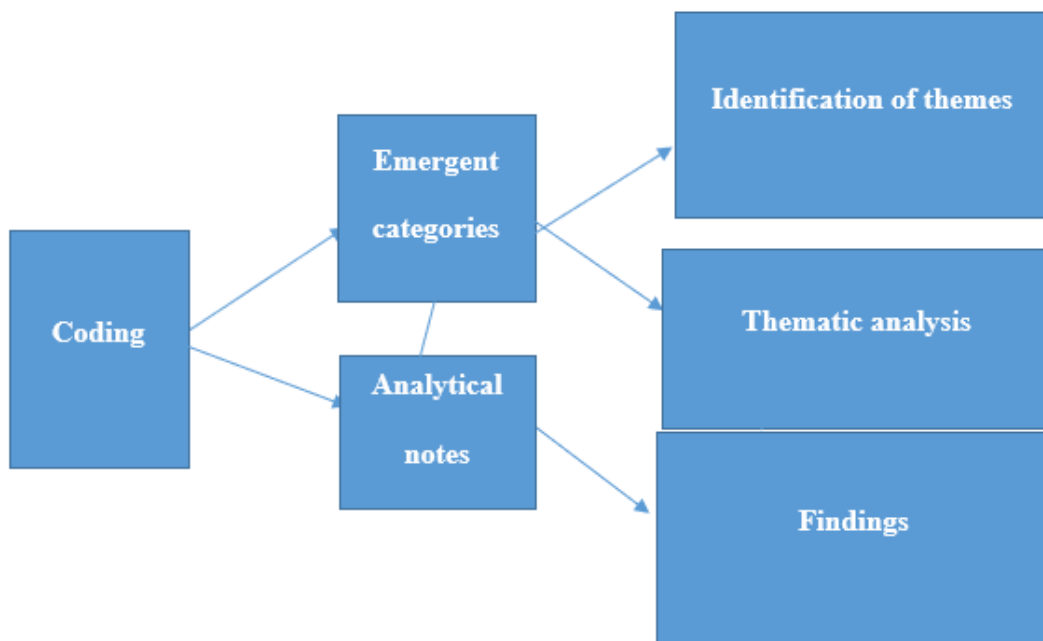
Source: Creswell, 2015

The coding process was essential in the thematic analysis of the participants’ personal experiences. Figure 5 shows the data coding process from beginning to end. In performing thematic analysis, first the initial codes were formed to allow for breaking

down the data, putting the data into codes, and finding links that existed between the codes. Manual coding and analytical notes were used to connect initial codes into main categories and sub-categories. Themes were then identified after initial codes were collected into emergent themes.

Figure 5

Coding Procedure



Trustworthiness of the Study

To strengthen the rigor of the research, I addressed credibility, dependability, and transferability (Merriam, 2009) through triangulation, prolonged engagement, and an electronic audit trail (stored in Microsoft cloud to facilitate data retrieval).

Credibility

Triangulation is a systematic process of sorting through the data to find common themes or categories by eliminating overlapping areas (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In this

study, triangulation occurred during the data collection and data analysis phases. During data collection, I collected different types of data, such as researcher observations with correlation with the interview transcripts and recorded interview sessions with participants about ways used to maintain the Mandingo language. During data analysis, I compared personal notes with the interview transcripts to establish similarities. Credibility was also reinforced through prolonged engagement and persistent contact with the participants during the summer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I contacted participants by phone before the semi-structured individual interviews to fully explain the nature, extent, and reasons for the study. The participants were allowed to add or change the summary of information after the 48- to 68-minute semi-structured interviews had been carried out. Participants were given my email and phone number in case they had any additional questions or thoughts after the interviews. In addition, member check was conducted for review purposes after interpretation of data to suggest any changes.

Dependability

Dependability, also known as reliability, establishes all the necessary steps taken by a researcher to ensure confidence in the presentation of data (Connelly, 2013). I maintained an audit trail through keeping records throughout the inquiry process to achieve reliability in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Establishing an audit trail helped to provide clear documentation of all research decisions and activities (Merriam, 2009). Dependability was confirmed through an ongoing reflexive journal and analytical memos (Merriam, 2009). I kept a detailed digital account of the research process that is stored in the Microsoft office OneDrive cloud for easy access. I included details about how data were collected and analyzed and how decisions were made throughout the research

process. In addition, audit trails on transcripts, analytical memos, reflective notes, themes, and displays were included in the reflective journal.

Transferability

Transferability relates to external validity, or whether the results of a study can be applied to other situations (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, the person who is investigating the study must provide enough descriptive data to make transferability possible (Merriam, 2009). Transferability was strengthened through the provision of researcher reflexivity and variation (Creswell, 2015). In this study, I presented any assumptions and background that could have affected data transferability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The reflective notes included nostalgic feelings, beliefs, and emotions that could have tainted the study so they can be avoided in any future research (Carlson, 2010). In addition, data were sampled from participants coming from two West African countries, which helped to diversify the data collected (Merriam, 2009).

Confirmability

Confirmability was established through my role (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and was strengthened by using an audit trail and researcher reflexivity. I also used the theory of language socialization to align the study. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed within a day to preserve the memory of the data from the interview sessions. Regular examining of the data occurred to establish accuracy of interpretation and verification of reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Reflexivity

Researcher reflectivity means becoming aware of the researcher's effect on the data that are being collected. It involves acknowledging how a researcher's personal

experiences and beliefs may affect the connections among the researcher, data, and participants (Lichtman, 2013). Researcher bias tends to affect the research data when an interviewer allows their personal experiences to influence data collection, data analysis, and interpretation to control the study's outcome (Lichtman, 2013). Some instances in which researcher bias may manifest in a study include, but are not limited to, the following: asking participants leading and multiple questions, expressing emotions over participant responses, and sharing opinions over participants' responses during an interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Sorsa et al., 2015). Researcher bias can be prevented by being objective during the data analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I am an immigrant parent with two children under the age of 7. I have faced challenges in teaching and maintaining a native language with my children both within and outside the home. Although I am consistently using my *Ateso* language with my children, the English language has been a deterrent in their learning and maintaining the *Ateso* language. The influence of syllables from the English language seems to mix with words from the *Ateso* language, hence blurring the learning process. For example, *olot* (means "go" in *Ateso* language) sounds like "a lot" in English. The confusion comes from the pronounced long middle /o/ sound and the ending short /t/sound. In addition, *akipi* means "water" in the *Ateso* language but the silent /i/ at the end of the word disappears. This makes the long /p/ sound more pronounced, hence distorting the word. Therefore, the word "*akipi*" in *Ateso* sounds more like "pee" in English to my children due to similarity in sounds. These are just a few examples that have caused frustration with teaching and learning *Ateso* for my children. In addition, cultural norms such as waiting to be spoken to and using appropriate expressions when addressing elders are still

ingrained in the way I teach my children at home. For example, I believe children should wait their turn to talk and should address adults by adding an expression such as “aunt” for women and “uncle” for men.

I have also faced some challenges outside the home. For example, when I first enrolled my daughter in a daycare center when she was a 3-year-old, the teacher informed me that it was “difficult” to understand my daughter’s speech because she was mixing the two languages, Ateso and English. Therefore, the teacher suggested I should speak only English because my daughter was “confused.” I was disturbed by this experience because it reflected some of the real challenges that children of first-generation immigrants have to navigate as they enroll in schools across the United States. These are some of the lived experiences that drove my passion for doing this research.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) pointed out that researcher bias can be prevented by being objective and avoiding bias during data analysis. Having addressed my role in this research, I prevented bias in two ways during data collection. I consistently re-evaluated participant responses and refrained from using leading questions that would prompt the interviewees in any particular direction. In addition, I had the participants review the data interpretations to verify the representation of their beliefs and experiences, and reviewed the findings with the research team.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted with immigrant Mandingo-speaking West African parents with children 3–7 years old. A series of steps were taken to address the ethical considerations in increasing validity and trustworthiness. Pseudonyms were used for identification purposes as a way to protect the integrity of the participants. All

participants were asked to consent to the study before any Zoom/video platform interviews were conducted. A time limit was applied to the interviews as they were solely virtual. Additional recording permissions were revisited to maintain clear and constant communication with the volunteer participants. I also informed the participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. All the data collected and research-related materials were kept in a password-protected file on my home computer to ensure the anonymity and trustworthiness of the findings.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Presentation of Results

This study was designed to examine first-generation Mandingo parents' lived experiences in maintaining their native language with children 3–7 years old. The language socialization theory and the African philosophical principle of *banerado* or *banyeredo* were evident in the participants' descriptions of their language experiences inside and outside the home. Six participants were recruited through snowball sampling and interviewed according to IPA guidelines and methods. Participants' names were replaced with alphabet letters or pseudonyms. Interviews averaged about 1 hour. Some follow-up interviews were also carried out to gain more information. There were three critical questions guiding the study:

Research Question 1: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents describe their experiences in learning and maintaining a native language?

Research Question 2: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences of maintaining their native language with young children at home?

Research Question 3: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences of maintaining their native language with young children outside the home?

All the interview questions were tested for validity with a colleague before the study. After the first interview, I shared the transcript with the research team to discuss the efficacy of each question and its ability to evoke responses from the participants to address the research questions. In addition, a member check was conducted after data interpretation for verification purposes. An email attachment was sent to the participants

and they were asked if any changes should be made to the data interpretation. Participant A sent back an email stating that “I have read chapter 4 and 5, all the information there is good and accurate.” Participant B also sent an email stating she had read the information and that it was “good.” Therefore, no changes were made to the data interpretation based on the verification received from Participants A and B.

The data analysis stage included entries in a reflective journal, interview videos on Zoom, and a call recorder transcribed by listening to the video line-by-line. I manually color-coded all the emerging themes from each participant’s transcript. The findings were first assigned to 10 major themes based on patterns that emerged from the analysis. Similar codes were then grouped into nine major themes as developed from the study’s research questions. I manually coded both the invariant constituents and significant themes. The results revealed the following major themes related to the three research questions. For RQ1, which related to Mandingo-speaking parents’ experiences with language learning and language maintenance, the following themes emerged: a conflicting sense of feeling, sense of belonging, and cultural appreciation. For RQ2, which related to how first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining their native language with young children at home, the following themes emerged: consistency with Mandingo use, enforcing Mandingo use, and adhering to cultural values. For RQ3, which related to how first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences of maintaining their native language with young children outside the home, the following themes emerged: extended family unit, connections to home countries, and school community.

RQ1: Description of Parent Experiences

RQ1 was: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents describe their experiences in learning and maintaining a native language? The descriptions of language learning experiences involved a wide range of settings from when the participants were in their home countries to when they immigrated to the United States. Some participants drew upon experiences from childhood whereas others drew upon experiences from adulthood either in their home countries or in the United States. The contexts in which they described these experiences included elementary schools in their post colonized home countries, African immigrant communities in the United States, adult language classes, and high schools in the United States. Experiences drawn from the postcolonial period from 1957 to date included corporal punishments such as wearing a bone around the neck and kneeling on rice grains for speaking the Mandingo language in their home country. Postcolonialism in Africa is a timeline in which African countries gained independence from colonial imperialism (Mbembe, 1992). In this research, the participants described the language maintenance experiences of societies emerging from the era of colonization beginning in the 1980s. These tactics of suppressing African languages, such as Mandingo, in communication, formal education, and economic development were based on the social Darwinist positions of inferiority complex, which led to devaluing African languages. Ouane and Glanz (2010) argued that this ideology downgraded African languages as traditional, local, disordered, and subordinate, whereas colonial languages such as English, French, and Portuguese were praised as messianic modernizers or unifiers. The idea of unification promoted a culture of standardization of French as a national language at school, hence relegating Mandingo as traditional.

Similarly, in dominant countries such as the United States, the majority group controls the idea of language standardization in society and tends to decide on the community's ideal model (Mallikarjun, 2018). Mandingo-speaking immigrants are categorized as minorities in the United States; they have to adhere to dominant language policies such as the English-only movement, where English is seen as the national language in the United States. The rich data provided by the participants elucidated emotions that included a sense of conflict, a sense of belonging, and cultural appreciation.

First and foremost, the theme of a collective *sense of belonging* emerged in the language learning and maintenance experiences among the participants. A feeling of belonging means the participants felt understood, valued, and accepted by those around them. It should be noted that many variations of Mandingo are spoken within the West African immigrant community. These include Dyula, Bambara, Soninke, and Malinke, which may give newcomers a sense of belonging because they can meet and interact with many people who speak Mandingo within and outside their Harlem immigrant community. The data showed most participants felt welcomed and happy to maintain their language within the immigrant community in which they settled because acts of kindness were expressed by fellow immigrants, they engaged in socialization activities, and they met fellow Mandingo speakers from other countries. A sense of belonging was apparent among the participants in the United States within the immigrant community. Meeting and interacting with Mandingo speakers from different countries seemed to give the newcomer participants a feeling of community. According to Guardado (2018), immigrant communities provide a sense of belonging through a shared commitment to being together in a group. In multilingual minority communities, extended family unit

ideology is a common feature in supporting children's language socialization, language use, and maintenance (Liang, 2018). This ideology provides community members with a sense of belonging, including interacting in social situations to share and express ideas and feelings (Liang, 2018).

Second, the participants expressed *cultural appreciation* and pride in speaking the Mandingo language. The participants believed language gives different meanings to expressions and emotions when verbalized in a native tongue during familiar ritual celebrations. Cultural appreciation in this study was expressed through ritual gatherings, respect for elders, and politeness. Generally, cultural appreciation was seen as finding comfort in familiar religious traditions and practices and celebrating special occasions with music, dance, and cuisine. The participants talked about being proud of their language because it was widely spoken in West Africa and because their children could understand commands in Mandingo. These commands evoke a different traditional atmosphere than when expressed in English. For example, showing respect for elders, expressing ideas, and politeness were evident in how the participants showed their cultural appreciation. The data showed some participants felt that retaining the language came with the pride of adhering to cultural values and beliefs and understanding the full extent of cultural meanings by expressing who they were as Mandingo people. Some participants seemed to appreciate their cultural upbringing more as adults than when they were young. In contrast, some upheld their cultural upbringing to a certain extent, whereas others were immersed in using Mandingo to express their cultural values and rituals.

Last, the participants had a *conflicting sense of feeling*. The participants seemed to go back and forth between rationalizing the language policies established by the schools while disregarding their native language. They expressed the hardship of not using their native language at school. They oscillated between being embarrassed and humiliated from the corporal punishments at school and yet saw it as necessary because of economic development, nationalism, and social-cultural acceptance. Participant B recalled a time when she was caught speaking her language and was made to wear a big bone around her neck, which was embarrassing and humiliating because the other children teased her for wearing a bone. Another participant recalled being asked to kneel on rice grains because of speaking Mandingo around a non-Mandingo speaker who felt excluded at school. However, both participants thought their punishments were necessary because they needed to use French, the primary language used at school. Participant C, who did not go through a similar experience, expressed no question about using French at school because it was a national language. The school was a formal setting.

Table 2 is a summary of the description of parent experiences. The table shows themes that emerged in Research Question 1, the number of codes used to determine the themes, and the number of participants who responded. The next section is a discussion of each theme in detail while giving evidence and an analysis of each.

Table 2*Description of Parent Experiences*

Theme	Number of codes	Number of participants
Sense of belonging	32	6
Cultural appreciation	20	6
Conflicting sense of feeling	16	3

Sense of Belonging

Belonging is a feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group (Garza et al., 2021). Sense of belonging in this study was used as a binding factor in language maintenance. The participants expressed that the commonalities that existed in using a variation of Mandingo within the West African cultures evoked feelings of belonging. The participants felt understood, valued, and accepted by those around them. It should be noted that a variation of Mandingo is spoken within West African immigrant communities, which might explain why most newcomers felt a sense of belonging. They can meet and interact with people who speak Mandingo within and outside their immigrant community. The data showed a sense of belonging was mentioned by all the participants indicated they felt welcomed and happy to maintain their language within the immigrant community in which they settled because acts of kindness were expressed by fellow immigrants, socialization, and meeting fellow Mandingo speakers from other countries felt welcoming. The following examples are two quotes from among many that were provided by all the participants. Participants B and C described the excitement of meeting Mandingo-speaking people from other West African countries and how that

interaction gave them a feeling of being in their home country. Participant B described her encounter with parents during her facilitating job:

As a facilitator, we service parents and the providers, So I found out, you know, like 50 or 60% of my parents and providers speak the same language that I speak, you know. And we are not from the same country. Some of them are from my country, but some are from different countries, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ivory Coast, or Guinea . . . During the application, I ask the parent, “Where are you from? What language do you speak?” When the parents say Bambara or Malinke or Jula? I know those are all the same languages, you know. So, I would like, say, “Oh, let’s continue with this to make you feel better, you know, more comfortable, so we can complete the application.” So, once they hear me speak Mandingo, they say, “Oh my god, you speak the same language . . . This will make my life so much easier.”

In this example, language was being used to build a sense of belonging despite national borders. The participant demonstrated an understanding of the variation of Mandingo that is spoken in most West African countries. The participant started her meetings by asking parents about their native languages: “When the parents say Bambara or Malinke or Dyula? I know those are all the same languages, you know.” This knowledge of what the parents speak seemed to bind the interaction when the participant said her response to people who speak Mandingo was as follows: “Let’s continue with this to make you feel better, you know, more comfortable.”

Similarly, Participant C provided an example of a sense of belonging when meeting a Mandingo speaker on a bus and how that made her feel at home:

Because my language is spoken in multiple different countries, that just allows you to connect to them. So, for that reason, I tend to rely on the power of culture. I remember meeting someone who was Malian, and I was asking them about their name. And we started talking, and next thing, you know, she's telling me that she thinks about that, and we kind of just hit it off. There. We started talking. She could understand me, and I could understand her. So, it kind of developed into this new school, like, my type of people in a way. Yeah. Like, maybe it would feel like that's my people.

In this example, Participant C said her language was spoken in "multiple countries" and that awareness seemed to provide her with a connection to people from those countries. Their meeting "hits off" and "they understand" each other because they have a similar background. They feel valued and understood, hence having a sense of belonging to a group of people. Participant A also seemed to have a similar experience of finding a longtime friend after what she described as a "bad experience" in a highly American-populated high school:

I came home and told my uncle that I did not want to be in that school because of the bad experience. And he helped me go to school where many of the children from our community attended the same school. So as soon as I started attending that school, I was able to make friends. There was a girl my best friend right now was in that school, and that's where we met when we immigrated here at the same time. So, we automatically became best friends, and sometimes it's better to be with people from the same background than by yourself. So, I became friends with her, and my experience at school was much better. Yeah.

In a follow-up interview, Participant A described the “bad experience” as a fight with a classmate who constantly picked on and embarrassed her because of her accent.

Participant A later talked about finding someone who “automatically” became her friend in another school because they had similar backgrounds. The idea of leaving a highly American-populated elementary school and enrolling in a heavily immigrant neighborhood elementary school gave the participant a sense of belonging because she was able to meet people who spoke like her, and she felt comfortable. It became a binding factor in her relationship with the new friend.

A sense of belonging was apparent among most participants in the United States within the immigrant community. The participants’ belief was that meeting and interacting with people who speak a similar language gave them a sense of belonging by being valued and understood as they maintained Mandingo within an English-dominant language society. Close reading and rereading of the transcripts showed the participants had a nonchalant attitude about maintaining the language. They often used the phrase “it is just like home” when asked about their experience of maintaining the Mandingo language in the United States.

Cultural Appreciation

Appreciation is defined as the recognition and enjoyment of the good qualities of someone or something (Han, 2019). Cultural appreciation involves a person from another culture seeking to acquire knowledge and an understanding of another culture by honoring and respecting the culture, its practices, and its history (Han, 2019). In this study, cultural appreciation was defined as seeking to honor and respect the practices and history of one’s own culture. Appreciation involved the participants recognizing and

enjoying the customs, norms, and behaviors that affirmed their identities as a Mandingo group. Participants A and C pointed out that having arrived in the United States as children, they were just beginning to appreciate the norms and traditions of their own culture. Participants B, D, E, and F expressed their continued pride in their language and its customs and wide use in Africa. They used words such as “super proud” or “proud” and “happy” when talking about their cultural beliefs.

The participants expressed cultural appreciation by respecting their traditional rituals, respecting elders, being polite, and taking pride in speaking the Mandingo language. Participant A believed words expressed in Mandingo gave full meaning to her traditional marriage ceremony ritual. She explained how using a native language evoked emotions and meaning in her tradition in the following statement:

My mother said this to me. “So, today that you go into your husband’s house, you are going as my newborn daughter, so everything you do now on is going to count, but everything you did before your marriage is forgiven, only your mother can forgive that, you know” . . . so that was really nice because you see how difficult it was for me to explain it in English. But in my language, when they said everybody cried. The entire crowd was in tears, my dad was in tears. So, I feel like I wouldn’t have understood that experience. And I wouldn’t have understood the whole meaning of that statement. If they had to translate it for me in English, you know what I mean? But I feel like if that statement had to be translated for me, I probably wouldn’t have understood its message as much.

In this example, Participant A described the traditional transition ritual between a mother and daughter during a marriage ceremony in her culture. The participant was happy that

she could understand this traditional ritual's "whole meaning" because she still spoke Mandingo. Otherwise, she would not have "understood its message" had they translated it into English.

Similarly, Participant C explained how moving to the United States had made her appreciate her culture:

I really appreciate my culture and everything that comes with it. I appreciate my culture and everything that was in it and the things that I'm able to learn. And I think language is a way to connect with people who have a similar background as you who come from the same country as you or may just speak the same language as you. Because my language is spoken in multiple different countries, that allows you to connect to them. So, for that reason, I tend to rely on the power of culture.

In this example, the participant showed her strong desire to maintain her identity as a Mandingo-speaking person by using strong words such as "I appreciate my culture and everything that comes with it." The use of the word "everything" by the participant could mean the use of norms such as respect for elders, use of language, and others. She also talked about identifying with a group with similar cultural beliefs because "language is a way to connect with people from similar backgrounds."

In another complementary example, Participants E and D shared their thoughts on how the use of language is a show of respect when addressing the older generation.

Participant D stated, "When you speak with older people, you have to show respect while talking with them and good discipline." She continued to say that children "have to speak Mandingo around the elders because they are your older people." Participant E said, "The children spoke to adults differently in my culture. You have to show respect. You have to

change the tone of voice, okay. You have to look down and keep your head down to show a lot of respect.” These participants associated respect with using a native language when communicating with older people. In these two examples, the participants noted that addressing older people in a native language was a form of “respect” and “discipline.” They added that body language was essential when addressing elders and that “you have to change the tone of voice.”

In cultural appreciation, all the participants believed language is a salient feature of cultural identification. The participants used strong words such as “I am proud” or “I appreciate my culture” and “respect for elders” that pertained to their cultural norms (B. Y. Lee, 2013). Some parents believed a heritage language was necessary for conveying deeper feelings. Liang (2018) stated it is impolite not to speak a heritage language to senior family members according to the traditions of some ethnic groups in Korea.

Language maintenance in colonized countries in Africa is driven by the effects of hegemonic powers, leading to ideologies that favor the colonizers’ language as opposed to Indigenous languages. For example, the conflicting sense of emotions exhibited by Participants A, B, and C demonstrated some of the complexities of postcolonial education policies. These contradictory feelings were based on the monolingual ideologies that the colonialists established in the late 1950s, which stemmed from social Darwinist ideology. Imperialistic ideals of creating confidence and worthlessness within colonized nations are evident in social Darwinist ideology (Wolff, 2017). Similarly, language maintenance in dominant countries such as the United States is affected by prevailing country policies such as English-only policies. Therefore, in communities where immigrants are the minority, English becomes the only language the Mandingo speakers are relegated to use

in public places. In dominant countries such as the United States, the majority group controls the use of language in society and tends to decide on the community's ideal model (Mallikarjun, 2018). As a result, the multilingual concept becomes incompatible and unfitting into the monoglot standard. Mandingo and its cultural beliefs may not be maintained fully because of the dominant American culture. Therefore, language ideologies within the Mandingo culture might become constructed and reconstructed in fluid interactions at the micro and macro levels in multilingual settings.

Conflicting Sense of Feeling

A *conflicting sense of feeling* is defined as having mixed emotions. It reflects the feeling that it is not wrong to maintain a language regardless of teachers' enforcement tactics in schools. The Mandingo participants had conflicting feelings about language learning and maintenance. The participants contradicted their statements by rationalizing the importance of monolingual ideologies that the colonialists established in the late 1950s postcolonial era. Three participants went back and forth between supporting how they were forced to maintain the French language while disregarding their mother tongue as children and defending the established language policies. They expressed that it was hard not to speak Mandingo as a child in school. The participants recalled that they were forced to speak the French language by harsh tactics such as wearing a bone around their neck or a symbol that said they were a vernacular speaker (traditional African languages were regarded as vernacular). Some talked about kneeling on grains of rice. These punishments evoked conflicting feelings among the participants. For example, Participant B recalled feeling embarrassed because her peers laughed at her for wearing a bone around her neck for the entire day. Participant A felt discouraged that the teacher made

her kneel on grains of rice. However, their emotions seemed to change as they talked about their punishments. Participant A was sympathetic with the teacher for making her kneel on rice grains because speaking her language made her non-Mandingo-speaking classmates uncomfortable. Participant C did not get punished, but she defended the monolingual idea of speaking only French at school because it is a national language and should be respected. She supported Mandingo being spoken at home. Although Participant B was passionate about speaking her native language and had quickly adjusted to American life, she recalled unpleasant experiences as an elementary school child growing up in Guinea in the 1990s. This is what Participant B said:

When we are in class, the professor will give us something called in French assemble they put in your neck . . . It's like saying no Mandingo speaking. It is something that when you wear it on your neck, that means you are on punishment. At first, it was embarrassing because I wondered why I had to get punished for speaking my language. When they explain that it is not because we don't want you to speak Mandingo but because we want you to learn how to speak good French. We tend to understand little by little. But I remember one time I got it; it was the first time ever, you know the people are like talking. And when they gave it to you everybody was looking at you and talking saying look; she was speaking Mandingo. It was embarrassing, and I was ashamed. But if you look at it in different ways, it was good for us because it's finally how to practice speaking more in French, you know, to be able to know more words in French than just Mandingo, you know.

This conflicting sense of emotions demonstrates some of the complexities of postcolonial education policies. In this example, Participant B said she was “embarrassed” and “ashamed” during an event in which she was required to wear a bone around her neck for speaking Mandingo, but also that it “was good for us” because she had to learn French, which would help her in the future to get a job. Similarly, Participant A recalled being discouraged about speaking her language because of punishments:

I remember being punished for speaking our language. It was very discouraging at the school. We went outside, got the rice, and knelt on it. I mean, I was pretty young. So, at that time, I didn’t really, I didn’t really feel like it was wrong to get punished because we wanted not to speak the language in the school. And this was to ensure that the other students were not feeling uncomfortable. And we did it, and there was a particular student that thought we were talking about her. So that’s the reason why we got punished.

The above excerpt is another example of the conflicting sense of emotions. Participant A said she felt “discouraged” to speak Mandingo at school because she was made to kneel on grains of rice. However, she continued to say that “it was not wrong to get punished” because she made the non-Mandingo-speaking students “uncomfortable.” In contrast, Participant C, who grew up in an urban setting, did not think French was an enforced school policy. She argued that French was just a “school requirement” because the school was an institutional place, and French happened to be the national language. However, she explained that Mandingo had its own place at home, and French had its own place at school:

I spoke Mandingo at home all the time; that was the primary language or actually the only language that was actually spoken in the house. When I went to school, we spoke French . . . I mean, yeah, at school. It's, you know, it's an institutional place. So that was the primary language, and French is the country's national language. Essentially being like the national language that was the focus. That is what was required. It did not necessarily matter what you spoke at home; we just happened to speak our language because there weren't educated people.

In this example, Participant C demonstrated how the complex structural webs of social, political, and public systems tend to control a local community's practices, identities, and beliefs. She said Mandingo was spoken at home because there were not "educated people," whereas French was the "national language" so it had to be spoken at school. Although not contradictory, this statement shows the complexities of colonialism in Africa.

The conflicting sense of feeling expressed by the participants reflected the feeling that it was not wrong to maintain a language regardless of the enforcement tactics carried out by their teachers in school. These complex responses stemmed from monolingual ideologies that the colonialists established in the late 1950s, which created feelings of confidence and worthlessness within colonized nations (Wolff, 2017). Ouane and Glanz (2010) pointed out that devaluing language ideologies has caused African languages to be downgraded as traditional, local, disordered, and subordinate, whereas colonial languages such as English, French, and Portuguese are praised as messianic modernizers or unifiers. Adenekan (2019) stressed that such ideologies are cultivated because language is easily manipulated and exploited by those in power for inclusion and exclusion. Therefore,

hegemonic countries tend to monopolize the use of English and French against other languages. Ademowo (2016) stated that ultimately, African elites and postcolonial educational policies have either ignorantly or deliberately made Africans view their languages as inferior and less competent while holding colonial languages in high esteem.

Summary of the Description of Parent Experiences

Through a detailed analysis of the data, themes of a conflicting sense of feeling, sense of belonging, and cultural appreciation were found among all participants. These themes answered the primary research question: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents describe their experiences in learning and maintaining a native language? The data helped to shed light on the participants' emotions ranging from when they were in their home countries to when they immigrated to the United States. Some participants drew upon experiences from childhood whereas others drew upon experiences from adulthood either in their home countries or in the United States. The data revealed themes showing the complexities of language maintenance. There is more to language maintenance than meets the eye. The political forces that control society are as strong as the will to not be dominated.

RQ2: Experiences of Children's Language Use Inside the Home

The second question was: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining their native language with young children at home? This question was focused on how first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents viewed their experiences maintaining a native language with their young children (i.e., 3–7 years old) at home. This question focused on the family domain, the center for heritage

language continuity. The participants believed home practices were crucial in later socializing their children into the Mandingo immigrant community within the United States or their home country. Therefore, they drew upon the experiences they had with their children daily within their homes. Chen et al. (2018) pointed out that heritage language development in children in immigrant families can be encouraged through daily language socialization both within the home and at school. Liang (2018) stated high cohesion leads to high language use and low cohesion leads to low language use within mother–child or grandparent–grandchild relationships. Therefore, supporting and enhancing a child’s first language can facilitate communication and respect among family members, strengthening family ties as adults act as role models or experts. These naturalistic conversations (Meddegama, 2020) were also seen in this research as parents interacted with their children daily.

Although the participants worked hard to maintain their native language by being consistent and enforcing its practices, there was evidence of frustration due to crucial policies. According to Guardado (2018), some unsuccessful home language practices lead to language loss. Some use strategies that encourage the development of ethnic identity, oral language proficiency, and the continuation of family and cultural values. García-Sánchez and Nazimova (2017) stated that the host country’s cultural ideologies significantly influence maintaining and developing language use or practices within immigrant families. Therefore, immigrant families have to negotiate these policies and language ideologies daily. The data analysis revealed the following themes: consistency with Mandingo use, enforcing Mandingo speaking, and adhering to cultural values.

Consistency with Mandingo use in this study reflected the constant application of Mandingo in the home during family routines. The participants seemed to stick to Mandingo, although some children answered in English rather than Mandingo. The participants' levels of consistency varied from home to home. Some participants seemed to fall back on using English and Mandingo for the children to understand a full conversation. During the analysis, the participants reflected that consistency in language use was helpful in maintaining Mandingo with their young children. Therefore, once the children ventured out into the community, such as in a religious setting familiar to the participants, they were aware that they had to address elders using a native language.

Enforcing Mandingo speaking in this study is seen as demanding the children to comply with the use of Mandingo at home. The participants used the word "enforce" more frequently when discussing socializing their children into daily language use. The participants used many tactics to ensure their children could use the language at home. Some tactics were corrective, and others were puristic. The corrective tactics were withholding items until the child used Mandingo to retrieve them. Some puristic tactics included asking the children to use complete Mandingo sentences without inserting any English words. However, some participants accepted their children responding in English as the parents spoke in Mandingo.

Adhering to cultural values were reflected in the participants' feeling that Mandingo and the American cultural differences were overbearing for them to instill the discipline needed to learn the language. The participants reflected that being respectful when using the language daily with their children helped develop language maintenance. This practice was thought to help children learn. The participants believed children

should display the act of being passive listeners. This can only be done by respecting elders by not responding to adults, avoiding eye contact, and waiting to be spoken to. To them, these acts of respect cannot be separated from the language. They go hand in hand. Others believed English-only policies also affected them as parents.

Table 3 shows the themes that emerged in Research Question 2 related to the children’s experiences of language use inside the home. The table shows the themes, the number of codes used to determine the themes, and the number of participants who responded.

Table 3

Experiences of Children’s Language Use Inside the Home

Theme	Number of codes	Number of participants
Consistency with Mandingo use	21	6
Enforcing Mandingo use	16	4
Adhering to cultural values	27	4

Consistency With Mandingo Use

The Mandingo-speaking parents were consistent with using their native language daily. They talked to their children in Mandingo during daily routines to enforce the use of Mandingo by their children. The participants’ levels of consistency varied from home to home. Some participants seemed to fall back on using both English and Mandingo for the children to understand. Other participants were persistent with using only Mandingo with their children. Participants B and F expressed pride in using Mandingo with their children. Both participants seemed to have a back-and-forth exchange in Mandingo

language with their children. Participant B was happy with what she had done as a mother teaching her children the language and watching them use it daily. Her conversation with her child also showed how smoothly she communicated with her son using Mandingo. She said the following:

Today, my son N, he has to go to school. They have a summer enrichment program going on. So, I went and woke him up. You know, I say to him *alou willi wati barase* [it's time to wake up] in my language in Mandingo. I told him, N, it's time to wake up. And then he got up. He said, *Awa, N'watô gnen-na* [okay, I'm going to use the bathroom]. I say *Awa, WA gnen-na. idalako. Ani wa-Sali* [yes, go use the bathroom, brush your teeth, and then do your prayer]. *Ani elaben Kawa ecolela* [and then you can get ready for school]. He said, *N'ye afé ka n'ko folo. Ani ka atoké* [okay, I want to take a shower first, eat and then do the rest]. I say *awa* [okay], and all these you know you know; we were speaking my language like that. And then he went to shower and then after he finished showering, he prayed, and then he got dressed.

In this example, language consistency appeared to be used in a daily routine as a home practice. The participant engaged in a conversation, and Mandingo was the primary language being used between her and the child. The child appeared to be fluent in using Mandingo as he casually went through his daily routine of getting ready for school.

Similarly, Participant F used a daily routine to teach her children the Mandingo language. She seemed confident when she responded with emphasis to questions regarding the use of Mandingo daily. She had a matter-of-fact attitude about her children

using Mandingo. She provided no rationale, perhaps assuming it was somewhat of an obvious choice. She explained below:

Yeah, yesterday I called them to come and get some food. I said *Na eyè dominiké* [Name withheld] said that he wants more. He said, *N'yè dôko* [I want more food]. After I gave him more food, they ate, and when they were done, they put their plates back in the sink, said, *Enikè dômini laben-na* [thank you, mommy, for cooking], and went and washed their hands. All that he said in Mandingo.

This example also shows a daily practice of periodically having a meal and cleaning up directed in Mandingo. The participant seemed to have a naturally occurring conversation with her children during a daily routine.

The consistency of Participants B and F seemed different from that of Participants C and D. The latter associated their varying use of Mandingo with their children and some words the children may occasionally say as consistency in the language. Participant D revealed she consistently spoke Mandingo and that her children responded in English. Similarly, when talking about her use of Mandingo, Participant C revealed that she mixed English and Mandingo when engaged in conversations. Participant C also appeared to associate her use of one-word or two-word phrases in Mandingo as consistency in using the language with her child. For example, when asked about the last time she used Mandingo with her child, Participant C said:

Just now, when he was eating, he said *N'baraban* which means I am finished, sometimes when he's eating once in a while, he'll say *N'baraban*, which means I'm done. Yeah, usually when he is eating, and I'll continue asking him words like if there is no food on the plate, I'll ask him. *E'baraban? E'baraban?* [Are

you done? Are you done?] In my language? *E'baraban?* [Are you done?] And then I'll say it in English. Are you finished? Are you done? And then I'll repeat the response to him that he's technically supposed to be saying. And then I think once you start probably like, three to four times not really to have much, but many times that he does, it's exciting to know like, okay, he gets it, you know, something is working.

Although the participant seemed to use Mandingo with her child more often (she said just now), the child appeared to use Mandingo rarely. He may utter some words such as "I am done." In this example, Participant C used the words "once in a while, and he will say a word in Mandingo" and also said "the times that he does, it's exciting." This response indicates the child was not well-versed with Mandingo. However, when he did say a word, the participant became overjoyed to hear her child say a word in her language. This gave her hope that "something is working" and the determination to continue teaching her son some Mandingo. The participant also seemed to use both languages a lot. She says are you done and then reverts to Mandingo, "*E'baraban.*" This may indicate the participant was not used to indulging in Mandingo herself or that she may not know a lot of Mandingo words per se. According to the participant, her husband speaks more Mandingo than she does because she came to the United States at a very young age and has lost some of her Mandingo language. She also indicated during the interview that immediate family members tend to speak English more and this has interfered with her constant use of Mandingo with her son.

Similarly, when asked the same question about how she maintained Mandingo, Participant D was quick to say that the children understood Mandingo, but they did not speak the language. She said:

I speak with my kids all the time—this morning when my son and my daughter go to summer camp. I tell my daughter. *Ekana Njina ka- da-toun* [Don't forget to close the door], and she said in English, I closed the door, mommy. They understand, but they do not speak. Only one daughter speaks Mandingo because she went to Africa for 3 years.

This is yet another example where a participant consistently used a native language with the children daily. When asked about how often she used Mandingo, Participant D said that she spoke it “all the time.” And then she responded that the last time she used it was “this morning.” This indication of the current use of Mandingo was significant because it validated the participant’s claim of using Mandingo on a consistent basis.

The reading of the transcripts revealed that the idea of consistency differed among the participants. To some participants, consistency meant the exchange of Mandingo between the parent and the child. To other participants, consistency meant the parents spoke in Mandingo and the children responded in English. This variation in language use and practices in the homes of these immigrant parents could result from high and low cohesion. Liang (2018) pointed out that high cohesion leads to high language use and low cohesion leads to everyday language use within mother–child or grandparent–grandchild relationships. High cohesion among Participants B and F, whose attitude of consistency meant the children’s involvement in the language also seemed to lead to high language use, appeared to be increased.

In contrast, low cohesion was expressed by Participants C and D who mixed the two languages and seemed to have low language use. Chen et al. (2018) pointed out that Heritage language development in children in immigrant families can be encouraged through daily language socialization both within the home and at school. Therefore, supporting and enhancing a child's first language can facilitate communication and respect among family members, strengthening family ties as adults act as role models or experts. These naturalistic conversations (Meddegama, 2020) were also seen in this research as parents interacted with their children daily. Therefore, consistency goes beyond just saying words or phrases in a native language. It involves the complete and constant indulgence in the native language of all family members. However, there could be variations within consistency as well. Sometimes, places or reasons for someone's use of the language may be different from someone else. For home-based tasks, this may be consistent, but for other contexts or topics, it would be different.

Enforcing Mandingo Use

Enforcement in this study was loosely defined as insisting discreetly on the children's compliance with Mandingo use at home. The participants used the word "enforce" more frequently when discussing socializing their children into language use daily. The participants used many tactics to ensure their children could use the language at home and to enforce the use of Mandingo. Some tactics were corrective and others were puristic. The corrective tactics were withholding items until the child used Mandingo to retrieve them. Some puristic tactics included insisting that the children use complete Mandingo sentences without inserting any English words. However, some

participants accepted their children responding in English as the parents spoke to them in Mandingo.

Participants A and B talked about wanting a clear separation between English and Mandingo. Participant A thought the idea of mixing the two languages was confusing her son. To her, being intentional in her interactions with her son would help him gain a deeper understanding and knowledge in the use of these two languages. Also, Participant B wanted her children to speak pure Mandingo without mixing it with English. She intended not to insert any English words in the Mandingo language sentences. Therefore, both participants had the same idea of enforcing the use of Mandingo at home.

Participant A gave an example of such an occurrence with her son:

For example, he came home one time and said, “Mommy, I want my *shapo* [hat].”

I told him this is my hat [uses physical gesture to emphasize a hat by placing her hands on the head], and we say, this is not *shapo* [hat], letting him know what it means. When he kept saying my *shapo* [hat] when he got home, his dad told me we needed to tell him things in English and then in our language. So, we would teach him what it meant in English and what it meant in our language.

In this example, the child used the two languages when carrying on a conversation, “I want my” and then “*shapo*,” which means a hat in Mandingo. The child was not aware that he was mixing two languages, English and Mandingo. So, the participant tried to clarify by saying “it is not *shapo* in English. It is a hat.” Similarly, Participant B redirected her child from translanguaging but instead used complete Mandingo sentences.

According to Participant B, teaching children the language had come a long way. She said they had to put “pressure” on the children from the start because the children

were responding only in English. However, her husband decided the children should no longer speak English in the house because they were getting “older” and “understand everything” in Mandingo. Therefore, she put “pressure” on her children by eliminating English or translanguaging Mandingo and English:

Sometimes when my children mix Mandingo with English, I ask, how do you say that specific word in Mandingo? Because you said that word in English, but how do you say that specific word in Mandingo? You can say a full sentence in Mandingo. I want them to be fluent in Mandingo. For example, they know the word water in Mandingo, but they say *ine water nko* if they want to drink water. JJ said that to me yesterday. So, I said, what’s that word, water. How do you say the word water in Mandingo? I ask him in Mandingo, what is the word water in Mandingo? He said, *gi*. Then I say, oh, so why don’t you use *gi* say *ine gi nko*.

In this example, Participant B seemed to know the extent of her children’s knowledge in Mandingo. She said, “They know the word water in Mandingo.” Therefore, she appeared to enforce the use of Mandingo when the children seemed to deviate by inserting a few English words. She made her son repeat a complete sentence in Mandingo to keep up with the “fluent” use of the language. Unlike Participants A and B, who enforced the proper use of Mandingo with their children by being intentional with the different use of both languages, Participant F demanded that they use Mandingo in the house. In the following excerpt, she gave an example of such incidents:

Yeah, I’ve told them sometimes that there is no English in the house. Okay.

Yesterday I told them that if you need something and don’t tell me in Mandingo, I

am not doing it. I told them if you ask me something in English, I will say it to you in Mandingo, and then you say it back to me in Mandingo. Okay.

In this example, Participant F seemed to enforce the use of Mandingo by delaying gratification when items were withheld. She said, “I am not doing it if you say it in English.” Also, she spoke of “no English in this house.” All of these tactics forced the children to think about using Mandingo.

The rereading of the transcripts revealed that the outside community heavily influenced the participants’ Mandingo use and practice at home with their children. In all the examples, the children seemed to show outside English influence in their daily vocabulary. The insertion of some English words or the use of English sentences was attributed to the English-only policies in the United States. García-Sánchez and Nazimova (2017) pointed out that the host country’s cultural ideologies significantly influence maintaining and developing language use or practices within immigrant families. In host country communities where immigrants are the minority, language maintenance is affected by language policies from the dominant culture such as English-only policies.

Adhering to Cultural Values

Cultural values in this study were defined as what the participants felt were the right communicative skills to be used in their culture. The participants felt the Mandingo and American cultural differences were overbearing for them to instill the discipline needed to learn the language. The participants believed African cultural values such as politeness, respect for elders, and kindness were important in learning and maintaining the language. The participants felt children are socialized into a language in an African

culture by being passive listeners. Passively listening to an adult as they speak was not only considered to be a practice but also a sign of respect. In addition, addressing older people by specific Mandingo titles was considered respect. Children who respect elders are considered great learners because they can understand what the adults are saying or teaching them. Therefore, it was important for the children to adhere to African cultural values to maintain the language. This could only be done by respecting elders as passive listeners, avoiding eye contact, and waiting to be spoken to. Participant B noted the following:

In the interactions, you know that the child can't say anything when the adult is speaking. You have to wait until the adult finish[es] talking, and then if you have anything to say, you can respond or wait until you are called upon. You also have to lower your head down until the adult is finished talking, with no eye contact. In my culture, we believe when adults speak, you know, the child cannot say anything you have to wait until they give you the okay to talk. If you start to talk, it is like disrespecting the adult or something like that.

In this example, Participant B showed how cultural practices in children's learning of language are thought to be intertwined with culture (Moore, 1999). Participant B said that "a child can't say anything when an adult is speaking" and that if a child talks when an adult is speaking then "it is like disrespecting the adult." This is the complexity of cultural beliefs that the Mandingo children have to navigate between the African culture and the American culture.

Likewise, Participant F would agree with Participant B regarding cultural beliefs and practices attributed to how children should interact with adults. She explained it in the following excerpt:

Here too, they said child has to look at your face to talk, and in our way, when a grown-up is talking to you, you have to be down [she bowed her head when she said the word down]. But here [meaning the United States], child look at you face to face to understand you, but the way they educate me, that is wrong. I think if the parent is talking the child should not be talking. Because you talk and the child talk and you talk and the child talk. The kid is not going to understand you. The child is still a child. You have to respect the older people, okay. One person talks and one person listens. When they are talking to you. You have to keep quiet and listen to what they are talking to you.

In this example, language socialization was used to shape children's identities as they identified with a community of speakers (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). The participant said that "when a grown-up is talking to you, you have to be down." This show of respect within the African culture is an identifier of status between a child as a passive listener and an adult as the main speaker during a conversation. Establishing such clear identities between listeners and speakers encourages competent and appropriate interactions within the broader society (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011).

Similarly, Participant A elaborated on how language socialization plays a primary role in transmitting cultural values and beliefs as it shapes the worldview of individuals in communities (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). The participant pointed out the ways in which culture and language are intertwined during interactions in the following excerpt:

Yeah, so when you see someone older than you, you need to add something to their name. So, if it's like an older person's age, not too old, for example, the age difference between you and myself, I will consider you older sister. So, I have to call you *tanti*; I could never call you by your name; I have to call you *tanti*. But if you're much older than me, or you have a family, you're married, and let's say we have a 10-year difference. I would call you *tonto*; I could never call you by your name, you know. So that's like, that's like a huge thing. And it's so important for us to know that because when we become accustomed to the culture here, we don't value that respect.

In this example, the cultural value of respect was demonstrated through the position of status in society. The idea of using titles when addressing community members such as “tanti” or “tonto” encouraged competent and appropriate interactions during a conversation.

In contrast to the above three participants, Participant C, who was brought to the United States as a child and was raised in a culturally stanch household, disagreed with these African cultural values to a certain extent. In her opinion, children should use a gentle tone—looking at the adult's face as they talk or being an active listener is not wrong. She explained her thoughts in the excerpt below:

I think, for the most part, what I grew up with was respecting the elders and not talking back to them. So that's definitely one of those things where it's like, you know, an adult tells you to do this, you're kind of supposed to do it. However, for me, being that I've been here for such a long time, I'm 32 right now. My opinion differs greatly in not responding to an adult. I think a child should be able to

express themselves, but it depends on the tone of voice and how they express themselves. So, it's, it's a matter of whether the person is being rude or disrespectful, but if you're able to tell someone your opinion, I don't necessarily see anything wrong with that.

Participant C showed a change in intellectual trajectory influenced by learner bidirectionality over a period. She said, "I have been here for a long time" and her opinion "differs" when responding to adults. This showed that her worldview about her beliefs had been influenced by the structured social system in control within the United States.

A close reading of the transcripts for cultural differences revealed four participants believed adhering to African cultural values was necessary for children to learn. However, one participant differed in her opinion of the cultural values expected of African children. All participants reflected that being respectful when using the language daily with children helped them develop language maintenance. This practice showed the thought that children's learning of language is intertwined with culture. The participants believed children should display the act of passive listening, which is demonstrated through respect for elders by avoiding eye contact and waiting to be spoken to. Literature on language socialization shows language is the primary vehicle for transmitting cultural values and beliefs. Language plays a crucial role in shaping the worldview of individuals and communities. Guardado (2018) postulated that the language socialization process shapes children's particular identities, drawing them to identify with a community of speakers that expects them to interact competently and appropriately with a broader society. Language is seen as a social practice affected by environmental changes and

participant agency or the power to act and make choices (Moore, 1999). It is these structured webs of social, political, public, and economic systems that control a local community's practices, identities, settings, and beliefs (Heath, 1980; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011).

Summary of Experiences of Children's Language Use Inside the Home

Through a detailed analysis of the data, themes of consistency, enforcement, and cultural values were found among all participants. These themes answered the second research question: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining their native language with young children at home? The participants believed home practices were crucial in later socializing their children into the Mandingo immigrant community within the United States or their home country. Therefore, they drew upon the experiences they had with their children daily within their homes. The data revealed the participants were consistent in using their language with their children. That consistency was measured by how they talked about the timing, as words like "just now," "this morning," and "yesterday" marked the frequency with which Mandingo was used to gain fluency in the language. Learning was more effective as the children came to expect using Mandingo at home. The theme of enforcement was used to ensure children did not fall back into the use of English. The participants used a range of tactics to enforce the use of Mandingo. Some tactics were corrective and others were puristic. Last, in cultural values, the participants believed African cultural values such as politeness, respect for elders, and kindness were important in learning and maintaining Mandingo. The participants felt children are socialized into a language in an African

culture by being passive listeners. The next section covers the third question, which focused on the experiences of children's language use outside the home.

RQ3: Children's Language Use Outside the Home

RQ3 was: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining their native language with young children outside the home?

The themes of extended family unit, connections to home countries, and school community emerged. The description of the language learning experiences of Mandingo children presented in this question came from language use and interactions within the United States and the participants' home country of Guinea and one from Liberia. The experiences within the United States involved the African immigrant community and the elementary school system the children were currently attending. The participants felt the English-only policies in place in the U.S. educational system affected their children's maintenance of the Mandingo language. They believed their children sometimes felt ashamed to use Mandingo in front of their friends and stayed at school most of the time where English was the only language. Therefore, the participants turned to their African immigrant community to assist with socializing their children into the Mandingo language. A common practice within the immigrant community is to send children back to their home countries at a young age so the children can be socialized into language by interacting with extended family members. African philosophical ideals support the community's extended family ideology to support children's language socialization, language use, and maintenance. This ideology provides community members with a sense of belonging, including interacting in social situations to share and express ideas and feelings (Liang, 2018).

Language socialization and communicative competence within the African tradition are expressed through the broad worldview of African philosophy. This philosophy is a moral code demonstrated through a person's character and actions within the community and is abstractly linked to a person's very existence (Oyebade & Azenabor, 2018). The Mandingo community believes in the philosophy or principle of *banerado* or *banyeredo*, which means a "good person." A good person is described as hardworking, kind, polite, humble, respectful, and giving to the community. The Mandingo participants believed life is an echo in that what you do comes back a hundredfold. The participants in this study explained that character and actions were nurtured and strongly required of their children to become good functional citizens in society. For example, a "good child" was hardworking, kind, respectful, and disciplined. The actions children can take include helping and speaking the language with older people. In addition, these actions require children to show respect when interacting with elders by addressing them accordingly. For example, adding a title to someone's name such as "big sister" or "little brother" or tanti or tonto is a show of discipline or respect. The rich data provided by the participants included the following: extended community, connections to home countries, and school community.

The *extended community* is usually formed by family members in the nuclear family and those who are not but are still considered close relatives. In this study, the participants deemed people with whom they interacted within the immigrant community as extended family members. This kinship referral practice was based on the extended family unit ideology that is a common feature among immigrants in which community members provide one another with a sense of belonging through social interactions,

sharing, and expressing ideas and feelings (Liang, 2018). In this research, other Mandingo-speaking non-relatives were sometimes called *tanti* or *tonto* or aunt and mom. The children were socialized into the language by having authentic conversations with other Mandingo speakers during community gatherings, house visitations, religious education, and relatives in their home countries. Therefore, children's communicative competence within the Mandingo community in the United States was realized through an extended family ideology.

Connections to home countries referred to the participants' countries of origin. Five participants in this study came from different parts of Guinea, a country in West Africa, and one participant was from Liberia. The participants explained that maintaining a native language in the United States gave them a sense of belonging within the immigrant community and with family members in their home countries during visitations. Five participants said maintaining the language was critical in having them and their children have a continued communication channel and connection with family members back in their home countries. If an individual cannot speak Mandingo during a visit to a home country, they are shunned and considered a "lost" person or a stranger to the community.

When it comes to the *school community*, language socialization researchers view schools as spaces where children acquire communicative competence and develop citizenship in multiple communities (García-Sánchez & Nazimova, 2017). The school community in this study was considered the elementary schools where the Mandingo children attended classes ranging from prekindergarten to second grade. These experiences included interactions with both friends and teachers. Students may face

national and group subjectivities, belonging differences, and marginality in a school community. Strong attitudes toward heritage language use and ethnic identity could be influenced by the presence of a heritage language teacher and co-ethnic friends (García-Sánchez & Nazimova, 2017). The participants in this study felt the school community was making it hard for them to teach their children Mandingo because of the long hours their children spent at school and the use of English when the children were interacting with their friends.

Table 4 shows a summary of Mandingo parents’ language experiences with their children outside the home. The table shows the themes that emerged with the corresponding number of codes and the number of participants who responded.

Table 4

Experiences Outside the Home

Theme	Number of codes	Number of participants
Extended community	22	6
Connection to home countries	20	5
School community	27	6

Extended Community

In this study, an extended community reflected people with whom the participants interacted within the immigrant community, such as in religious settings, family gatherings, and in their immediate neighborhood. Some participants referred to the non-blood Mandingo people as “aunt,” “big sister,” or tanti and tonto. This open referral to non-blood relatives as aunts or uncles, brothers or sisters, seemed to be influenced by African tradition, expressed through a broad view of the African philosophical moral

code (Oyebade & Azenabor, 2018). The moral code is demonstrated through a person's character and actions within the community and is linked to a person's very existence. The Mandingo community believes in the philosophy or principle of *banerado* or *banyeredo*, which means a "good person." A good person is known to be kind, respectful, hardworking, and disciplined. Having an extended family unit allowed the Mandingo speakers to socialize their children into Mandingo with the help of "aunts," "uncles," "sisters," and "brothers." The children were socialized into language at the Mosques, community gatherings, and house visits where Mandingo use was encouraged. These interactions enhanced Mandingo children's social and cultural development through naturalistic language interactions. Participant A proudly talked about her children speaking Mandingo with relatives:

A lot of kids their age all speak English. But, my kids talk to my family members a lot. And the only language that they can speak is Mandingo. So yeah, when they go to my sisters or my Auntie's house to visit, they all speak to the kids in Mandingo. And I'm very surprised when my kids speak Mandingo with them because my kids spend a lot of time with kids who don't say it outside the house. And that's it.

In this example, the children were socialized into language through their interactions with an aunt and grandmother. These interactions were made possible by an extended family ideology based on African philosophical ideas of kindness and respect for elders. The participant said, "The only language they can speak is Mandingo." This was an example of a way to show respect for elders in the community by speaking the Mandingo language. Similarly, Participant B reflected on how children can be socialized into

language use and practice by interacting with extended “family members” within the community and following the African philosophical moral code of being a good person. Participant B talked about how the principle of *banerado* was used in socializing her children into Mandingo in the community:

We are always happy to share and help out. We have a lady from Mali who sits by the Mosque. She comes there to get food. I asked her what had happened to her. She told me that she has no family. She has the same last name as my husband, so he started to call her “my sister.” I began to send my children to take food for her. The lady doesn’t speak English or French. So she speaks Mandingo with them. My daughter asked me why they have to do this all the time. I told her that my mother did the same with me, and I am also doing it with them. In my culture, when a child sees an older person, they have to run and help immediately, and we believe that when you help someone, blessings will come back to you.

In this example, the Mandingo children were socialized into language outside the home by interacting with an “extended family member.” They also practiced kindness and respect for elders by helping and using the language with a new family member through the African philosophical principle of *banerado* or being “a good person.” Participant A said that “my husband started to call her sister,” and she began to send her children to take food for the new “aunt.” In addition, Participant F showed how children were socialized into language through the idea of extended family unit during religious education:

Yeah, they go every Saturday and Sunday to the Mosque for prayer studies, where there are people who already know Mandingo. When the teacher is reading the

Quran, they use French, but when the teacher wants them to repeat something, or they want them to help do something around the Mosque, they speak Mandingo to them.

In this example, the children were socialized into language use outside the home during religious studies. The participant said the Quran was read in French, but “responses” were all done in Mandingo. She also said that “when they want them to help do something at the Mosque.” This simple act of obedience allowed the children to practice Mandingo use with adults and peers within the community through the principle of *banerado*, or being “a good person.”

Unlike Participants A, B, and F, whose children were socialized into language use outside the home through the extended family unit ideology guided by the African philosophical worldview, Participant C seemed to struggle with language use and maintenance. She blamed it on herself and the family members who tended to speak English around her son:

Honestly, not really. I speak mostly English, and even when I am around my family members, I tend to speak English. So that’s also why it’s harder to teach Malinke, you know, because, again, when he’s at school, he’s speaking English. And then when he goes within a large crowd, which is not within his home, his hearing English, and that’s coming from me, than anybody you know, we’re all speaking English to him outside of the house, so when we come home with peace of mind in case it makes them a little, it makes it very hard. I’m not gonna say a little bit makes it hard.

In this example, the participant struggled to maintain Mandingo with her son because her family members “tend to speak English.” She pointed out that it was “harder” to teach her language because she also resorted back to speaking English around the family.

Connection to Home Countries

Maintaining a native language in the United States gave the participants a sense of belonging within the immigrant community and with family members in their home countries during visits. Most participants said that maintaining the language was critical in having them and their children have a continued communication channel with extended family members. If an individual cannot speak Mandingo during a visit to a home country, they are shunned and considered a “lost” person or a stranger to the community. A common practice within the immigrant community is to send children back to their home countries at a young age so the children can be socialized into language by interacting with extended family members. Participant A stated her two children, 4 and 5 years old, visited their grandmother in Guinea for an extended period of 1 year. Although it was not an easy decision, she was proud of what the children had accomplished in Africa:

At first, it was tough for me to give my kids to my mother. But now, when I talk to them, I’m so proud. I’m super proud because they still speak English, their English is still very fluent, but they even speak more fluently in our language now than they were here. For example, I call them every day on videos. So yesterday, as soon as I called, he said, *Iyé mounkela yendö?* [What are you doing over there?]. I said *Fossi, N’ye yandoronné* [Nothing, I’m here]. And he goes, *nta, Ité afö anjè Ko ayé chocolate douma?* [Nta, can you tell him to give me chocolate?].

Bani abara aban adila m'ma [Because he refused to give me chocolate]. But all of this conversation is in my Mandingo. Now they call me nta [name withheld]. Because my mom calls me [name withheld] and everybody calls me nta [Name withheld]. So now they stopped saying, Mommy.

In this example, the child used the proper conventions in the Mandingo language when he said “nta,” which shows someone’s status within the community. He also showed respect by addressing his mother as “nta,” a proper word for her status within the community. She said, “I am super proud” because the children were fluent in Mandingo. Although Participant B had a month’s stay with her children in Guinea, she had a similar experience in which the children seemed to have flourished speaking Mandingo in her home country:

Yeah. So, you know how I speak my language with everybody and even my children. But they were not saying much in the beginning. They were talking some words. So, I went back home to visit my family for 1 month. And by the time we got back, they could speak French and Mandingo fluently because Everybody was speaking the language. So, when my family back home saw that my children understood the language and they were responding to what was asked of them, they were so excited. They said, Oh, my goodness, you did a wonderful job, you know, to teach your children your language, they know everything we tell them, they know everything, and they can understand us. And that was wonderful. Yeah

The participant seemed happy with both the reaction from her relatives and the children’s active engagement in using Mandingo. She said that her children were limited in

language expression before traveling to Africa, but after they visited Africa, the children became fluent in both English and Mandingo. This example validated the idea of sending the children back home to be socialized into language and to establish their communicative competence. The participant seemed to feel accepted by the community when they said she did “a wonderful job” teaching her children the language.

Equally important is the example provided by Participant A regarding home country visits. Participant A equated a sense of belonging to her connection with family members back home. Continuing to use the language even after having spent several years outside that community was inevitable. Therefore, maintaining a native language in the United States gave her a sense of belonging or connection with her relatives back home because not knowing the language would have led to isolation and name-calling (lost or stranger):

So, when you come, like if you don't grow up around them, like, for example, I'm the perfect example. I came to America when I was 14 years old. And I've been here for 14 years. I didn't go back for a really long time. So, they already had this stigma of, you know, when these kids go over to foreign land, they forget their ID. And you know, they don't speak their language. So I enjoyed the surprise faces on like my grandmother's and my cousin every time they will say hi [foreign language]. And I'll respond back in Mandingo [foreign language]. Like, they would like, drop their jaw-like, you speak, you still remember the language, and they'll be so proud. And that's like, such a great feeling for me. So that's it's a good thing that, you know, my parents did not let me forget our language, even when we came here. So, I was grateful to be able to communicate with

everybody. I didn't feel like a stranger. And I think that that gave me the connection to like my father's village and my family members and helped me connect with them.

In this example, Participant A credited her parents for helping her maintain her native language because she did not feel like a "stranger" when she visited her homeland.

Instead, she felt a "connection" with them. In continuing to use the language when with her grandmother back home, the participant adhered to the African principle of being a good person, meaning that a "good person" has respect. Speaking the language with elders was a sign of respect.

School Community

The school community is part of a national place where rules apply to language learning and maintenance. In this case, the English-only policies that require English to be used in all public areas have children always using English. The school community in this study was considered the elementary schools where the Mandingo children attended classes ranging from prekindergarten to second grade. These experiences included interactions with friends and teachers during and after school hours. The school community is an essential space in helping to support children's language socialization and communicative competence. Schools give children a platform to gain national and group subjectivities as they interact with teachers and peers. The children also begin to understand belonging differences, such as accent and language differences. As a result of national and group subjectivities, children who are marginalized may start to form their national and personal identities as immigrants. Therefore, strong attitudes toward heritage language use and ethnic identity could be influenced by the presence of a heritage

language teacher and co-ethnic friends (García-Sánchez & Nazimova, 2017). Participant A reflected on her interaction with a teacher who opposed her son's use of Mandingo at school:

So, because in our home, we will speak Mandingo to him. But when he went to school, they would speak English to him. I remember in school. My husband went to drop them off one day in daycare. The teacher asked not to speak Mandingo to our child. Because she said that, he gets really confused with his words. So, he was always mixing the two languages together. So, she was like, I couldn't help it because he kept saying it. The teacher was really upset because when he wanted food, he would say *ntako* [food] she is like, what does that even mean. But that's how you say it in Mandingo.

This example shows how some immigrants face marginalization within an English-only school system. The teacher's frustrations over language differences seemed to frustrate the participant. She clearly said, "But that is how we say it in Mandingo." Similarly, Participant B showed the same helplessness faced at school with English-only policies interfering with the immigrant community:

When they are out, we don't have much control when they are with their American friends and stuff. They are always at school and after school. So, they hang out with friends who speak English. Last time he told me that he was going and hanging out with his American friend. They went outside to play, and I know they speak English. So, like I was saying, I don't want to take their happiness away.

In this example, it is apparent that English-only policies render Mandingo-speaking parents helpless within the American community. The participant said, “We don’t have much control”; therefore, exposure to the English language was sometimes inevitable. Also, Participant D revealed how children were sometimes embarrassed by their parents using Mandingo in front of their friends:

A lot because they do not speak Mandingo at school, only English. So, when they come home, they continue to respond to me in English. But they understand what I am saying. But it’s affecting me a little bit. I went to pick up my daughter from school one day. I started to talk to her in Mandingo, but she began to reply in English because she was with her friend and spoke English. I told her in Mandingo, don’t ever do that.

In this example, the child seemed embarrassed to use Mandingo in front of her friends. The participant said her daughter began to “reply” in English because she was with her friends. The child was forming her identity as an immigrant. She was gravitating toward an English-only group.

In analyzing the participants’ responses, it was evident that language socialization and communicative competence in Mandingo children were expressed through the broad worldview of African philosophy. The Mandingo community particularly believes in the principle of *banerado* or *banyeredo*, which means a “good person.” This principle is a moral code demonstrated through a person’s character and actions within the community and is abstractly linked to a person’s very existence (Oyebade & Azenabor, 2018). Most participants and their children expressed the extended family unit ideology from African philosophical ideals. This ideology supports children’s language socialization, language

use, language maintenance, and communicative competence (Liang, 2018). It provides community members with a sense of belonging, including interacting in social situations to share and express ideas and feelings (Liang, 2018). The participants in this study explained that character and actions were nurtured and strongly required of their children to become good functional citizens in society. For example, a “good child” is hardworking, kind, respectful, and disciplined. The actions children can take include helping and speaking the language with the older people. In addition, these actions require children to show respect when interacting with elders by addressing them accordingly. For example, adding a title to someone’s name such as “big sister” or “little brother” or tanti and tonto is a show of discipline or respect. The participants felt the English-only policies in place in the U.S. educational system affected their children’s maintenance of the Mandingo language. The children were exposed to an English-only environment and English-speaking friends. Ultimately, there was little time to practice Mandingo, and some students felt ashamed of using their native language in front of their peers and teachers.

Summary of Parent Experiences With Children’s Language Use Outside the Home

Through a detailed analysis of the data, themes of extended community, connections to home countries, and school community emerged. The description of language experiences expressed in RQ3 came from language use and interactions within the United States and the participants’ home countries. The participants deemed the people with whom they interacted within the immigrant community as extended family members. The school community in this study was considered the elementary schools

where the Mandingo children attended classes ranging from prekindergarten to second grade. These experiences included interactions with both friends and teachers.

Summary

This chapter provided evidence of nine themes found through a close reading of the data. Following the guidelines of the IPA methodology, the themes provided rich data that answered the three primary questions. Themes were discussed in relation to the research questions that they specifically answered. The data as a whole helped illuminate the lived experiences of Mandingo parents in maintaining their native language with children 3–7 years old. The questions were as follows:

Research Question 1: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents describe their experiences in learning and maintaining a native language?

Research Question 2: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining their native language with young children at home?

Research Question 3: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining their native language with young children outside the home?

Themes of conflicting sense of feeling, sense of belonging, and cultural appreciation were associated with the general sense of participants' experiences with language learning and maintenance. The participants presented a *conflicting sense of feeling* when discussing their own experiences learning and maintaining Mandingo in their home countries. The participants seemed to go back and forth between rationalizing the language policies established by the schools while disregarding their mother tongue. They oscillated between being embarrassed and humiliated by the corporal punishments

at school and accepting their punishments as necessary for economic development, nationalism, and social-cultural acceptance. A collective *sense of belonging* also emerged in the language learning and maintenance experiences among the participants. The participants felt understood, valued, and accepted by those around them, especially within the immigrant community. Many variations of Mandingo are spoken within the West African immigrant community, to include Dyula, Bambara, Soninke, and Malinke. Newcomers can meet and interact with many people who speak Mandingo within and outside their Harlem immigrant community. Last, the participants expressed *cultural appreciation* and pride in speaking the Mandingo language. The participants believed language gave different meanings to expressions and emotions when verbalized in a native tongue during familiar ritual celebrations. Cultural appreciation was expressed through ritual gatherings, respect for elders, and politeness. Generally, cultural appreciation was also seen as finding comfort in familiar religious traditions and practices and celebrating special occasions with music, dance, and cuisine.

In the second question, the themes of consistency, enforcement, and cultural values emerged as a result of language maintenance experiences with children at home. The theme of *consistency* was found during the data analysis, as all participants reflected that being consistent in using the language daily helped develop language maintenance among their children. At times, the participants also felt *enforcement* in using the language was necessary because it forced their children to become fluent in using the Mandingo language because of daily practice. The participants used many tactics to ensure their children could use the language at home. Some tactics were corrective and others were puristic. The corrective tactics were withholding items until the child used

Mandingo to retrieve them. Some puristic tactics included asking the children to use complete Mandingo sentences without inserting any English words. Finally, for the theme of *cultural values*, the participants felt the Mandingo and American cultural differences were overbearing for them to instill the discipline needed to learn the language. The participants reflected that being respectful when using the language daily with their children helped develop language maintenance. This practice was thought to help children learn. The participants believed children should display the act of being passive listeners. This can only be done by respecting elders by not responding to adults, avoiding eye contact, and waiting to be spoken to. To them, these acts of respect cannot be separated from the language. They go hand in hand. Others believed the policies of English only also affected them as parents.

Finally, the themes of extended community, connection to home countries, and school community emerged as a result of the question on language maintenance with children outside the home. The participants believed language acquisition and competence in using it could be realized through an *extended community* or extended family unit ideology in this matter. In this research, other Mandingo-speaking non-relatives were sometimes called “tanti” or “tonto” or aunt and mom. The children were socialized into the language by having authentic conversations with members of the extended community during community gatherings, house visitations, religious education, and relatives in their home countries. Next, *connection to home countries* referred to the participants’ countries of origin before immigrating to the United States. The participants believed maintaining a native language in the United States gave them a sense of belonging within the immigrant community and with family members in their

home countries during visits. All six participants said maintaining the language was critical in having them and their children have a continued communication channel and connection with family members back in their home countries. If an individual cannot speak Mandingo during a visit to a home country, they are shunned and considered a “lost” person or a stranger to the community. The *school community* was considered the elementary schools where the Mandingo children attended classes ranging from prekindergarten to second grade. The experiences noted among the participants’ children were the interactions with both friends and teachers. The participants felt a push from the teachers, no control of their children’s interactions, and long school hours exposed their children to the constant use of the English language, hence affecting their exposure to Mandingo. Students may face national and group subjectivities, belonging differences, and marginality in a school community. Strong attitudes toward heritage language use and ethnic identity could be influenced by the presence of a heritage language teacher and co-ethnic friends (García-Sánchez & Nazimova, 2017).

Table 5 shows a summary of all the themes, the number of participants and their corresponding responses to the recurrent themes, and how much of the sample responded.

Table 5*Recurrent Themes*

Recurrent themes							
Themes	A	B	C	D	E	F	Present in over half of the sample?
Conflicting sense of feeling	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
Sense of belonging	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Cultural appreciation	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Consistency	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Enforcement	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Cultural values	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Extended community	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Home country	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
School community	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter contains a discussion of the themes found during the data analysis stage, how the themes relate to the extant literature, the limitations and implications, and practice recommendations.

Overview of Findings

This study was designed to examine first-generation Mandingo parents' lived experiences in maintaining their native language with children 3–7 years old. Overall, the current literature showed Mandingo-speaking parents positively perceive language use and experiences with their children inside and outside the home. At the center of language learning within the Mandingo community was the broad worldview of African philosophy of personhood (Fairfax, 2017). This philosophy is a moral code demonstrated through a person's character and actions within the community and is abstractly linked to a person's very existence (Fairfax, 2017). The Mandingo principle of a *banerado* or *banyeredo* is evident in the African philosophy of personhood and means good person. Language socialization theory looks at communities as places that promote communicative competence of the novice (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). Therefore, the principle elements of *banerado* are expected to be displayed by children and other novices as forms of sociality and competence. Communicative competence is realized when novice members of a community group can participate in speech events that are socially recognized in broader society (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011).

The principle of *banerado* or *banyeredo* encourages an interconnected relationship between an individual and the community. The conformed individual norms and ideals of moral virtues or personhood such as generosity, kindness, compassion,

benevolence, respect, and concern for others are believed to be demonstrated within the community (Gyekye, 1992). In order for personhood to be an acceptable form of humanity, it has to be embodied within the community through a person's character toward others (Obioha, 2014). Otherwise, without a reflective infrastructure and an enforcer of these values, crime and violence, abuse, neglect selfishness, and materialism will invade the community (Obioha, 2014). However, some challenges have affected the smooth learning and maintenance of the Mandingo language in children between 3 and 7 years old. A major challenge is the English-only policies established by the dominant majority in countries like the United States. The majority group controls language standardization in society and tends to decide the community's ideal model (Mallikarjun, 2018). Therefore, the Mandingo-speaking immigrants in this study were categorized as minorities in the United States; they needed to adhere to dominant language policies such as the English-only movement, in which English is perceived as the national language in the United States. While drawing upon the theory of language socialization, nine themes emerged to answer the primary research question: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view experiences maintaining their native language with young children? The following questions guided this qualitative study:

Research Question 1: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents describe their experiences in learning and maintaining a native language?

Research Question 2: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining their native language with young children at home?

Research Question 3: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining their native language with young children outside the home?

As discussed in Chapter 4, the salient themes that emerged for RQ1 were conflicting sense of feeling, sense of belonging, and cultural appreciation. The themes that emerged for RQ2 were consistency with Mandingo use, enforcing Mandingo use, and adhering to cultural values. Finally, the themes that emerged for RQ3 were extended community, connections to home countries, and school community.

Interpretation of Results

Conflicting Sense of Feeling

All six participants expressed a conflicting sense of feeling. The participants oscillated between supporting how they were forced to maintain the French language while disregarding their native tongue as children and defending the established language policies by saying “it was good for us.” The six participants expressed that it was difficult not to speak Mandingo as children growing up in their home countries. They recalled the harsh tactics used by teachers to enforce the use of French at schools, such as wearing a bone around their neck or a symbol that referred to them as vernacular speakers (native languages are regarded as vernacular). For example, Participant B recalled feeling embarrassed because her peers laughed at her for wearing a bone around her neck for the entire day. Participant A said she was “discouraged” after being asked to kneel on rice grains because she spoke Mandingo in class. However, both participants said it was good for them to be punished because it was for their benefit. Although all the participants expressed a conflicting sense of feeling, I chose to analyze only three examples in

Chapter 4 because those participants verbally detailed their feelings. The other three participants used phrases such as “Ha, the teacher does not like it” as they blushed and swung their partially closed knuckles from top to bottom, which indicated being beaten with a stick. Therefore, although all the six participants were affected by postcolonial policies, only three expressed this effect verbally. The use of body language and physical gestures by the other three respondents appeared contradictory. For example, smiling while discussing punishment indicated the participants thought it was acceptable to be punished for speaking Mandingo.

The contradictory feelings expressed by the respondents were reflected in the extant literature on language ideologies. Prior research showed postcolonial ideas in Africa contributed to such complex responses. Ouane and Glanz (2010) pointed out that devaluing language ideologies has caused African languages to be downgraded as traditional, local, disordered, and subordinate, whereas colonial languages such as English, French, and Portuguese are praised as messianic modernizers or unifiers. According to Adenekan (2019), language is easily manipulated and exploited by those in power for the purposes of inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, hegemonic countries tend to monopolize the use of English and French against other languages. These monolingual tendencies are evident in institutional and everyday practices (Blackledge, 2000). For example, in the United States, the English debate shows political identity about who is “Americanized” to fit into the idea of a true American (Schieffelin & Doucet, 1998). To explicitly become a U.S. citizen requires proficiency in the English language as literacy tests are introduced to immigrants to be Americanized. In the above example of forcing students to wear bone necklaces or kneeling on rice grains for speaking an unacceptable

language, it becomes apparent how harsh tactics are used to enforce the use of French in schools. Ademowo (2016) stated that ultimately, African elites and postcolonial educational policies have either ignorantly or deliberately been aimed at making Africans view their languages as inferior and less competent while holding colonial languages in high esteem. This conflicting sense of emotions demonstrates some of the complexities of postcolonial education policies demonstrated by the participants as they described language learning and language use in the context of colonized countries.

Sense of Belonging

The participants had a collective sense of belonging. A close observation of the interviewees for this study showed they presented a nonchalant attitude about maintaining Mandingo as immigrants. They used the phrases “it is just like home” or “it is just like my country” when asked about their experience maintaining Mandingo in the United States. The participants felt welcomed and happy to maintain their language within their immigrant community because fellow immigrants expressed acts of kindness. Two participants also felt the American community was very welcoming and pleasant to them as non-English speakers. Participants E and F said Americans “take their time and speak slowly when they know that you do not speak English.” Overall, the participants were able to socialize and meet fellow Mandingo speakers from other countries. This welcoming atmosphere made them feel understood, valued, and accepted by others within the immigrant community. It can be assumed that the feelings of belonging and happiness experienced from fitting in occurred because many West African people speak a variation of Mandingo such as Dyula, Bambara, Soninke, or Malinke. For example, Participant C said, “Because my language is spoken in multiple different countries, that

just allows you to connect to them.” Participant B talked about her interactions with a vast African clientele:

I found out, you know, like 50 or 60% of my parents and providers speak the same language that I speak. And we are not from the same country. Some of them are from my country, but some are from different countries, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ivory Coast, or Guinea.

When exploring her interactions with Americans, Participant E raved about the sense of belonging she felt when interacting with them:

America is good because American people here are nice. American people take their time if they see you that you do not speak the language. They take their time to make you know, to really understand what you’re trying to say. And then they help you in a lot of different ways.

The responses acquired from the interviews with participants were also reflected in the extant literature. Prior research showed that due to early migration in the 13th century, the Mandingo language became widely spread in a large geographical area in Africa and has acquired numerous dialectic variations (Pruitt, 2022). It is known as Bambara in Mali and Malinke/Mandinka in Guinea, spoken with only five instead of seven vowels (Vydrin et al., 2000). In Sierra Leone, it is a two tonal language with a high and low pitch. However, a variety spoken on the borders of The Gambia and Senegal is non-tonal and uses a pitched accent influenced by Wolof. In Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast, Dyula constitutes the linguistic and cultural nucleus. All the Minding languages are closely related to each other. Therefore, being mutually intelligible with Mandingo is closely related to understanding Bambara, Malinke, Soninke, and Dyula (Williamson &

Blench, 2000). Although the participants in the current study came from different countries and were different from one another, language was used to portray both differences and similarities. Language united them as people who belonged to a certain group. In this case, the new geographical location made them redefine their national identities as individuals to conform to the context of being the “other.” The use of language, therefore, gave them a sense of belonging as it gave them feelings of conscious attachment to the Mandingo immigrant community. Language was being used to build a sense of belonging despite national borders, hence becoming a binding factor among the participants in this study. Therefore, when describing their language experiences, the participants had a collective sense of belonging as they shared a common language.

Cultural Appreciation

The participants expressed cultural appreciation and pride in speaking the Mandingo language because it helped them identify with the Mandingo community. They recognized and enjoyed customs, norms, and behaviors that affirmed their identities as a Mandingo immigrant community. Participants A and C pointed out that having arrived in the United States as children, they appreciated the norms and traditions of their own culture more now as adults. Participants B, D, E, and F expressed pride in knowing that many West Africans speak a Mandingo in the United States. They used words such as “super proud” or “proud” and “happy” when expressing their cultural beliefs. They also believed language use gives deeper meaning to expressions and emotions when verbalized in a native tongue during familiar ritual celebrations. Therefore, identifying and participating in cultural celebrations and practices showed respect for elders and politeness as African people. For example, Participant A described the traditional

transition ritual between a mother and daughter during a marriage ceremony in her culture. Participant A shared that she was proud of being able to understand her language because she could understand this traditional ritual's whole "meaning." Otherwise, she would not have "understood its message" had they translated it into English. She later admitted that embracing her cultural beliefs made her proud of her heritage. She said, "It's like a sign of being proud of where you're from. So, yeah, it's really, it's a really big thing. And my parents really ensure that they didn't, they did not let us miss out on it."

The extant literature on Asian parents showed a similar trend of adhering to cultural appreciation. Many parents described the importance of retaining the home language because it was viewed as a salient feature of cultural identity or keeping up with the culture. In a study conducted by B. Y. Lee (2013), some parents believed native language was necessary for conveying deeper feelings. In other studies, it was viewed as impolite not to speak a native tongue around elders. Liang (2018) conducted a study on Asian parents and the results revealed some ethnic groups in Korea believe it is disrespectful to speak English around senior family members. Similarly, Sawyer et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative study of 14 Spanish-speaking parents from three early childhood centers in Pennsylvania. The researchers examined parent and teacher beliefs in supporting dual language learning. The results showed many parents described the importance of retaining the home language because it is a salient feature of cultural identity or keeping up with the culture. The participants in the current study described their happiness toward cultural appreciation as immigrants in the United States, this could be a result of postcolonial ideals as they were denied to speak their language as school children.

Consistency With Mandingo Use

The participants reflected that being consistent in the native language daily strengthened language maintenance among their children. According to Liang (2018), consistent language use supports and enhances a child's communication skills. When asked about when they last used Mandingo with their children, the participants' answers were "just now," "today," or "this morning." The participants' consistent utterances of "today," "just now," and "all the time" showed they made it a habit to speak Mandingo daily, which kept the language current in their children's minds. For example, Participant B said,

Today, my son N, has to go to school. They have a summer enrichment program going on. So, I went and woke him up. I say to him *alou willi wati barase* ["it's time to wake up"]. And then he got up.

In another example, Participant E said, "Yeah, yesterday I called them to come and get some food. I said *Na eyè dominiké?* [Do you want more food?]. He said, *N'yè dôko* [I want more food]."

Previous studies on language socialization indicated home support, especially daily routines, is significant in helping children maintain their native language. Chen et al. (2018) posited that native language development in children from immigrant families can be encouraged through daily language socialization both within the home and at school. The Chinese American children from their study were assessed in Cantonese or Mandarin. Structural equation modeling results showed adult Chinese language use with children at home predicted children's higher receptive and expressive vocabulary 2 years later. Liang (2018) stated high cohesion leads to high language use and low cohesion

leads to low language use within mother–child or grandparent–grandchild relationships. Therefore, supporting and enhancing a child’s first language can facilitate communication and respect among family members, strengthening family ties when adults act as role models or experts. Consistency is more than simply saying words or phrases in one’s native language. It involves constant indulgence in the native language by all family members. Therefore, the participants believed consistency was important in learning and maintaining language with children at home.

Enforcing Mandingo Use

Four participants believed enforcing the use of language was essential in supporting the learning and maintenance of Mandingo at home. The participants used the word “enforce” frequently when discussing socializing their children into daily native language use. The participants used a range of tactics to enforce the use of Mandingo. Some tactics were corrective whereas others were puristic. The corrective tactics were withholding items until the child used Mandingo to retrieve them. Some puristic tactics included insisting that the children use complete Mandingo sentences without inserting any English words. However, some participants allowed their children to respond in English when the parents spoke to them in Mandingo. Either way, some form of Mandingo use was included in their daily conversation. Individual approaches among the participants of the current study had to do with showing respect to their elders or maintaining cultural values and language. For example, Participant A thought the idea of mixing the two languages would confuse her son, so she became more intentional in her interactions with him by explaining the two different languages and why they were both

significant to his learning and acquisition. When asked how she felt about her son learning Mandingo, she said the following:

Yeah. Like for my son when he was growing up. He was very conflicted. So, because in our home, we will speak Mandingo to him. However, when he went to daycare, they would speak English to him. The teacher also said that he gets really confused with his words.

Similarly, Participant B wanted her children to speak pure Mandingo without mixing in English. She provided the following as her reasons:

I want them to be fluent in Mandingo. For example, they know the word water in Mandingo, but they say *ine* water *nko* if they want to drink water. For example, J.J. said that to me yesterday. So, I said, what is that word, water? How do you say the word water in Mandingo? I ask him in Mandingo, what is the word water in Mandingo? He said, *gi*. Then I say, oh, so why don't you use *gi* say *ine gi nko*.

However, it is clear that some parents enforced the use of Mandingo for communication purposes because their English skills were weak. For example, Participants D, E, and F often provided one-word responses, which forced me to repeat the questions and include explanations to help them understand the inquiries.

Although the parents in the current study used direct enforcement of language use with their children at home, the extant literature showed more indirect enforcement by being relentless with maintaining a native language. Yang (2017) noted some Korean parents enrolled their children in diverse Korean culture-oriented environments or activities such as Korean heritage language schools, Sunday school at Korean church, and informal gatherings. The parents formed or supported the transmission of language and

culture to their children through these extended family members in the grassroots groups within their communities. Likewise, Kwon (2017) argued that family members preferred the native language because of their inability to communicate in English with their children. According to Liang (2018), it is difficult for parents with weak English proficiency to understand their children's assignments and school arrangements regardless of their intentions. The participants in the current study believed enforcing the use of language was essential in supporting the learning and maintenance of Mandingo at home.

Adhering to Cultural Values

The participants believed African cultural values such as politeness, respect for elders, and kindness were essential in teaching their children to learn and maintain the Mandingo language. They felt children are socialized into a language in an African culture by being passive listeners. The participants related that the body language of a passive listener should include avoiding eye contact and staying still while being spoken to or waiting to be asked to speak. They added that passively listening to an adult as they speak was considered a social practice and a sign of politeness and respect. In addition, addressing older people by specific Mandingo titles was considered respectful. Children who respect their elders are considered great learners because they can understand what the adults are saying or teaching them. Therefore, it was important for the children to adhere to the African cultural values by maintaining their language. However, the participants also felt the Mandingo and the American cultural differences required overbearing standards in instilling the discipline needed to learn. For example, Participant

B explained the challenges children face when interacting with adults according to African social values:

You know that the child can't say anything when the adult speaks during the interactions. You have to wait until the adult finish talking, and then if you have anything to say, you can respond or wait until you are called upon.

A similar challenge was echoed in the following response by Participant E, who articulated the conflict faced when mediating between African and American cultural expectations:

Here too, they said child has to look at your face to talk, and in our way, when a grown-up is talking to you, you have to be down [she bowed her head when she said the word down]. But here [meaning the United States], child look at you face to face to understand you, but the way they educate me, that is wrong. I think if the parent is talking the child should not be talking. Because you talk and the child talk and you talk and the child talk. The kid is not going to understand you.

García-Sánchez and Nazimova (2017) posited that the host country's cultural ideologies significantly influence maintaining and developing language use or practices within immigrant families. These hegemonic language ideologies, cultural-political policies of recognition, and belonging are negotiated by immigrants daily. Guardado (2018) argued that unsuccessful home language practices can lead to language loss whereas some strategies encourage the development of ethnic identity, oral language proficiency, and the continuation of family and cultural values.

Extended Family Community

The most significant theme that emerged for RQ3 was extended community. The participants believed having an extended family unit allowed Mandingo speakers to socialize their children into Mandingo with the help of “aunts,” “uncles,” “sisters,” and “brothers.” The extended family relationship is gained through open kinship referrals of non-blood relatives as actual relatives. In addition, at the center of this solid communal bond is the ideology of *banerado* or *banyeredo*, influenced by African tradition expressed through a broad view of the African philosophical moral code (Oyebade & Azenabor, 2018). The moral code is demonstrated through a person’s character and actions within the community and is linked to a person’s very existence. Therefore, children were socialized into language at the Mosques, community gatherings, and house visits where Mandingo expression was encouraged. These interactions enhanced Mandingo children’s social and cultural development through naturalistic language interactions. Participant A proudly talked about her children engaging in Mandingo with relatives:

A lot of kids their age all speak English. But my kids talk to my family members a lot. And the only language that they can speak is Mandingo. So yeah, when they go to my sisters or my Auntie’s house to visit, they all speak to the kids in Mandingo.

The participants also pointed out that children were naturally socialized into and through language by interacting with the elders in the community as they practiced the ideology of *banerado* or *banyeredo* (defined as being a good person). Children are expected to help with the well-being of older people in the community. They are encouraged to show acts of kindness by cleaning, cooking, and serving the elderly in the community. For

example, Participant B explained how her children learned Mandingo while practicing the principle of banerado or banyeredo:

We are always happy to share and help out. We have a lady from Mali who sits by the Mosque. She told me that she has no family. She has the same last name as my husband, so he started to call her “my sister.” I began to send my children to take food for her. The lady doesn’t speak English or French. So, she speaks Mandingo with them.

In previous studies, communicative competence within the immigrant community was also realized through an extended community ideology (Guardado, 2018). The extended family included grassroots groups such as churches and language schools (Liang, 2018). Research has shown authentic conversations with the older generations significantly enhance children’s identity and social and cultural development through naturalistic language interactions. A strong case regarding these findings was made by Xu and Huang (2019), who examined how authentic conversation provided a social-cultural resource for developing Chinese learners’ cultural competence as a heritage language in Australia. Using a language socialization framework and intergenerational interaction model, the researchers found naturalistic interaction between the older and younger generations enhanced the acquisition of Chinese cultural knowledge through related lexical items. Another study that explored a similar phenomenon was conducted by M. Lee et al. (2015). Applying a narrative approach to their work, they examined the preferences of 13 Spanish-speaking parents related to raising Spanish–English bilingual children. Research in the community revealed participants relied on extended family, relatives, and school programs to provide communicative competence to young children.

Therefore, African cultural values such as politeness, respect for elders, and kindness are essential in the success of the extended family ideology. This ideology was important in socializing the African children into a language outside the home as many “aunts” and “uncles” would be involved in carrying authentic conversations in Mandingo with the children.

Connection to Home Countries

Another theme that emerged during the interviews was a strong connection to one’s country. Most participants said maintaining the language was critical in having them and their children sustain a continued communication channel with family members back home. Participant C related that if an individual cannot speak Mandingo during a visit to a home country, they are shunned and considered a “lost” person or a stranger to the community. A common practice within the immigrant community is to send children back to their home countries (Kwon, 2017). Interactions between children and their extended family members strengthen the grandparent–grandchild bond (Liang, 2018). Therefore, children can also be socialized into language by interacting with extended family members. In revealing their experiences of sending her children to Guinea, Participant A expressed that her two children, ages 4 and 5, visited their grandmother in Guinea for 1 year. Although it was not an easy decision, she was proud of what the children had accomplished in Africa during their daily phone calls. Participants E and D also talked about the benefits of their children spending time in Africa. Participant D said, “My older daughter speaks Mandingo because she was in Africa for 3 years.” These examples clearly show the benefit of socializing children into language use with extended family members in native countries.

The extant literature by Torres and Turner (2017), Kwon (2017), and Liang (2018) on cultural and language immersion showed that sending children to native countries for connection is a positive approach. Torres and Turner's (2017) study of 11 university Hispanic students also supported the positive impact of cultural immersion by showing the participants promoted the idea of interacting with family members as a way of maintaining ethnic identity. Kwon (2017) interviewed six Japanese and Korean immigrant mothers living in New York City, New Jersey, and North Carolina. The mothers in this study pointed out that their children's connection and frequent cross-border contacts with intergenerational families in their countries were fundamental reasons and motivations for maintaining a native language. A study of Asian parents showed the participants promoted the idea of heritage language maintenance as a way to facilitate communication among family members (Liang, 2018). Therefore, connection to home countries was seen as essential in maintaining the Mandingo language outside Mandingo homes because the immediate community was mainly English-speaking. It was also crucial in having the participants and their children sustain a continued communication channel with family members back home.

Language Interactions in the School Community

The participants believed the school community was negatively affecting their children's maintenance of the Mandingo language. First and foremost, the participants expressed that they did not have much control over their children's actions outside the home. In addition, the teachers were insensitive to children who mixed Mandingo and English. García-Sánchez and Nazimova (2017) revealed that the school community is part of a national place where rules apply to language use. However, inadequate teacher

training (Souto-Manning et al., 2018) makes it difficult to meet the diverse learning needs of students in the classrooms (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Interactions with friends and teachers during and after school hours become crucial in learning and maintaining a native language. It was with sadness that Participants B, C, and E talked about the school experience dilemma. For example, Participant B said, “When they are out, we do not have much control when they are with their American friends and stuff.” She continued to blame the long hours at school as detrimental to maintaining Mandingo: “They are always at school and after school. So, they hang out with friends who speak English.” She said these long hours made it difficult for the children to maintain Mandingo. Also, when asked about how the school experience affected her child’s learning of Mandingo, Participant E replied “a lot because they do not speak Mandingo at school, only English. So, when they come home, they continue to respond to me in English.” She continued to explain about an incident in which her daughter felt embarrassed to speak Mandingo: “I went to pick up my 7-year-old daughter from school one day. I started to talk to her in Mandingo, but she began to reply in English because she was with her friend who spoke English.” In addition, the issue of teachers being insensitive was brought up by Participant A, who explained that the teacher asked her not to use Mandingo with her son at home: “My husband went to drop them off one day in daycare. The teacher asked not to speak Mandingo to our child. Because she said that, he gets really confused with his words.” The issues presented by Participants A, B, and E could be related to the formation of new identities due to experiences in school. Some children have had bad experiences with peers.

Participant A also disclosed a frustrating “bad experience” due to her foreign accent in an early grade in elementary school when she first came to this country. The experience changed her life in several ways because she was suspended:

So, when I first came, I started in elementary school, and I guess the teacher asked a question, and so when I answered the question, I said, or the person can have an art attack. And then there was this girl that kept picking on me, she was like, what the hell is that? It’s not called an art attack, you say, heart attack, you know. So, she kind of embarrassed me. And then I turned around but again, with my accent, I was like, why do you keep embaaarrrraassing me? And then she was like, well, why do you talk like that? It’s not embaaarrrraassing you. It’s embarrassing, you know? And then we were in the hallway. And she came again, and she kept picking on me. And we got into a physical fight. I ended up getting suspended from that school.

Prior research on immigrant students in elementary schools in the United States showed most newcomers face marginalization in schools (Kiramba et al., 2020). Therefore, this affects their communicative competence in heritage languages as they try to fit into the American persona. M. Lee et al. (2015) found most teenagers were uncooperative with their parents about speaking Spanish because they believed it was un-American. In a related study conducted by Kiramba et al. (2020), the authors examined a cross-cultural educational experience of 30 African immigrant youth in U.S. schools. The findings revealed many participants struggled with cultural and linguistic differences, stereotypes, and marginalization in the school environment. This was coupled with low expectations from teachers and adjustment to new schooling practices. Cunningham

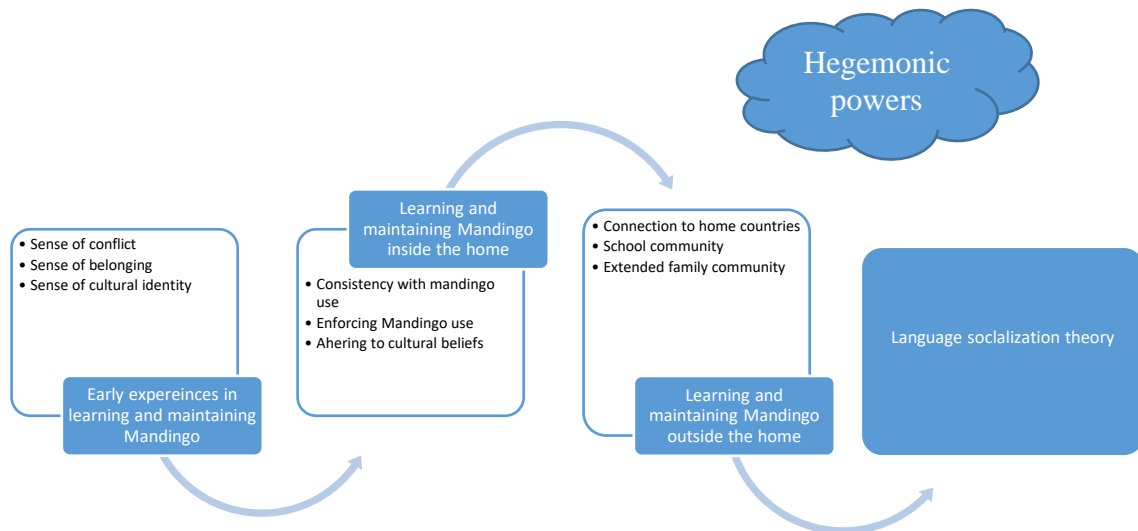
(2020) pointed out that teachers' attitudes also influence local policies and classroom practices. Their study of a mixed discourse of teachers in northern England about orientations and views on responsibility for language maintenance and attrition showed teachers hold parents and children responsible for maintaining and deteriorating languages beyond English. Therefore, the school community is believed to negatively affect African children in the maintenance of the Mandingo language due to long hours and less culturally diverse trained teachers. Hence, this affects learning and maintaining Mandingo outside the home.

Discussion of Findings

Figure 6 shows a summary of the findings. The idea is that the Mandingo participants' experiences though grounded on the philosophy of *banerado* are strongly affected by the hegemonic powers that hover over their language experiences either as young children growing up in their home countries or inside and outside their homes as parents.

Figure 6

Summary of Findings



In relation to the first research question, which looked at how Mandingo-speaking parents describe their experiences with learning and language maintenance, results showed the participants were emotionally conflicted, had a sense of belonging, and appreciated their culture as they became immigrants in the United States. The participants drew upon experiences from their native countries and the United States. These experiences were controlled by dominant language ideologies that were either instilled by colonial powers that devalued the native languages in African countries or monolingual ideologies controlled by those in power in the United States. The early language learning experiences and maintenance controlled by imperialistic ideals span from the postcolonial period from 1957 to date. These ideals included corporal punishments such as wearing a bone around the neck or kneeling in rice grains for speaking the Mandingo language at school. Despite unfavorable treatment by educators, the participants oscillated between

supporting how they were forced to maintain the French language while disregarding their native tongue as children and defending the established language policies by saying “it was good for us.” However, the language dynamics of the participants changed from conflicted to yearning to belong and appreciating their culture once they immigrated to the United States. These feelings could have been brought upon by dominant language policies that categorize Mandingo-speaking immigrants as minorities in the United States. In this case, the participants had to adhere to dominant language policies such as the English-only movement, where English is seen as the national language in the United States (Adenekan, 2019). The participants also embraced their cultural appreciation by recognizing and enjoying the customs, norms, and behaviors that affirmed their identities as a Mandingo immigrant community. Ironically, the participants were pleasant about their experiences. This kind of calm attitude appears to be supported by what they referred to as *banerado* or *banyeredo*, the philosophical principle that means a “good person.” A good person is described as hardworking, kind, polite, humble, respectful, and giving to the community. The Mandingo participants described it as a form of *karma* that life is an echo in that what you do comes back a hundredfold. This explains why the participants had security and support as they felt accepted, included, and part of a certain group (Garza et al, 2021).

The complexities brought upon by colonialism and powerful dominant language ideologies are consistent with both the language socialization theory and literature on language maintenance, ideologies, and power. Language socialization theory postulates that language is a social practice affected by environmental changes and participant agency or power to act and make choices (Moore, 1999). However, these environmental

changes are controlled by complex structured webs of social, political, public, and economic systems that decide on the local community's practices, identities, settings, and beliefs (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). The language socialization broad worldview is evident in the literature on language maintenance, ideologies, and power. The extant literature on political systems such as colonial imperialism in Africa and dominant hegemonic powers in the United States shows how the maintenance of language is being controlled. In postcolonial African countries, racist and social Darwinist positions of inferiority complex are evident in how communication, formal education, social-cultural modernization, and economic development are conducted through "superior" languages (Ouane & Glanz, 2010). In this study, the participants recalled being formally educated in French and forced to abandon their native Mandingo language.

Similarly, the literature shows language maintenance is affected by the language policies put in place by those in power. Adenekan (2019) posited that language is easily manipulated and exploited by those in power for the purposes of inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, hegemonic countries tend to monopolize the use of English and French against other languages. However, in a bid to maintain their language and assert themselves in the face of more dominant language ideologies, the Mandingo participants persisted through a sense of belonging as it created an "us" against "them" language binding attitude within their immigrant communities. Although the participants came from different countries and were different from one another, language was used to portray their similarities and as a binding factor. It asserted the identity of the participants by uniting them as people who belonged to a certain group. In this case, the new geographical location made them redefine their national identities as individuals as they

conformed to that context. The use of language, therefore, gave them a sense of belonging as it gave them feelings of attachment either consciously or unconsciously. Language socialization and worldview are centralized on the notion of directionality and learner agency (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). The intellectual trajectories of children and novices do change over time. For example, the participants who once were conflicted as children and forced to speak French and abandon their native language had changed that notion and saw their language as a source of belonging and cultural identity.

The overall persistent and positive attitude guided by the principle of *banerado* against a hovering cloud of powerful language ideologies was a surprise because I expected the usual sad immigrant stories of struggling to assimilate into the American culture. In addition, although immigrants do have a sense of belonging and cultural appreciation when in the United States, the conflicting emotions expressed by the Mandingo participants set them apart from prior research on Asian and Latinx immigrant parents in the United States as reviewed in this study. In addition, the devaluing language ideologies that have caused the African elite to downgrade their native languages as inferior and less competent while holding colonial languages in high esteem were not evident in this research. In conclusion, the participants were positive and persistent as they described their experiences with learning and maintaining Mandingo as children in countries of origin and as immigrants in the United States.

In relation to the second research question, which looked at language use and maintenance within the home environment, findings showed the participants were consistent in using language, enforced Mandingo use, and adhered to cultural values to help maintain Mandingo within their homes. The family domain was mainly at the center

of language continuity although it was affected by crucial social structural policies in the United States. The participants mostly used language practices that were successful in promoting language maintenance though others felt less success. In language socialization theory, practices are looked at as meaningful actions that occur routinely within a group, such as listening and speaking. These are shared daily by the social group, and, over time, they become normalized expectations in everyday life (Moore, 1999). Guardado (2018) posited that unsuccessful home language practices lead to language loss whereas successful practices encourage the development of ethnic development, oral language proficiency, and the continuation of family and cultural values. In this study, a detailed analysis of the data showed participants' daily practices of maintaining Mandingo at home were consistent, enforced, and focused on cultural differences. The participants believed home practices were crucial in later socializing their children into the Mandingo immigrant community within the United States or their home country. Therefore, they drew upon experiences with their children daily within their homes. The data revealed the participants were consistent in using their language with their children and that consistency was measured by how they talked about the timing of their interactions; just now, this morning, and yesterday marked the frequency with which Mandingo was used. This kind of consistency helped to gain fluency in the language. It made learning more effective as the children came to routinely expect to use Mandingo. In addition, enforcing Mandingo speaking in the homes was used to ensure children did not fall back on using English. The participants used a range of tactics to enforce the use of Mandingo. Some tactics were corrective and others were puristic. Last, in adhering to cultural values, the participants believed African cultural values such as

politeness, respect for elders, and kindness were important in learning and maintaining Mandingo. However, they also found that African cultural values clashed with American values, making it difficult to teach and maintain Mandingo at home. Yet, the participants strongly felt language and culture are intertwined and they could not teach one without the other.

Overall, there were similarities and differences between the current research and the body of literature. Prior research and the current research indicate maintaining and developing language use or practices within immigrant families is significantly influenced by the host country's cultural ideologies. Hegemonic language ideologies and politics of recognition and belonging have to be negotiated by immigrants daily (García-Sánchez & Nazimova, 2017). However, the level at which such practices are supported by different immigrant communities differs significantly from the Mandingo home practices. Research showed Asian parents rely on language schools (M. Lee et al., 2015), Latino immigrants rely on family members (Guardado, 2018), or parents enroll their children in summer schools in their respective countries. The current research showed the Mandingo participants relied on their philosophical beliefs rather than on services that helped to promote language learning and maintenance. Ultimately, the family domain created by the participants was at the center of continuity within the Mandingo language use inside the home with the guidance of the principle of *banerado*.

In relation to the third research question, which looked at language use outside the home, results showed the participants relied on the immigrant community and home countries for support in maintaining the language. On the other hand, the school community was making it difficult to maintain Mandingo inside and outside the home.

Therefore, immediate communities were crucial in socializing the children into language. In language socialization theory, communities are looked at as places that promote the communicative competence of the novice or children. Communicative competence is realized when novice members of a community group can participate in speech events that are socially recognized in broader society (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). The two immediate communities were the immigrant and school communities. In the immigrant community, the participants were supported through an extended family ideology. This community support was crucial in their children's language socialization, language use, and maintenance. The children were socialized into the language by having authentic conversations with other Mandingo speakers during community gatherings, house visitations, religious education, and relatives in their home countries. Therefore, the children's communicative competence within the Mandingo community in the United States and countries of origin was realized through an extended family ideology. This ideology provided community members with a sense of belonging, including interacting in social situations to share and express ideas and feelings (Liang, 2018). However, at the center of language socialization and communicative competence is the African philosophy of *banerado*. This philosophy is a moral code demonstrated through a person's character and actions within the community and is abstractly linked to a person's very existence (Oyebade & Azenabor, 2018). The Mandingo community believes in the philosophy or principle of *banerado* or *banyeredo*, which means a "good person." A good person is described as hardworking, kind, polite, humble, respectful, and giving to the community. The participants in this study explained that character and actions were nurtured and strongly required of their children to become good functional

citizens in society. For example, a “good child” is hardworking, kind, respectful, and disciplined. The actions children can take are helping and speaking the language with the older people. In addition, these actions require children to show respect when interacting with elders by addressing them accordingly. For example, adding a title to someone’s name such as *tanti* (big sister) or *tonto* (little brother) is a show of discipline or respect. The children were socialized into the language by having authentic conversations with other Mandingo speakers during community through the principle of *banerado*.

Prior research showed the extended family ideology practiced by the Mandingo in this study is a common feature in immigrant communities and is a critical cultural orientation for many immigrant populations, including Hispanic, Asian, African, and other immigrant communities, in developed countries (Guardado, 2018). However, in this research, the idea of extended family ideology went beyond interacting in social situations to share and express ideas and feelings (Liang, 2018). Rather, the participants developed a fictive kinship to service their members (Swigart, 2001). The Mandingo immigrant community members act as role models, representatives of families back home, moral supporters, free babysitting services, and celebrations during which children are socialized into language within a large community of support. At the center of this idea of having an extended family ideology is the principle of *banerado*, which guides communication patterns.

Unlike the immigrant community and home countries being considered as strong supports, the school community is believed to be a deterrent in language learning and maintenance. Language socialization researchers view schools as spaces where children acquire communicative competence and develop citizenship of multiple communities

(García-Sánchez & Nazimova, 2017). Prior research showed children in other immigrant communities such as Asian (B. Y. Lee, 2013) and Latinx communities (Gort & Sembiente, 2015) had strong attitudes toward native language and ethnic identities because of the presence of native language teachers and co-ethnic friends. African children may not have the same exposure due to scarce research on their attitudes toward native languages and ethnic identities. In this study, the participants revealed that they believed their children were using English when interacting with their African and American friends. Participant D narrated about an incident in which she went to pick up her child from school and the child pretended not to understand the Mandingo language. Participant B talked about an incident in which the teacher asked her to please “speak English” with her then 3-year-old son. This led me to believe that perhaps the African children may not have the same level of strong attitudes toward their native languages because they have had very little exposure to native language speaking teachers. Research also shows African children tend to struggle with cultural and linguistic differences, stereotypes, and marginalization in the school environment (Kiramba et al., 2020). Therefore, the school environment may be more detrimental to African children in maintaining their native language compared to children from other immigrant communities who have more support from the school community. Although there is little support from the school community, the Mandingo have turned to their immediate immigrant community and communities back in their countries for support in socializing their children into language as they embrace the principle of *banerado* as a guide in language learning, language use, and maintenance.

Implications

For Educators

The primary commonality that emerged with some of the participants concerning the school community was the absence of teacher input and teacher insensitivity to children who mixed Mandingo and English. Teachers in elementary schools can be trained to understand the wide variety of cultural norms of children whose parents are foreign-born Africans. The urgent need for professional development was confirmed. Sawyer et al. (2017) noted early childhood teachers are less diverse and less trained in culturally linguistic responsive techniques. Sierk and Catalano (2020) stated unconscious language ideologies may be to blame for teacher attitudes toward immigrant children. García-Sánchez and Nazimova (2017) concurred that strong attitudes toward heritage language use and ethnic identity could be influenced by a heritage language teacher and co-ethnic friends. Therefore, teachers need to be empowered through professional development opportunities to challenge the societal ideologies embedded in language policies. For example, a culturally responsive ongoing professional development that incorporates students' rich cultural heritage into learning experiences can have positive outcomes (Hope & Naff, 2016). This kind of training for in-service teachers and schools would improve cultural diversity understanding among the teaching staff. The education system should assume a role in home language development to help prevent language shifts that interfere with home languages (Cunningham, 2020).

Teacher preparation programs that address pre-service teachers' own cultural understandings can be used to address the problem of teacher insensitivity to children from diverse backgrounds. Training programs should include strategies for self-

reflection, which can uncover biases, and cultural immersion programs. The effectiveness of the programs will depend on a cultural examination using professional development by university faculty of K–12 as well (Hope & Naff, 2016). Professional development should also have an in-person interaction so the participants can engage in dialogue about diversity. The interactive approach can foster culturally relevant conversations among teachers as they develop an understanding of cultural differences and how to approach students and families.

For Parents

The participants in the study were collectively struggling with their children's English speaking outside the home and the cultural differences inside the home. This is an indication that African parents need support transitioning into their new environment. For example, four of the participants felt the Mandingo and the American cultural differences were overbearing for them, making it difficult to instill the discipline needed to learn the language. Some of the issues the participants raised based on cultural differences were making eye contact, children waiting their turn to talk, and respect for elders by speaking the native language. A grassroots community program established through the Mandingo immigrant community can be used to address cultural differences using both African and American presenters. For example, a cross-cultural workshop on communication cues can be used to teach African parents the differences in communication styles between children and adults in the United States. The African parents can learn that making eye contact during a conversation is a positive communication gesture to let the other person know you are listening, as opposed to a child viewed as being disrespectful in the African culture.

District Based

The effort to train and provide elementary school teachers with resources and professional development to understand a wide variety of cultural norms of children whose parents are foreign-born must involve district leaders (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). District leaders are responsible for school budgeting and implementing the curriculum teachers use daily; therefore, having all the stakeholders on board (Souto-Manning et al., 2018) will make it easy for teachers to adjust their lessons knowing that it is coming from the district. Although teachers were not interviewed in this study, I am sure many teachers would want to understand the DLL children they teach because it is a challenge to ensure their diverse learning needs are met (Souto-Manning et al., 2018).

Children internalize beliefs and ideas about the cultural concepts and their appropriate expressions. Children from immigrant Mandingo-speaking families internalize beliefs, ideas, and norms according to the African culture. For example, the concept of politeness and its appropriate expressions requires children to lower their heads down or wait to be asked to talk. However, what these children learn through interactions with their caregivers and community members may not correspond to the ways of talking and behaving that are valued in U.S. schools. Many children who bring culturally different practices to school are misunderstood academically, underestimated, and devalued (Zentella, 1997). These children may, in turn, feel less confident about their ability to succeed at school and to convey their knowledge to others (Cummins, 2000).

In order to address these issues, teachers need to understand the knowledge children bring into the classrooms and respect the knowledge children's families have by getting parents involved in school activities (Moll et al., 1992). Understanding the

linguistic systems and cultures by using children's families as resources for learning would be ideal for teachers of children whose language is something other than English (Moll et al., 1992). For example, teachers can incorporate a community's storytelling styles into classroom discussion activities (Au, 1980). They can involve students in research projects that draw on the knowledge and expertise in the community and use that as the basis for literacy instruction and formal school learning (Moll et al., 1992). The curriculum must be tailored specifically to reflect students' experiences in the classroom. When students' experiences are reflected in the stories they read and hear, they develop a sense of belonging. Teachers can engage students in interviews with each other and classroom guests to learn more about each other's cultures and histories. Classroom interviews can encourage students to focus on the positive side of differences. Teachers can focus on pronouncing students' names correctly and learning the stories behind their names and pronunciations. In addition, a student-centered approach to teaching in which students' cultural strengths are identified and nurtured by teachers in a classroom environment can strengthen teachers' understanding of the knowledge children bring into the classroom.

Further Research

Based on the study's findings, I propose a study to compare the experiences of first-generation parents with those of second- or third-generation Mandingo-speaking immigrants. Such a study would establish more insight into the universal and unique factors surrounding language use and learning within the immigrant community. Also, a study of teacher perceptions of native language learning and maintenance could provide insights into Mandingo-speaking children's experiences at school because learning is

integral to the students and having teachers who are ignorant about bilingual students is a barrier children face. I would also recommend a study of the observations and lived experiences of students as they negotiate the traditions and language of their native country with the traditions and language of the United States.

Last, this is just a small study on language use and the lived experiences of Mandingo speakers. We need other studies on what other immigrant communities think about language use and learning. Therefore, a study of the lived experiences of other immigrant groups such as Urdu-speaking parents, Bengali-speaking parents, or Tajik-speaking parents within Brooklyn would help establish some similarities or differences in language learning and maintenance within other immigrant communities.

Limitations

The present study had some limitations. The first limitation is that the study was not conducted in the native language of the participants, even though they spoke English as a lingua franca. The participants may not have fully understood the interview questions, as there was some indication that some participants might have benefited from the use of a native language. For example, a great amount of time was spent explaining and simplifying the questions for some of the participants to understand enough to respond to the inquiries. Zoom interviews were also used in this study. I perceive this as a limitation of the study because face-to-face interviews could have been employed with the participants to gain thick descriptions of their experiences. In addition, due to time constraints and parent presence during a child's interviews, one child was available to be interviewed. I decided to exclude the data collected from this child because the data seemed influenced by the parent's presence. However, data from the children could have

validated the parents' claims about language use at home. Therefore, in the future, face-to-face interviews and focus groups with participants' children should be used to uncover similarities and differences not consistently recognized in individual interviews.

The second limitation was the potential for researcher bias owing to the fact that I am a Ugandan immigrant with similar lived experiences to those of the participants. I am also familiar with the African traditions and cultural beliefs presented by the participants. However, I focused on analyzing the participants' experiences without making judgements during the process. I looked at the data that were presented and analyzed them with as much of an unbiased mind as possible. I consistently re-evaluated participant responses and asked open-ended questions first and followed them with more specific probing questions. I avoided using leading questions so as not to prompt the interviewee in a particular direction. I did not bracket myself or my experiences from the analysis, rather I used my understanding as a foundation for analyzing the study results.

Conclusion

This study was designed to explore the lived experiences of Mandingo-speaking parents in learning and maintaining their native language with children ages 3–7. Three research questions were explored related to Mandingo-speaking parents' experiences with language learning and language maintenance: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents describe their experiences in learning and maintaining a native language? How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining their native language with young children at home? How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents view their experiences maintaining their native language with young children outside the home? The salient themes that emerged for RQ1 were

conflicting sense of feeling, sense of belonging, and cultural appreciation. The themes that emerged for RQ2 were consistency, enforcement, and cultural values. Finally, the themes that emerged for RQ3 were an extended community, connections to home countries, and school community.

APPENDIX A INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewer: _____ Date _____ Time _____ Duration _____

Interviewee: _____

Summary:

This study will use interviews as part of a research design known as The Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA). This approach seeks to understand the participant's lived experiences during a period. The responses will help scholars understand participants lived experiences in maintaining native languages with children 3-7 years old.

Instructions for Interviewer:

1. Establish a Zoom connection and ask the participant if he/she would prefer the camera on or off. Make sure the sound and internet connection are strong.
2. Inform the participant that his/her responses will be recorded, and participant's identity will not be revealed. Ask the participant if he/she has any questions.
3. Before the Interview begins, read the interview procedures script (See below)
4. Commence the Interview. Follow the questions in order. Take notes in the spaces provided.

Instructions for the Interviewee:

*Thank you for participating in this research study and taking the time to sit here with me today. I have already given you the information for the consent form procedure to fill out for this Interview. I would like to remind you that this will be a recorded interview that will last from 60-90 minutes with your permission. I will be asking a lot of questions about language use in your home. If you feel uncomfortable or you would like to discontinue this Interview, please let me know, and I will immediately stop the Interview at any time.
I would like to remind you that this is being recorded and its for research purposes. Do I go ahead and start the conversation now?*

Interview Questions:

Research Question 1: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents describe their experiences on native language maintenance?

1. What country are you from, and what brings you to the U.S.? How long have you been in this country?
2. Does your culture have a perspective on speaking your mother tongue?
 - How do these perspectives make you feel about maintaining your mother tongue?

- Can you describe your experience or feeling about maintaining your mother tongue?
- How have your perspectives changed since you have been in this country?

Research Question 2: How do first generation Mandingo-speaking parents' view their experiences of maintaining their native Language with young children at home?

3. Do you speak Mandingo with your children at home?
 - When do you speak Mandingo with your child?
 - Can you describe a specific time when you used Mandingo with your child?
 - How did it make you feel and why?
4. What cultural beliefs do you hold dear as to how children should interact with adults?
 - How do these beliefs affect the daily use of Mandingo language with your children?
 - Can you tell me a time when your beliefs affected your daily use of Mandingo language with your child?
 - What was challenging about it?
 - How did that make your feel and why?
5. What practices do you use to support Mandingo language daily use with your young children?
 - How successful are those practices in supporting Mandingo use with your young children?
 - Can you give me a specific example of when a practice was successful?
 - How did it make you feel, and why?

Research Question 3: How do first-generation Mandingo-speaking parents' view their experiences of maintaining their native Language with young children outside the home?

6. What experiences have affected your views on maintaining your Language with young children outside the home?
 - How did your outside experiences affect your maintenance of Mandingo Language with your young children at home?
 - Can you describe a specific encounter outside the home that has affected your language interaction with your young children inside the house?
 - How did that make you feel?
7. How do you perceive the future of Mandingo language use with your children in the U.S

Questions for children

1. Do your parents speak Mandingo at home with you?
2. Do you understand it? Do you speak it back? Why/ why not?
3. How do you feel when your parents speak or teach you Mandingo?
4. How do they teach you to speak it? What do they do to help you understand?
5. Are there any other things you do in your family to learn Mandingo?

Interviewer Notes:

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