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Factors Affecting Business Growth Among U.S. African Immigrant Entrepreneurs

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November 2025

Abstract

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MPhil, Walden University, 2019

DBA, California InterContinental University, 2014

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

African immigrant entrepreneurs experience obstructions in growing their businesses into nationally recognized names in the United States. Business leaders and policymakers need to understand the obstructions inhibiting African immigrant entrepreneurs' success. Grounded in human capital theory, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the factors experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs as obstructions for African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States. The participants comprised 15 African immigrant entrepreneurs from California, New York, New Jersey, and Texas, each with a minimum of 5 years of business ownership experience and an annual minimum gross sales of $1,000,000. Data were collected using semistructured interviews and relevant public reports. Three themes emerged from the thematic analysis: (a) structural and institutional barriers, (b) social and cultural integration challenges, and (c) discrimination and perceptual biases. Findings indicated that African immigrant business owners face multiple barriers, including structural and institutional factors such as the lack of financial capital, inequality in financial systems, and social and cultural constraints like language barriers and a shortage of networks. Consumer prejudice and racism experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs affect their attempts to attain competitive and credible business status nationwide. African immigrant entrepreneurs may use these strategies to help grow their businesses. The implications for positive social change include the potential for business leaders and policymakers to develop programs and policies that remove obstructions to support African immigrant entrepreneurs' business growth and economic sustainability.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my big brother Ebenezer Amissah Barnes, a financial and management consultant who planted the seed of pursuing a second doctoral degree in my spirit, and to my dear wife, Dr. Angela Barnes, a gastroenterologist whose continuous encouragement kept me going and saw me through.

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Finally, I would like to thank all the research participants for taking the time out of their busy schedules to sit down with me for interviews that lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. I am grateful.

This accomplishment is not mine alone; it belongs to all who have walked with me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The United States is home to approximately 4.6 million African immigrants (Tamir & Anderson, 2022). These immigrants are not among the wealthiest settlers in the United States (Dogan et al., 2022), despite their high educational attainment (Ekwonye et al., 2021), dual cultural experience (Lakshman et al., 2021), and high levels of human and social capital (Amini Sedeh et al., 2021). Despite their involvement in entrepreneurial enterprises, African immigrant-owned businesses in the United States have not been able to match their Asian, Latin American, and European counterparts in terms of success and growth—at least not to the point of nationwide name recognition (Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021). This study focused on the factors accounting for the inability of African-owned businesses to grow into nationally recognized names in the United States.

Chapter 1 includes an introduction to the study. It also includes an overview of the existing literature and the gap leading to the research problem, descriptions of the research problem, the purpose of the study, and the research question. Additionally, details regarding the theoretical foundation, nature of the study, definitions of key terms, assumptions, scope, limitations, delimitations, and the significance of the study in terms of practice, theory, and social change are also included. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Background of the Study

Africans by birth and descent migrate to the United States for social, economic, and political reasons (Ferwerda & Gest, 2021). According to the Pew Research Center, there were approximately 4.6 million African immigrants living in the United States as of

2022 (Tamir, 2022). African immigrants in the United States have a consumer purchasing power of $1.2 trillion (McKinney, 2021). Many of the 4.6 million African immigrants in the United States are entrepreneurs engaged in diverse industries such as retail, services, transportation, technology, education, healthcare, and manufacturing (Tamir & Anderson, 2022).

An examination of literature on immigrant entrepreneurship in the United States revealed that immigrant entrepreneurs of Asian, European, and Latin American origins have set up multimillion-dollar enterprises that have become household names in the United States and beyond. Yet, African immigrant entrepreneurs have not been able to grow their businesses beyond their communities and states in the same way (Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021). Although African immigrants possess high educational attainment, dual cultural experience, and high levels of human and social capital, they are not among the subsets of U.S. immigrants most likely to achieve significant personal wealth or widespread business success (Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021).

Past researchers such as Boyd (2022) have focused on multiple aspects of African immigrant entrepreneurship in the United States but have not identified factors that could contribute to successful entrepreneurship and increased growth. Exploring and understanding the phenomenon from the perspectives of those who have had the experience firsthand is an important step toward understanding and finding a lasting management solution to the problem. Boyd noted the lack of research on African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States. Although research on the factors that obstruct African immigrant entrepreneurs' growth has been conducted in other countries,

such as by Ostrovsky and Picot (2021) in the context of South Africa, no such studies were identified in the context of the United States. The lack of research on the factors obstructing African immigrant entrepreneurs' growth in the United States presents a gap in the literature regarding the disconnect between the traits associated with the U.S. African immigrant population that predict business success and the lack of widespread success among many African immigrant-owned businesses. If this gap is not addressed, it may lead to continuing ignorance regarding the identification of what factors obstruct African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States, such as their Latin American, Asian, and European counterparts.

Without identifying the obstacles, it may not be possible for African immigrant entrepreneurs to change their existing practices regarding business and entrepreneurship for the better, which could have implications not only for their employment, wealth creation, and lifestyle, but also for the overall economy of the United States, which may fail to benefit from their potential contributions (Dogan et al., 2022). These factors align with the gap identified by Portes and Martinez (2021) regarding the lack of research on African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States. Although research on the factors that obstruct African immigrant entrepreneurs' growth has been conducted in other countries, such as by Urban et al. (2024) in the context of South Africa, no such studies were identified in the context of the United States, indicating the need to identify, understand, and help address the socioeconomic factors that obstruct African immigrant businesses from growing to become household names in the United States. This study

could help inform literature on the subject as well as serve as a potential resource for entrepreneurs to help grow their businesses.

Problem Statement

Despite high educational attainment (Ekwonye et al., 2021), dual cultural experience (Lakshman et al., 2021), high levels of human and social capital (Amini Sedeh et al., 2021), and their involvement in entrepreneurial enterprises, businesses owned by African immigrants in the United States have not been able to match their Asian, Latin American, and European counterparts in terms of success and growth (Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021). Although there were 4.6 million African immigrants living in the United States as of 2022 (Tamir, 2022), with a consumer purchasing power of $1.2 trillion (McKinney, 2021), African immigrants face higher unemployment rates compared to native U.S. citizens (Otiso, 2023). The general problem was that U.S. businesses owned by African immigrants do not often achieve the same degree of widespread success, growth, and notoriety as businesses owned by immigrants from Asia, Europe, and Latin America (Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021; Portes & Martinez, 2021). The specific problem was that, without the understanding of obstructions they experience, it may not be possible to achieve change in African immigrant entrepreneurs' existing practices regarding business and entrepreneurship for the better (Portes & Martinez, 2021), which could have implications not only for their employment, wealth creation, and lifestyle, but also for the overall economy of the United States, which may fail to benefit from their potential contributions (Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the factors experienced as obstructions for African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States by African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States. The research phenomenon explored was the obstructions experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs in growing their businesses into nationally recognized names in the United States. Understanding the phenomenon and exploring possible areas to target to solve the identified problem could help boost African immigrant entrepreneurship, which may, in turn, help curb unemployment and related social challenges within the African immigrant community. Through the exploration of particular obstructions to growth experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States, it may be possible to help African immigrant entrepreneurs change their existing practices regarding business and entrepreneurship for the better, which may not only help enhance their social and economic status—through higher employment, wealth creation, and standard of living—but may also benefit the U.S. economy through the realization of the potential contributions of African immigrant entrepreneurs, which are lacking at present, and U.S. society through potential reduction in poverty and crime.

Research Question

The following overarching question guided this qualitative case study:

RQ1: What factors do African immigrants experience as obstructions for African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States?

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation for this study provided a theoretical lens for the interpretation and development of the study. The theoretical framework of the study was based on human capital theory (Becker, 1964). Human capital refers to the skills possessed by individuals that increase their productivity (Ray et al., 2023). In the context of entrepreneurship, human capital includes parts of an entrepreneur's skills, experience, training, and education that are responsible for their organization's performance (Ray et al., 2023). Originally developed to examine the importance of education, human capital theory suggests that individuals have different skills and knowledge that have value in economic terms (Ray et al., 2023). According to social capital theory, social relationships can be understood as resources that result in the accumulation and development of human capital (A. Thomas & Gupta, 2021). Social capital is a characteristic of social relationships that produce benefits regarding human capital (A. Thomas & Gupta, 2021). For instance, a stable home environment can encourage high educational attainment among immigrants, resulting in the development of skills that are valued in the marketplace (A. Thomas & Gupta, 2021).

Adom and Asare-Yeboa (2016) applied the theory of human capital in the context of entrepreneurship, associating attributes of human capital with success in entrepreneurship. Ray et al. (2023) found that outcomes related to human capital, such as knowledge, ability, and skills, were significantly related to entrepreneurial success. Human capital assists in the exploration of opportunities in beginning ventures and the acquisition of economic resources (Lanivich et al., 2021). It also helps in learning and

developing advantages for one's organization. Venture capitalists use human capital to assess the performance of new companies (Espinosa & Zarruk, 2021).

With respect to immigrant entrepreneurs, Rudaku et al. (2023) applied human capital theory to explore the influence of human capital on immigrant entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial activity. Rudaku et al. found that human capital, such as skills and information related to the business, was statistically significant in the entrepreneurial growth of immigrant entrepreneurs. In this study, the research on human capital theory and entrepreneurship was expanded in the context of African immigrant entrepreneurs. In alignment with the focus of this study, the identified research problem was explored within the theoretical framework of human capital in the context of African immigrants.

Nature of the Study

The research phenomenon explored was the obstructions experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs in growing their businesses into nationally recognized names in the United States. The qualitative research methodology was applied to this study. Researchers use the qualitative research method when exploring a phenomenon based on subjective experiences (W. M. Lim, 2024). By contrast, the focus in quantitative methodology is on quantifiable and empirical data (W. M. Lim, 2024). The qualitative research method was preferable to the quantitative research method in this study because qualitative data are richer and more detailed in meaning than quantitative data. The qualitative case study design is useful for eliciting rich descriptions and exploring the subjective viewpoints of individuals in a study (Habib, 2021), as was needed in this study.

The single case study research design was used in this research. According to Alam (2021), a case is a contemporary phenomenon that occurs in real life where the boundaries between the context and the phenomenon are not clear. Based on this definition, Alam inferred the nature of case study as an empirical investigation focused on a set of cases as defined above that addresses questions of the form why and how with respect to a phenomenon. Consequently, in this study, the research phenomenon of interest was the obstructions experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs in growing their businesses into nationally recognized names in the United States. The case under consideration was the contemporary phenomenon in the context of African immigrant entrepreneurs. The case under consideration was restricted only to African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States. I adopted a single case study design, which is justified given the focus on one bounded system of African immigrant entrepreneurs, aligning with Alam's (2021) emphasis on empirical inquiry into real-life phenomena where contextual boundaries are blurred.

The unit of analysis in this study's single case study consisted of one bounded system, namely, African immigrant entrepreneurs from California, New York, New Jersey, and Texas. The unit of observation that applied in this study was African immigrant entrepreneurs with a minimum of 5 years of business ownership experience and annual minimum gross sales of $1 million. Thus, the period of focus was their experiences as business owners for at least 5 years. The study was based on a research problem identified from past research (Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021; Portes & Martinez, 2021), highlighting that U.S. businesses owned by African immigrants do

not often achieve the same degree of widespread success, growth, and notoriety as businesses owned by immigrants from Asia, Europe, and Latin America.

The general population consisted African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States. The target population was African immigrant entrepreneurs from the U.S. states with some of the highest concentrations of African immigrants: California, New York, New Jersey, and Texas. The sample comprised 15 African immigrant entrepreneurs from these states with at least 5 years of business ownership experience and an annual minimum gross sale of $1 million. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source for data collection included semistructured face-to-face open-ended interviews. Secondary data sources for the study included a review of documents, including past peer-reviewed literature on the research phenomenon, relevant information from reports from organizations such as the Migration Policy Institute, and governmental sources such as the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The collected data were analyzed using NVivo software and thematic analysis.

Definitions

Acculturation: Refers to outcomes that occur when people from different cultures are exposed to direct contact with each other for a continued period resulting in alteration in the original cultural patterns of both or one of the groups (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2022).

African immigrant: An African immigrant is any individual who originates from the African continent and migrates to the United States with the goal of establishing

permanent residency or becoming a naturalized citizen in the United States (Mafico et al., 2021).

Assimilation: Refers to a form of acculturation in which an individual from a minority group deselects their original culture and choose the dominant culture (Hanfstingl et al., 2021). As part of this process, the individual integrates the dominant culture's beliefs and values while abandoning the beliefs and values of their original culture (Hanfstingl et al., 2021).

Cultural capital: Refers to social assets that are not financial and which serve as a currency in enabling individuals achieve social mobility beyond the economic means available to them (Mantra et al., 2023).

Cultural identity: Refers to the feeling of belonging, which consists of shared interests, beliefs, values, and companionship. Cultural identity is formed by associations in which an individual is involved and beholden to aspects of traditions they have inherited (Zajda & Majhanovich, 2021).

Ethnic identity: Is formed by the ethnic group that a person voluntarily identifies with (Georgas & Papastylianou, 2021). It includes more than race and is a multidimensional and complex construct that affects the overall growth of a person (Georgas & Papastylianou, 2021).

Integration: In the context of this study, integration refers to a form of acculturation in which a person favors both their original culture and the dominant culture. Integration consists of an integration of one's original cultural beliefs and values with the beliefs and values of the dominant culture (Shokouhi, 2021).

Marginalization: Refers to a form of acculturation in which a person does not favor either the dominant culture or the culture of their origin, resulting in either rejection of both the integration or retention process regarding the beliefs and values of the original culture and the dominant culture (Shokouhi, 2021).

Assumptions

Assumptions refer to those aspects of the research that influence the results of the study and are assumed by to be true as part of enabling the study, which cannot be verified (W. M. Lim, 2024). Several assumptions were made in this study. First, I assumed that the African entrepreneurs who partook in the study would be forthright and open regarding their responses to the interview questions. Due to the difficulty of verifying personal experiences and perspectives, I assumed that participants would be honest in their responses to facilitate the study. I took the participants at their word regarding their experiences and perspectives regarding the research phenomenon under consideration. Additionally, I assumed that there would be no hidden motivation or agenda held by the participants that would affect the validity of their responses, as well as the honesty of their answers.

To ensure the study could be conducted, there was a need to assume the honesty, forthrightness, and lack of hidden motivations of the participants, because these factors are not possible to verify, and insistence on their verification would have made the study impossible to conduct. To ensure participants provided proper responses, I ensured they were comfortable during the interviews, assured about their anonymity and privacy, and interviewed with a systematic interview protocol, as recommended by W. M. Lim (2024).

Another assumption concerned the research methodology. Specifically, I assumed that the sample and the population identified would enable access to the most qualified participants for answering the research question. The assumption regarding the sample and the population was because the inclusion criteria, sampling technique, general and target population, and sample reflect the purpose of the study. Finally, I assumed that the qualitative research method was appropriate for this study, based on the general characteristics of the method as reported by other researchers and their alignment with the nature of this study.

Scope and Delimitations

In this qualitative single case study, the scope extended to African-owned businesses by African immigrant entrepreneurs to explore the factors experienced as obstructions for African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States. In terms of the population, the scope of this study extended to African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States, with the specific target on the U.S. states with some of the highest concentrations of African immigrants, namely, California, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, and Texas (Zong & Batalova, 2017). In terms of individual characteristics, the scope included African immigrant entrepreneurs with a minimum of 5 years of business ownership experience and an annual minimum gross sale of $1 million. In terms of data collection, the scope of this study extended to semistructured interviews as the primary source, with the secondary source consisting of a review of documents, including past peer-reviewed literature on

the research phenomenon, relevant information from reports from organizations such as the Migration Policy Institute, and governmental sources such as ICE.

Associated with the scope are delimitations, which refer to those aspects of this qualitative single case study that resulted from the choices that I made. Delimitations are factors that are within my limits, such as the sample, population, and location (Diego, 2020). In this study, a delimitation was with respect to the sample. African immigrant entrepreneurs from California, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, and Texas with a minimum of 5 years of business ownership experience and an annual minimum gross sale of $1 million were selected through a purposeful sampling technique. I selected a sample from the U.S. states because they have some of the highest concentrations of African immigrants (Zong & Batalova, 2017). This delimitation allowed me to ensure the most representative African immigrant entrepreneurs from the United States were selected for the study. Another delimitation was the use of the qualitative single case study research design. The qualitative single case study research design was selected because of its alignment with the purpose of the study, although the selection of this research design excluded gathering participants' lived experiences.

Limitations

All types of research have limitations, and several limitations affected the present study. Although the detail-rich interview data may strengthen the understanding regarding the research phenomenon, some participants might have downplayed the challenges they have faced as entrepreneurs or inaccurately represented their business success. To address this limitation, participants were informed that their names and those

of their businesses would not be included in the published study. Further, participants were advised that the aim of collecting interview data was to understand their experiences as business owners, their businesses, and the related context, and not to quantify or assess their success as business owners.

Another potential limitation was the lack of quantitative methods and data, which might have increased the difficulty of ascertaining whether obstructive factors that are identified are unique to African immigrant business owners or are more closely related to confounding variables such as gender, education level, and economic context. The inclusion of multiple data sources and procedures to increase the validity of the research instruments, such as pilot testing and the interview protocol refinement framework, may have helped ensure a sound and comprehensive understanding of the research phenomena. No issues related to access to participants or the role of the researcher were anticipated.

Significance of the Study

The aim of any social study should be to benefit the relevant population and society (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The importance of a social study is seen in the degree to which it purports to benefit individuals, organizations, government, and society. This qualitative single case study was conducted to explore the factors experienced as obstructions for African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States by African immigrant entrepreneurs. The purpose of the study emanated from the ongoing phenomenon where African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States have not been able to grow their businesses to become

household names as their Latin American, Asian, and European counterparts have done (see Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021). The findings of this study could benefit several different sectors of society, enabling positive social change as well as informing the literature and benefiting the research body and academic communities on the subject. The expected results include increased employment and improve social services.

Significance to Practice

In terms of practice, the direct and primary beneficiaries of the research may be African immigrant entrepreneurs and all other minority entrepreneurs in the United States. Minority entrepreneurs in general, and African immigrant entrepreneurs, could use the findings of this study as a blueprint for business growth and expansion. The identification of socioeconomic and ethnic factors that obstruct African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States—factors such as language, education, religion, availability of business capital, cultural influences, support systems, lifestyles, outlooks on life, and human capital—would influence the growth of these businesses. Additionally, they might contribute toward changing entrepreneurs' socioeconomic, ethnic, and other practices relating to business and entrepreneurship for the better, putting them on the road toward growth. The growth of African-owned businesses could lead to increased employment, which could stimulate economic activity with positive sociopolitical consequences across the United States.

Significance to Theory

The findings of this study might also fill the gap in the literature about African immigrant entrepreneurship in the United States and business growth, a topic that has

received limited attention in the existing literature. Specifically, the findings of the study could contribute to the literature on the factors affecting business growth and how to resolve them from within the context and culture of African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States. The findings of this study could also contribute to the literature on how socioeconomic and ethnic factors influence the growth of business enterprises and how to manage those factors. The academic body of literature on entrepreneurship and business management could benefit from the use of the findings of the research as a resource for teaching. The findings of the study could also enhance current understanding among researchers regarding African immigrant entrepreneurs, helping develop a blueprint and a source of knowledge.

The knowledge unearthed by the research could benefit the existing literature and thereby help bridge the gap between academia and the market. In relation to the theoretical foundation of this study, I noted that, although others such as Portes and Martinez (2021) have studied African immigrants in the context of business and cultural capital, they have not identified factors accounting for the inability of African immigrant entrepreneurial ventures to become household names as has been the case with Latin American immigrant businesses. The findings of the study could enhance the theoretical literature on human capital in the context of African immigrants.

Significance to Social Change

The findings of this study could contribute to positive social change. The objective of this study was to explore the factors experienced as obstructions for African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the

United States by African immigrant entrepreneurs. The blueprint regarding African immigrant activities generated through the findings of this study could help boost the socioeconomic status of all stakeholders through the promotion of prudent entrepreneurial practices devoid of counter-socioeconomic behavior. African immigrant entrepreneurs who long for direction in the do's and don'ts of entrepreneurship could utilize the findings of this study to sharpen their entrepreneurial and business skills, with the ultimate result of growing their enterprises.

The outcomes of this study might include improved entrepreneurial skills and practices, increased job creation, increased profitability, and improved living standards. This study could help improve the perception of African immigrant entrepreneurs and promote their integration into mainstream business practices. The identification of growth factors and solutions to current problems could also help bring the phenomenon of the barriers experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs in growing their businesses into nationally recognized names in the United States more fully to light, and therefore help reduce the inequalities existing among business practitioners, placing businesses on more equal competitive footing.

Summary and Transition

In this chapter, introductory details relating to this study were discussed. Although African immigrants possess high educational attainment, dual cultural experience, and high human/social capital, they are not among the subsets of U.S. immigrants most likely to achieve significant personal wealth or widespread business success (Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021). The general problem was that U.S.

businesses owned by African immigrants do not often achieve the same degree of widespread success, growth, and notoriety as businesses owned by immigrants from Asia, Europe, and Latin America (Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021; Portes & Martinez, 2021). The specific problem was that, without the understanding of particular obstructions they experience, it may not be possible to achieve change in African immigrant entrepreneurs' existing practices regarding business and entrepreneurship for the better (Portes & Martinez, 2021), which could have implications not only for their employment, wealth creation, and lifestyle, but also for the overall economy of the United States, which may fail to benefit from their potential contributions (Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021).

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the factors experienced as obstructions for African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States by African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States. The research phenomenon explored was the impediments experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs in growing their businesses into nationally recognized names in the United States.

The theoretical framework of this study was based on human capital theory (Becker, 1964). In alignment with the purpose of the study, the qualitative single case study research design was found appropriate for the study. Through the provision of a blueprint for business growth among African immigrant entrepreneurs—based on an understanding of obstructive factors in African immigrant entrepreneurs' success and how African immigrant business owners can overcome them—the findings of this study

could affect positive social and economic change. The chapter also included discussions on the assumptions, scope, limitations, and delimitations related to the research methodology, sample, population, and the data collection method. In the next chapter, a review of the existing literature on the research phenomenon is discussed, together with the gaps in the literature that justified the need for this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

African immigrants have a higher unemployment rate compared to native U.S. citizens (Otiso, 2023). The general problem was that U.S. businesses owned by African immigrants do not often achieve the same degree of widespread success, growth, and notoriety as businesses owned by immigrants from Asia, Europe, and Latin America (Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021; Portes & Martinez, 2021). The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the factors experienced as obstructions for African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States by African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States.

This chapter starts with a discussion of the strategy I used to identify relevant literature. Second, I describe the theoretical framework that I used for this study: human capital theory. Afterward, I present past research on factors that influence the growth of African immigrant-owned businesses. These factors include access to credit and financing, expansion capital, cultural factors, personal characteristics of entrepreneurs, the role of technology, and existing supports for immigrant-owned businesses. Last, I conclude with a summary.

Literature Search Strategy

In the creation of this study's literature review, I used several sources of data, including textual analysis of records or written accounts, principal archival data, and journal articles. To ensure a comprehensive literature search, I accessed the Walden University library to find appropriate databases in relation to the study's focus topic. I conducted multi-database queries with Thoreau. In addition, I searched every relevant

database one at a time. This was done to ensure more control throughout the literature search, as well as to show more accurate articles and sources.

Specific online databases and search engines used included Google Scholar, ERIC, Global Health, Ingenta Connect, JSTOR, Journal Storage, EBSCOhost Online Research Databases, and Journal Seek. The following key search terms and combinations of search terms were used to query online databases for relevant results: African immigrant entrepreneurs, African-owned businesses, business skills, ethnic factors in business, socioeconomic in business, and perspective of factors affecting the growth of African immigrant-owned businesses. By searching with these key terms, the database search engines returned literature relevant to the problem statement and research question.

Other resources outside of these databases were also relevant, including government websites related to African immigrant-owned businesses, factors affecting the growth of African immigrant-owned businesses, and research groups focusing on the topic. This expanded literature search strategy permitted a wider range of important sources of statistics and reliable data regarding the topic of growth of African immigrant-owned businesses. Given the importance of reliability, I verified that resources were peer-reviewed to ensure scholarly rigor. Given this objective, I also searched for journals in Ulrich's Periodical Directory (Ulrichsweb, 2021).

The majority (65 of 76 sources, or 85.5%) of sources reviewed were published between 2020–2025. Articles related specifically to African immigrant-owned businesses and the factors affecting the growth of these businesses. It was important to prioritize

peer-reviewed sources because they met the rigor of scholarly standards. In the process of reviewing the literature, I further searched journals based on key terms and concepts and past sources. After obtaining a thorough body of studies related to the current research, the information was synthesized.

Theoretical Foundation

Becker's (1964) human capital theory served as a theoretical framework for this study and helped understand the factors contributing to the inability of African-owned businesses to grow into nationally recognized names in the United States. Becker originally developed human capital theory to study the value of education. Becker noted that the human capital model indicates how people who have varying knowledge and skills have economic value, as those who have more skills and education are likely to earn more. As such, the theory of investments in human capital came to fruition. Becker had used theory from Schultz (1961), who had indicated that increases in national output were disproportionate relative to land, labor hours, or physical capital, and argued "investment in human capital is probably the major explanation" (p. 1). This underscores the relevance and importance of human capital theory in understanding how African-owned businesses can grow into nationally recognized names in the United States, as well as the barriers that hinder African-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States.

Social sciences, education, and business management researchers have utilized the human capital model for over 4 decades because it provides an understanding of universal economic value, management, and entrepreneurship (Becker, 1964; Sun &

Fong, 2022). Researchers have advanced human capital theory by further expanding its use in a variety of settings (Mincer, 1958; Schultz, 1961; Sun & Fong, 2022). For example, Mincer (1958) established the concept of human capital as an explanation for income and labor inequality, subsequently developing a model on how varying people have different skills and how those skills are valued. Sun and Fong (2022) applied this theory in the context of entrepreneurship, wherein they linked various and specific attributes of human capital to entrepreneurial success.

According to Taweesangrungroj et al. (2022), human capital theory is one of the most complete human capital theories, providing an empirical guide for entrepreneurial success. Taweesangrungroj et al. noted that human capital is critical to advocating factors of entrepreneurship; specifically, human capital assets, behaviors, and business success performance are factors that have significantly interrelated outcomes. In fact, in practical application settings, human capital is the most frequently used selection criterion among venture capitalists when evaluating potential venture performance (Jaoui et al., 2022; Taweesangrungroj et al., 2022).

Several researchers have utilized human capital theory in the context of entrepreneurship. For example, Qin and Kong (2021) noted that human capital is essential in discovering and developing entrepreneurial opportunities. Zhou et al. (2022) utilized human capital theory in their study and found that the use of the conceptual model allowed entrepreneurs to maximize opportunities by obtaining financial capital and launching new business ventures. Safii and Rahayu (2021) further developed the theory of human capital by deconstructing the human capital paradigm to set forth a typology of

investments in human capital, including education, training/experience, and recruitment. Safii and Rahayu noted that investments in human capital result in increased human capital outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, and abilities. In line with the use of human capital theory in entrepreneurship, they further developed the social and human capital model, indicating that human, social, and financial capital are essential to new ventures' survival. In fact, combinations of human and social capital are more crucial to business survival and success than financial capital itself (Safii & Rahayu, 2021).

With the emergence of empirical research in this area and the wide application of human capital theory, scholars have developed several tests to objectively assess the concept of human capital. Scholars found that the elements of Becker's (1964) theory pertain to outcome-based measures and human capital deficits. Outcome-based measure deficits refer to a lack of explanation of outcome-based measures of human capital (Jaoui et al., 2022). Human capital deficits relate to the lack of attention to capture and measure the outcomes of human capital investments that are of greater value to entrepreneurship (Becker, 1964; Safii & Rahayu, 2021). With the pertinent constructs related to human capital theory—education, training or experience, and recruitment—and human capital deficits, human capital theory can help provide guidance and better understanding of the universal human capital phenomenon, allowing the development of tests to objectively assess the concept of human capital.

Future researchers and African immigrant entrepreneurs would yield benefits from analyzing specific types of investments and outcomes, as well as the recognized human capital from such investments (knowledge, skills, and abilities; Safii & Rahayu,

2021). Knowledge in this context refers to one's understanding of key principles, facts, processes, and their interrelationships (Safii & Rahayu, 2021). According to Carayannis and Grigoroudis (2023), knowledge in enterprising individuals is of higher value when it is specific to certain entrepreneurial activities and functions. The second human capital outcome is skill, which is one's expertise in applications to a specific set of tasks (Safii & Rahayu, 2021). For businesses to succeed, skills specific to entrepreneurial activities and functions need to be constantly developed. Ability is the third human capital outcome, which is the underlying factor of one's performance (Safii & Rahayu, 2021). According to Gerhart and Feng (2021), abilities are distinct from skills and knowledge given that abilities are less likely to alter over time. Gerhart and Feng added that abilities are widely applicable to a set of tasks within various situations.

Focusing on immigrant entrepreneurship, several researchers explored the importance of human capital in influencing business venture success. For example, Q. E. Wang et al. (2021) explored the benefits of human and social capital for entrepreneurs' innovation. The researchers noted that the level of education, entrepreneurial competencies, and social capital vary between entrepreneurs, especially those who are immigrant business owners (Q. E. Wang et al., 2021). Additionally, Q. E. Wang et al. outlined that immigrant business owners face several challenges in utilizing human and social capital, which are influenced by the institutional structures that are different from those of their host country. Cueto et al. (2021) and Razin (2017) further noted that the location or destination of entrepreneurship evolves from variations in human capital

attributes. Immigrant business owners' behaviors are influenced by the characteristics of the host country, which in turn impacts the rate of success among immigrant groups.

This set of human capital constructs could provide an understanding of the interrelations among these and their unique impact on entrepreneurship outcomes. With these constructs related to human capital theory, future researchers and policymakers may draw upon this study's findings to effectively manage, develop, sustain, and grow African immigrant-owned businesses while effectively considering and cultivating human capital investments. Considering constructs of human capital investments (such as education, training/experience, and recruitment) could significantly enhance human capital outcomes (such as knowledge, skills, and abilities), which could lead to successful African immigrant-owned business ventures in the United States.

Literature Review

Various factors impact the outcomes of African immigrant-owned businesses. Several researchers noted how these factors are vital in promoting economic activity with positive sociopolitical consequences across the United States (Bates, 2022; Griffin et al., 2021; Musara & Nieuwenhuizen, 2021). The identification of socioeconomic and ethnic factors, such as access to credit or financial support, availability of business capital, and support systems, has contributed to the increased likelihood of successful businesses that are owned by African immigrants (Santos et al., 2024). These findings support those of Duan et al. (2023), who identified multiple factors impacting African immigrant entrepreneurs' development in their small and medium businesses, as well as their surrounding communities. Attacks and threats on African immigrant-owned businesses

minimize prospects of entrepreneurship, job and wealth creation, thus impacting the economic growth of the area (Bates, 2022; Duan et al., 2023; Fairlie et al., 2022; Griffin et al., 2021; Musara & Nieuwenhuizen, 2021; Urban et al., 2024). For this reason, immigrant-owned business owners need additional support given that they face additional pressures, such as immigrant stress, lack of support systems in host countries, and financial constraints (Bates, 2022). Leaving immigrant entrepreneurs unsupported would lead them to quit or withdraw their businesses, which could have negative effects on the local economy.

Access to Credit and Financial Support

African immigrant-owned businesses often face a range of challenges in conducting entrepreneurial activities in host countries. One of the challenges in setting up immigrant-owned businesses is accessing ample financial support and credit. Bates (2022) noted this in their study, indicating that the problem in developing and sustaining African immigrant-owned businesses is due to limited access to formal finance. Bates examined this further, exploring the role of financial associations in sustaining immigrant entrepreneurship. Within the setting of South Africa, the researchers noted that there is a general lack of financial support available for immigrant-owned business ventures (Musara & Nieuwenhuizen, 2021). Through a qualitative phenomenology approach, the researchers purposively selected 10 participants and found that the majority of emerging immigrant entrepreneurs struggle to obtain sufficient capital for their businesses (Akusoba, 2024). The findings revealed that immigrant-owned businesses should be

supported financially to develop and further sustain their entrepreneurial goals. The entrepreneurs knew the problem facing them because they could identify and explain it.

Bates (2022) indicated similar findings, noting the challenges of growing immigrant-owned businesses in Cape Town. After analyzing 121 questionnaires, the findings revealed various factors that hindered the growth of the business, which included circumscribed expansion capital, competition from non-South Africans and large-scale retailers operating in malls, crime, transportation of stock, inaccessible loans, woeful handling of financial records, a lack of management skills and poor marketing, and, lastly, limited information on government services (Bates, 2022). Most of the growth challenges were due to a lack of financial capacity to increase their growth capabilities. This body of literature could provide initial findings regarding the challenges of immigrant-owned businesses in host countries such that financial support is lacking.

Financial support is needed for African immigrant entrepreneurs to start up and sustain their businesses. Ashourizadeh et al. (2022) noted the important role of banks and policymakers in developing a more inclusive finance system that provides ample credit support for African immigrant entrepreneurs. Ashourizadeh et al. examined this further, exploring access to finances by immigrant entrepreneurs and native entrepreneurs. Utilizing a quantitative method and survey, the researchers analyzed data collected from 15,850 participants by Global Entrepreneurship Monitor in 2015. The findings revealed that formal financing was useful for both immigrant entrepreneurs and native entrepreneurs where innovation is concerned. The findings divulged the need to provide

formal financial resources accessible to immigrants by demonstrating that they have the same innovative capacity as the host entrepreneurs.

Griffin et al. (2021) and Musara and Nieuwenhuizen (2021) concurred with Ashourizadeh et al.'s (2022) findings, underscoring the role of banks in compensating for the general lack of available capital and financial support for immigrant entrepreneurs. As such, Musara and Nieuwenhuizen reported that stokvels (informal finance associations) have played a critical role in providing capital for Cameroonian-owned businesses in host countries. However, there is still a palpable financial gap that should be addressed by banks and established finance systems. Griffin et al. concluded this in their study's findings, as the researchers explored immigrant entrepreneurs' perceived success in small retail businesses. They conducted an analysis of past literature regarding the attributes and challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs (Griffin et al., 2021). After surveying 262 immigrant entrepreneur respondents in Auckland, New Zealand, the findings of the study revealed that immigrant entrepreneurs face major challenges in securing financial capital, including a lack of access to bank loans and advisory services (Griffin et al., 2021). The findings also indicated that training in finance capabilities is needed to ensure business success among immigrant entrepreneurs (Griffin et al., 2021). This body of knowledge could provide justification regarding the need to widen access to finance for immigrant-owned businesses, as well as enhance financial knowledge among this population, which could improve the success and growth of African immigrant-owned businesses in host countries.

Identification of the factors that impact African immigrant entrepreneurs' development is vital to address. According to Urban et al. (2024), one of the factors that impacts African immigrant entrepreneurs' businesses includes access to credit from regulated financial institutions, which is in line with Ashourizadeh et al.'s (2022) findings. Further exploring this construct, the researchers aimed to explain how access to credit impacted African immigrant entrepreneurs' development in South Africa (Urban et al., 2024). Using a descriptive, quantitative approach, the researchers studied 230 participants and noted that structural and resource-related factors, such as social capital and human capital, were useful in determining entrepreneurial success (Urban et al., 2024). This is vital to address, given that having more credit lines for immigrant entrepreneurs could enhance the host nation's prosperity in terms of job creation, poverty reduction, and economic growth (Ashourizadeh et al., 2022; Urban et al., 2024). This, overall, improves people's well-being.

Challenges faced in business activities are often due to financial constraints. Several researchers underscored the importance of enhancing access to credit for African immigrant-owned businesses. Fairlie et al. (2022) noted various challenges for African Americans running small businesses in their host country. The researchers used data from the Kauffman Firm Survey, credit scores, and administrative data to explore the racial disparities for new ventures when accessing capital. The results of the study revealed that there are high costs of running businesses in host countries, which often translates to a greater credit limit needed by immigrant business owners. African American businesses remained small for about 8 years due to difficulty in accessing external capital compared

to their counterpart startups (Fairlie et al., 2022). Muchineripi et al. (2022) conducted a similar study that aimed to identify the challenges encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs in South Africa. With a focus on the specific factors that affect immigrant entrepreneurship, the researchers interviewed 23 foreign immigrants operating businesses in the Eastern Cape (Muchineripi et al., 2022). The results revealed several barriers experienced by immigrant entrepreneurs: (a) financial resources, (b) xenophobia and crime, (c) legislation, and (d) a lack of networks. The factor of financial resources was the leading barrier faced by immigrant entrepreneurs, which impacted their rate of business growth. This body of literature could underscore further the impact of financial resources on growing African immigrant-owned businesses.

Expansion Capital

Considering the financial constraints faced by immigrant-owned businesses, expansion of businesses is highly challenging to attain. Several researchers examined this topic further, noting the need to help provide financial capital for African immigrant-owned businesses to expand (Eresia-Eke & Okerue, 2022; Fatoki, 2021). According to Fatoki (2021), capital acquisition is one of the major issues facing African immigrant-owned businesses. Eresia-Eke and Okerue (2022) concurred, exploring the growth ability and employment in African immigrant-owned small businesses in Southern Africa. Through a quantitative study throughout South Africa, Mozambique, and Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), the results of the study indicated financial bootstrapping is one of the major challenges of growing immigrant-owned businesses; in fact, financial bootstrapping was ranked highest among all challenges (Eresia-Eke & Okerue, 2022).

Additionally, they found that access to business services and business location significantly contributed to the success of African immigrant-owned businesses (Eresia-Eke & Okerue, 2022). Moghaddam et al., as cited in Ashourizadeh et al. (2022), explained this finding further through their qualitative study, noting that immigrant entrepreneurs prefer bootstrapping as their first choice of financing. However, immigrant entrepreneurs still face several challenges in bootstrapping their ventures, which leads them to seek other external financing sources (such as bank loans, venture capital funding, and business angels). This finding has implications for stakeholders who are crucial in providing support to African immigrant entrepreneurship goals in various host countries (Ashourizadeh et al., 2022).

Understanding the factors that impact the success of African immigrant business owners is highly important. Fatoki (2021) examined this further through exploratory and descriptive research designs. After analyzing 121 administered questionnaires, the results of the study revealed that several factors impacted the growth of African immigrant-owned businesses, including limited expansion capital, competition, crime, transportation of stock, inaccessible loans, woeful handling of financial records, and lack of management skills. Among these challenges, expansion capital and inaccessible loans were reported as the highest-ranking challenges in terms of inhibitors of growth (Fatoki, 2021). Ervin-Brown (2022) found comparable findings, underscoring how important it is for immigrant entrepreneurs to have access to loan capital. Loan capital could not only seed their new ventures but also grow them exponentially (Ervin-Brown, 2022). With the aim of identifying funding challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs, the findings

revealed that immigrant business owners experience issues with accessing capital due to lack of knowledge about available resources, technical difficulties, and reluctance to obtain loans from financial institutions (Ervin-Brown, 2022).

Similar to Ervin-Brown's (2022) findings, Mulisa (2022) made similar conclusions regarding funding challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs. Ostrovsky and Picot (2021) focused on access to financing by immigrant business owners in Canada, utilizing data gathered through surveys. The researchers noted that funding for growth is difficult to acquire for immigrant-owned firms in Canada. The immigrant owners' applications were as likely to be approved as Canadian-born owners who seek growth financing (Ostrovsky & Picot, 2021). These findings could provide empirical information regarding the difficulties in financial and capital access faced by immigrant business owners. This is vital to address, given that financing sources tend to be similar for both immigrant owners and Canadian-born owners (Mulisa, 2022). Due to the priority placed on financing Canadian-born owners, immigrant owners would likely face significant limitations to growth capacity due to financial constraints. As such, this body of findings could provide empirical reference for both academics and policymakers regarding the ways in which African immigrant-owned businesses could be helped to support their growth.

Not only do African immigrant entrepreneurs need easier access and knowledge of available resources, but they also should be helped in overcoming language barriers and trust issues and becoming knowledgeable of basic finance, which could aid in obtaining sufficient funding for capital growth (Fatoki, 2021). This was found in a study

conducted by Ervin-Brown (2022), wherein the researchers underscored the challenges of accessing capital funding: language barriers and trust issues. Fatoki (2021) added to this through a descriptive quantitative study. With the use of descriptive statistics and independent samples t-test, the analysis of their findings indicated that immigrant entrepreneurs in South Africa lack basic financial knowledge in terms of sources of debt, such as factoring, leasing, and government debt instruments (Fatoki, 2021). Most of the immigrant entrepreneurs in the study also reported having no knowledge of nontraditional equity financing options, such as crowdfunding (Fatoki, 2021). African immigrant entrepreneurs should be provided with more support in gaining knowledge of the various financial options they have in host countries, which could increase their chances of obtaining financial aid and support. This could increase the likelihood of successful African immigrant-owned businesses (Fatoki, 2021).

Support Systems

There are barriers to growing African immigrant entrepreneurship in host countries, such as capital funding and financial aid (Eresia-Eke & Okerue, 2022). Considering these challenges, several researchers have found the significant role that support systems play in helping grow African immigrant-owned businesses (Kuria, 2024). Kuria (2024) noted that immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States should be supported in breaking out from traditionally restricted markets, considering biases arising from social and racial contexts. Focusing on sub-Saharan immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States operating small businesses, I conducted a qualitative study to explore how immigrant entrepreneurs could be helped grow their businesses in the host country by

understanding the business practices utilized (Kuria, 2024). The findings revealed that business practices—being competitive, acquiring skills and knowledge through education and mentorship, financial management, and social integration into the host country—improved business performance (Kuria, 2024). This means that social change could be attained by outlining to entrepreneurship educators and policymakers the challenges that African immigrants have in growing and expanding their businesses, which may be contended and mitigated by training, integration, and being competitive (Kuria, 2024).

Similar to Kuria (2024), Zehra and Usmani (2023) underscored the important role of family resources in immigrant entrepreneurship. The researchers aimed to explore this topic from a social embeddedness perspective, focusing on immigrant entrepreneurs in Rawalpindi in Pakistan. The study's findings revealed that family resources are not only important for immigrants to integrate economically into a country, but they are also vital in increasing immigrant entrepreneurs' likelihood of remaining in entrepreneurship (Zehra & Usmani, 2023). This is due to several factors, such as having family financial capital and having family members in geographical proximity, which increases immigrant entrepreneurs' overall motivation and support system (Kuria, 2024; Zehra & Usmani, 2023).

Family networks offshore could also have positive impacts on immigrant-owned ventures. Chen and Fan (2022) further explored this topic, assessing how immigrant-owned businesses grow through family networks. The researchers surveyed foreign nationals conducting businesses in China during the 2018–2019 period by examining factors in China and the home country of immigrants favoring their business success

(Chen & Fan, 2022). The results revealed that with their immigrant background, migrant business owners can easily access resources and make use of contacts in their home countries. This is especially attained through transnational family and kinship networks, which enable immigrant business owners to simultaneously engage in social and business activities in both countries (Chen & Fan, 2022). This way, immigrant business owners can grow and expand their business through family social networks, even as they are not within the same geographical location.

Social support networks outside of family also impact immigrant entrepreneurs' rate of success. According to Kuria (2024), factors of support included social capital, enhancing social networks and support, relationships, and ethnic community support. Similarly, Musara and Nieuwenhuizen (2021) underscored the role of social networks in having a successful immigrant-owned business. Taking Cape Town, South Africa as a case, they aimed to identify the factors of success of businesses owned by African immigrants (Musara & Nieuwenhuizen, 2021). Drawing data from immigrant small business owners regarding immigrant-owned ventures and social capital, the researchers conducted semistructured interviews and self-administered questionnaires among the participants (Musara & Nieuwenhuizen, 2021). The results of the study revealed that social networks are key in the development and growth stages of immigrant-owned businesses.

Networks, and their resulting social capital, can be critical determinants of successful business start-up for immigrant entrepreneurs. Aman et al. (2022) underscored the role of human and social support as resources that help develop and sustain

entrepreneurial strategies among immigrant entrepreneurs. The researchers noted that immigrant business owners often rely on external support and suggestions in growing their businesses (Aman et al., 2022). Feng et al. (2023) obtained similar findings by exploring the impact of personality traits, financial resources, motivation and commitment, and government support on the success of women-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). By using purposive sampling, 250 women-led SMEs were recruited to be part of the study. Using a multi-analytical approach, the findings revealed that personality traits, financial resources, motivation and commitment, and government support affected the success of the business. Further, the researchers observed that motivation and commitment mediated personality traits and entrepreneurial success (Feng et al., 2023). Echoed by D. J. Lim (2021), the researchers added that network ties are vital in enhancing overall immigrant business performance. In fact, stronger overall networks offset challenges faced by immigrant business owners, such as financial risks, access to capital, and lack of support (D. J. Lim, 2021). D. J. Lim found this in their study, which examined business performance and network ties of Chinese and Korean immigrants in California. As such, this finding justified that networks and resulting social capital provide the necessary support for the growth of immigrant-owned businesses (Feng et al., 2023; D. J. Lim, 2021). This is vital to address, given that there are various obstacles to immigrant entrepreneurship, which include a lack of support (Feng et al., 2023; Raimi et al., 2023).

Human and social capital significantly influence the development and growth of entrepreneurial activity among immigrant entrepreneurs. According to Rudaku et al.

(2023), immigrant entrepreneurs need networking activities and connections to thrive in their new host countries, especially among forced immigrants due to conflict. The researchers utilized and analyzed data from the Riinvest Migrants' Survey from 2008 to 2009 to assess the level of activity and success among Kosovan immigrant business owners (Rudaku et al., 2023; Tognazzo et al., 2023). The findings of their study indicated that host networking (foreign spouse and foreign language fluency) has a significant and positive effect on immigrant entrepreneurial success and activities (Tognazzo et al., 2023). This is vital to address in host countries, given that increased exposure to host countries, their culture, and their people increases the probability of starting and growing an immigrant-owned business (Tognazzo et al., 2023).

Raimi et al. (2023) concurred with Tognazzo et al.'s (2023) findings, wherein the researchers surveyed 101 African immigrant entrepreneurs through self-administered questionnaires. The settings of the study included the cities of Alice, King Williams Town, East London, and Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Using statistical analysis, descriptive statistics, and principal component analysis, the findings of their study outlined the importance of host networking in overcoming various business challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs (Raimi et al., 2023). These challenges included limited finance, weak markets, human capital, and, finally, a lack of support (Raimi et al., 2023). This body of literature could provide more in-depth information regarding the need to support African immigrant business owners in growing their firms or ventures in host countries by providing human and social support to entrepreneurs (Feng et al., 2023; Raimi et al., 2023).

The factor of support systems and social capital is influenced by the co-ethnic and host country cultural and institutional contexts (Andersson et al., 2021; Karadal et al., 2021). Andersson et al. (2021) noted that immigrant-owned businesses may be helped by providing co-ethnic (same ethnic group) networks, especially during the early years of operation. The researchers noted, however, that non-co-ethnic (different ethnic group) social capital only has a positive impact on business growth for immigrant businesses outside the ethnic enclave (Andersson et al., 2021). Karadal et al. (2021) explored the motivations among immigrant entrepreneurships. The researchers conducted interviews where participants had been recruited through snowball sampling to explore the entrepreneurial activities among Turkish immigrants living in the United States. The findings revealed that financial capital, intellectual and social capital, personal attributes, and psychological traits affected their entrepreneurial performance. Due to immigrant business owners' unique human and social capital, they can cultivate unique, trusting relationships considering their language, cultural, and religious knowledge (Karadal et al., 2021). Through such formed social capital, entrepreneurial immigrants can develop and sustain the growth of their businesses in host countries.

These findings by Andersson et al. (2021) and Karadal et al. (2021) could provide more in-depth analysis regarding the role of social capital and social support systems in helping immigrant-owned businesses grow. Conversely, when social capital and connections are not fostered within African immigrant business owners and host country members of society, entrepreneurial opportunities could be limited, which arise due to race-based obstacles to entrepreneurship (Bruton et al., 2023). This could be used by

policymakers and those aiming to support African immigrant business owners in host countries in thriving in their businesses, by fostering trusting relationships through the use of social capital.

Social support systems are crucial even among women immigrant business owners, who are more impacted by the co-ethnic and host country cultural and institutional contexts (Seyoum et al., 2021). Seyoum et al. (2021) underscored this in their study, noting the crucial role played by social support and social entrepreneurial intentions. Additionally, the researchers explored the moderating role of entrepreneurial education and physical proximity. Using a quantitative methodology with a sample of 12,345 participants, the study revealed a positive and significant correlation between support and social entrepreneurial intentions. Similarly, there was a moderating effect of entrepreneurial education. As such, Seyoum et al. concluded that there is a need for more support systems given the critical role of entrepreneurial ecosystems in enhancing the growth of minority and immigrant-owned businesses.

This body of findings by Seyoum et al. (2021) and Andersson et al. (2021) is not only relevant for policymakers, but also for African immigrant business owners and ethnic community leaders, in developing policies and support programs that aim to develop growing communities and sustain economic growth. This body of findings could provide empirical reference for policymakers and academics that African immigrant owners need social networks and support to help grow their businesses in the United States (Andersson et al., 2021; Seyoum et al., 2021).

Conversely, a lack of support systems, along with cultural factors, could lead to adverse business outcomes for African immigrant entrepreneurs. Several researchers delved further into this topic, aiming to explore the barriers and challenges experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs in host countries (Njaramba, 2022; Yendaw et al., 2023). Njaramba (2022) focused on the experiences of migrant African women entrepreneurs in relation to the establishment and operation of their businesses in North Queensland, Australia. Njaramba used a qualitative approach, conducting semistructured interviews and site visits to 11 businesses. The findings of the study indicated that cultural factors, family, human capital, social capital and networks, and institutional factors significantly impact the growth, establishment, and operations of their businesses (Njaramba, 2022). However, Njaramba's findings are limited in that it was a small-scale pilot study, gathering data from only 11 participants and within a specific region. Thus, the results are not generalizable to other cultures. However, Njaramba's study could provide initial empirical knowledge regarding the important role of ensuring the presence of support systems for African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States.

Providing support systems for the population of African immigrant business owners could result in increased venture performance and economic gain. According to Jones and Ram (2024), economic relationships are essentially vital to the operation of immigrant-owned firms. The researchers concluded this as they explored the experiences of 49 immigrant business owners and 60 of their workers in the West Midlands (Jones & Ram, 2024). Additionally, similar to Jones and Ram (2024) and Njaramba (2022), Yendaw et al. (2023) aimed to examine the factors that impact business performance,

especially among firms owned by African immigrant individuals. Yendaw et al. used a quantitative methodology to develop a conceptual framework explaining "the risks and complexities of West African immigrant entrepreneurs in Accra, Ghana" (p. 1). Using a survey, the researchers received responses from 779 participants and nine key informants. The researchers found that work-related hazards and difficulty accessing accommodation were the main risk factors that negatively affected the business operations of the immigrants (Yendaw et al., 2023).

Tiemo (2024) added to Yendaw et al.'s (2023) findings, noting that African immigrant entrepreneurs often face high external barriers resulting from the region-specific history, economy, demography, and cultural contexts. Tiemo utilized a phenomenological qualitative approach to examine this topic further. Their findings revealed that African immigrant entrepreneurs can overcome such barriers and challenges with the presence of social support (Tiemo, 2024). Bizri (2024) echoed this finding, noting that social capital is vital for immigrant entrepreneurs to maximize their entrepreneurial ventures in host countries. Enhancing social entrepreneurship among African immigrant entrepreneurs could enable them to reach their businesses' growth potential (Bizri, 2024). This is relevant in various host countries, such as the United States, where African immigrant entrepreneurs often lack a sense of belonging and face structural exclusion. This leads to negative outcomes in terms of further developing their businesses in host countries.

Cultural Factors

Cultural factors also impact the rate of development of African immigrant-owned businesses. Researchers have noted that the role of culture in entrepreneurship is even more significant when the entrepreneurs are women (Brieger & Gielnik, 2021; Sun & Fong, 2022). Brieger and Gielnik (2021) concurred that female and minority entrepreneurs are less successful with business ventures in comparison to White and male entrepreneurs. Surangi (2022) noted that gender and immigration status are a double disadvantage to women's success in business. I explored this topic given that female African immigrant entrepreneurs reported lower success rates than their male counterparts (Surangi, 2022). This is due to women's fear of failure and low self-confidence, despite having recognition for their contribution to economic development, growth, and job creation (Surangi, 2022). In addition, immigrant women in entrepreneurship face more challenges due to cultural factors. Colombelli et al. (2021) noted that women in entrepreneurship often face challenges in acquiring resources, especially concerning social capital. Immigrant women business owners are restricted by limited access to social capital outside of family members (Colombelli et al., 2021). This is vital to address, especially among immigrant women business owners, as the results of their study showed that the lack of social capital slows down immigrant venturing efforts, which leads to negative growth outcomes for the business in host countries (Colombelli et al., 2021).

Gender biases in the field of immigrant entrepreneurship are widely apparent. Brieger and Gielnik (2021) noted that there are several implications for female immigrant

entrepreneurship development and success. The researchers underscored that due to present gender biases, immigrant women in entrepreneurship face additional barriers to business development and growth, such as respect for traditions (Brieger & Gielnik, 2021). Sun and Fong (2022) concluded similar barriers for female immigrant entrepreneurs. The researchers conducted a study that aimed to explore the sociodemographic development of foreign entrepreneurs living in Hong Kong using census data obtained from 2001 to 2016 (Sun & Fong, 2022). They used linear probability models with a synthetic cohort design to evaluate the role of gender, education, age, ethnicity, and duration of stay. The findings revealed that gender, education level, ethnicity, and duration of stay positively affected one's success in becoming an entrepreneur in the city (Sun & Fong, 2022). The findings of this literature could provide empirical data regarding the role and impact of long-held traditional and cultural beliefs on the growth of African immigrant-owned businesses (Brieger & Gielnik, 2021; Sun & Fong, 2022). As such, there is a vital call on policymakers to formulate policies that could mitigate or avoid the negative effects of culture and traditional beliefs on immigrant-owned businesses, especially in firms where the entrepreneurs are women.

Personal Characteristics

Personal characteristics have significant effects on the growth of African immigrant-owned businesses. Several researchers examined the impact of personal characteristics on business development and longevity (Duan et al., 2023; Surangi, 2022). Duan et al. (2023) examined how immigrant entrepreneurial motivation impacts business

outcomes. Using a systematic literature review to determine the push factors that drive immigrants into business, the findings revealed that immigrant entrepreneurial motivation is influenced by personal circumstances, personality characteristics, and personal values. Additionally, entrepreneurial desire, need for personal improvement, experience, and business opportunities influenced entrepreneurial motivation. Surangi (2022) concluded similarly, noting the role of specific entrepreneur characteristics on business growth. Focusing on African immigrant entrepreneurs in South Africa, I conducted a phenomenological study to explore personal characteristics, entrepreneurial behavior, and business practices (Surangi, 2022). The findings revealed that despite apparent cultural and gender biases, women are more likely to successfully launch business ventures when they exhibit factors of courage, resilience, hard work, and social skills (Surangi, 2022). This body of findings could provide empirical literature regarding the ways personal characteristics could offset the barriers faced in launching and sustaining African immigrant-owned businesses, especially among the female immigrant population, who face more barriers to success than their male counterparts (Surangi, 2022).

Tiemo (2024) noted similar findings and added to Surangi's (2022) conclusions. I noted that amid business risk and uncertainty, female African immigrant business owners who exhibit attributes of resilience are more likely to overcome business challenges in the host country. Further, Tiemo noted the important role that cultural predisposition has on maximizing business growth opportunities in host countries by stating that, "at cultural level, there is a restriction in business opportunities due to collective heritage and cultural economy" (p. 1). Vandor (2021) delved into this topic as well, examining

international voluntary immigrant entrepreneurs by arguing that they have more entrepreneurial personality because of self-selection. Using a sample of 360 skilled migrants, the findings divulged that international entrepreneurial immigrants are mediated with willingness to take risks and the need for achievement.

African American entrepreneurs faced challenges such as stress, which impact negatively on their performance; however, personal characteristics proved useful in surviving difficult moments. Harima (2022) concurred, noting the need to acknowledge and address the unique challenges, such as immigration stress, faced by immigrant entrepreneurs. Adding to this, experienced immigration stress could significantly impact their lives, their business decisions, and overall intention to pursue their ventures (Harima, 2022). These experienced stressors and obstacles of immigrant entrepreneurs need to be addressed, given that they reduce intentions to grow their firms (Harima, 2022; Vandor, 2021). The findings of Vandor's (2021) study further revealed that resilience plays a vital role in increasing overall intention to grow their firms, despite the presence of heightened stress and cultural obstacles. Similar to Tiemo's (2024) findings, resilience is a significant moderating factor between stress and entrepreneurial success of immigrant-owned businesses. This body of research could provide more knowledge of diversity in entrepreneurship, which could assist policymakers, academics, and practitioners in the field to develop more inclusive policies and guidelines to support African immigrant business owners. This could aid policymakers and immigrant business owners in enhancing certain personal characteristics that could help overcome business challenges such as resilience (Tiemo, 2024).

Having experience in entrepreneurship has been found to impact the rate of immigrant-owned business success. Several researchers noted that entrepreneurial experience can be the distinction between ethnic minority or immigrant entrepreneurs who are successful and those who are not (Khanin et al., 2022). Khanin et al. (2022) examined this further, noting that entrepreneurial experience, alongside opportunity recognition, enhances venture survival and growth in host nations. The researchers conducted their review by exploring past studies on the subject. The results of their findings indicated that experienced entrepreneurs were more likely to experience firm success, especially when they exhibit and possess opportunity recognition perceptions and behaviors (Khanin et al., 2022). This was the resulting evidence of their study's analysis, indicating that businesses experience varying barriers depending on the level of the venture, such that new ventures have more challenges than established ventures. This body of conclusions could provide significant information regarding the role of having experience in entrepreneurship on immigrant-owned business success.

Technology

The use of technological advancement has positively impacted immigrant-owned businesses. Several researchers assessed overall firm performance with the use and adaptation of technology (Bolzani & Scandura, 2024). For example, Bolzani and Scandura (2024) focused on exploring the firm performance of immigrant-owned and domestic firms when it comes to network collaboration. The study involved 71 immigrant entrepreneurs and 69 local entrepreneurs with firms in Emilia-Romagna, Italy. Using regression analyses on the surveys, the findings revealed that foreign immigrants had a

positive effect in influencing the performance of the local firms, especially where the immigrants were assimilated into the host culture. Bolzani and Scandura's findings are in line with those of Ruan et al. (2025), who aimed to examine the association between Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs, the constraints, and the economy of Malaysia. Ruan et al. noted that there should be more efforts in host countries to advocate technology use in immigrant-owned businesses. Encouraging firms to invest more in basic technology, in turn, impacts not only immigrant-owned firm performance but also enhances the technology level in the entire economy of the host country (Ruan et al., 2025). This body of literature could provide empirical insights regarding the ways to improve the performance of African immigrant-owned businesses in host countries, which entails the adoption and use of technology in this sector.

Support for Immigrant-Owned Businesses

Immigrant businesses are closely intertwined with national interest in community economic development. Researchers have reported this, indicating statistics that show the direct economic impact immigrant entrepreneurship has on its local host economies (C. Wang & Shen, 2022). Due to the various positive effects of successful immigrant entrepreneurship on local economies, immigrant business owners should be supported in their endeavors, especially as they face additional challenges linked to immigration, cultural, and ethnic factors (C. Wang & Shen, 2022). This can be done through the development and implementation of strategies and frameworks that could enhance business outcomes of African immigrants.

Business survival and growth strategies of immigrant-owned businesses in the context of African immigrants are vital to identify. Research has revealed that African immigrant entrepreneurs face broad difficulties when starting their businesses, and even more when they aim to grow and develop their businesses (Prah & Sibiri, 2021; C. Wang & Shen, 2022). With the aim of addressing this gap, several researchers have aimed to explore and develop frameworks that aid African immigrant-owned businesses in thriving in their host countries (Prah & Sibiri, 2021). Prah and Sibiri (2021) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the effects of COVID-19 on African immigrants' businesses in China. Surveys were used to collect data and semistructured interviews to follow up with the participants. The findings revealed that African American businesses were worst hit, considering that they had to deal with migration issues while struggling to deal with COVID-19 effects. Specifically, the researchers outlined factors that immigrant-owned businesses could leverage as strategies for growth: (a) enhancing the image of the founder's country of origin and (b) improving the overall presence of immigrant networks in the host country. According to the researchers, these factors as strategies may effectively enhance organizational performance and growth outcomes (Prah & Sibiri, 2021; C. Wang & Shen, 2022). This body of findings could provide initial context regarding some ways in which African immigrant-owned businesses could be helped to grow and thrive in their host countries.

There are various effective strategies and principles to support new ventures owned by African immigrants. These include enhancing ethnic network ties, which have been shown to bind and strengthen international business formations (Duan et al., 2021).

Duan et al. (2021) underscored the role of ethnic ties in improving business outcomes. They emphasized the impact of transnational entrepreneurial involvement with the home country on the business outcomes of immigrant-owned firms. With transnational ethnic ties, immigrant business owners can cultivate strong ethnic links, which result in an increased scope of business activities—both local and international (Duan et al., 2021).

Duan and Sandhu (2022) conducted a systematic literature review focusing on immigrant entrepreneurship motivation (IEM) to identify gaps in underperformance. Their findings revealed six factors associated with the performance of immigrant entrepreneurship: (a) individual characteristics, (b) personal values, (c) experiences, (d) business ideas and opportunities, (e) circumstances, (f) goal-setting and self-efficacy, and (g) immigrant entrepreneurial ecosystem (IEE). These factors influenced performance. The findings provide initial context for understanding issues to address when improving the entrepreneurial environment for immigrant workers.

Yang and Girotto (2024) added to this finding, noting that in addition to strong ethnic network ties, immigrant business owners should seek out innovative solutions to the problems they encounter, especially as they grow their businesses. Although host networking and ethnic ties are relevant to business development, innovation is most crucial for African immigrant-owned businesses to consider, as it increases sales revenue while minimizing cost (Yang & Girotto, 2024). This strategy is particularly effective for African immigrant-owned organizations, especially as they cope with cultural differences in their host countries.

Moghaddam et al. (2018), as cited in Ashourizadeh et al. (2022), focused on transnational entrepreneurship, social networks, and institutional distance, and aimed to assess the value of ethnic ties on performance. Their findings revealed that ethnic and social ties alone are not enough to successfully achieve and maintain competitive advantage for immigrant-owned firms in the global market (Ashourizadeh et al., 2022). Additionally, the outcomes further revealed that strategies such as opportunity sensing and opportunity seizing could enhance performance and success outcomes of immigrant-owned firms (Ashourizadeh et al., 2022). This body of knowledge could provide more reference for policymakers and future African immigrant business owners in developing effective strategies to ensure optimal firm performance, thereby increasing the economic outcomes of their host countries.

African immigrant-owned businesses need more access to knowledge and business advice in their host countries. In a new environment, along with immigration challenges, African immigrant business owners require sound advice regarding business network decisions, especially during the initial stages of their ventures (Jamaludin et al., 2023). Jamaludin et al. (2023) noted this in their study's findings, as they aimed to explore knowledge distribution among immigrant entrepreneurs and their businesses in Malaysia. Deriving data from five immigrant entrepreneurs, the researchers employed a qualitative study and in-depth interviews. The results revealed that providing immigrant business owners with sufficient knowledge in the host country was significant in helping them locate and exploit resources, resulting in successful businesses. This body of research could contribute to policymakers' understanding of how immigrant business

owners can be assisted, especially through business advice on network decisions. This is vital to address, given that immigrant access to sound business advice could increase a new firm's success rate and help measure its business performance.

Human, social, and financial capital are among the major challenges faced by immigrant business owners. To grow their businesses, immigrant business owners need access to the market in their host country (Azoulay et al., 2022). Researchers have previously developed frameworks and policy shifts aimed at making human, social, and financial capital easier to acquire for the targeted population (Azoulay et al., 2022; Orozco, 2022). Orozco (2022) examined how business owners made sense of ethno-racial identity in relation to market research and business orientation. The study utilized 65 in-depth interviews and participant observation and revealed that ethnic strategies were useful in advancing business strategy. These strategies function within the larger social structure and intersectionality contexts. Azoulay et al. (2022) aimed to demonstrate that immigrants are creators of employment—not takers of work—by exploring U.S. administrative data on immigrants involved in entrepreneurship versus local entrepreneurs. The findings revealed the benefits of immigrants, including the number of companies launched, the number of jobs created, and how the firms founded by immigrants compared with those of natives. Azoulay et al. found that human capital, social capital, and modes of integration are vital factors in enhancing immigrant-owned business outcomes in host countries. As such, more policies aimed at increasing access to human and social capital, as well as supporting the integration of immigrant business owners within their host countries, should be developed.

Comparable to Azoulay et al.'s (2022) findings, Yetkin and Tunçalp (2024) focused on the role of immigration in new venture survival, especially among immigrant business owners. The researchers noted that immigrants often face the challenge and liability of ethnicity due to their immigration status (Yetkin & Tunçalp, 2024). Using a qualitative method, they studied the narratives of 39 Syrian refugee entrepreneurs and four key informants in Türkiye. The findings revealed a diverse set of refugee entrepreneurs who were continuously excluded from the host due to societal factors. The researchers recommended a "social, political, institutional, and spatial context across host, home, and third countries" to address emerging challenges among immigrants. Oduro Owusu and Gil (2025) noted similar findings, underscoring the importance of cognitive and emotional engagement among immigrant entrepreneurs. The researchers focused on 3,259 businesses owned by refugees in Greater Accra, Ghana. Data were analyzed using Smart PLS-SEM and path modeling. The results demonstrated that "refugee entrepreneurship significantly and positively affects business sustainability. Emotional and cognitive engagement partially mediate this relationship" (p. 1). The findings revealed how refugee entrepreneurs navigate socioeconomic barriers to become successful. This body of findings could provide more empirical strategies that might be utilized by policymakers and those supporting immigrant entrepreneurs in their host countries. Supporting immigrants is an effective strategy that could lead to economic development and expansion of African immigrant-owned business activities across national borders.

Summary and Conclusions

Several researchers have addressed human capital in entrepreneurship; however, few have placed direct emphasis on social and human capital among African immigrant entrepreneurs who seek to grow their businesses into nationally recognized names in the United States (Dogan et al., 2022). Dogan et al. (2022) conducted a study on successful immigrant entrepreneurs and the benefits in the host country, finding that immigrant entrepreneurs enhance levels of physical capital investment, job creation for local workers, and contribution toward the host country's gross domestic product (GDP). Q. E. Wang et al. (2021) noted that immigrant entrepreneurs who embark on a new venture in host countries often must overcome challenges in utilizing human and social capital, which are influenced by institutional structures that are different from those of their host countries. This places immigrant entrepreneurs at risk of experiencing additional adverse conditions, such as immigrant stress and ethnic adversities related to entrepreneurship and networking. Therefore, using the framework of Becker's (1964) human capital theory as a point of reference, future researchers and policymakers can better identify, explore, and explain the factors accounting for the inability of African-owned businesses to grow into nationally recognized names in the United States. Finally, future researchers, policymakers, and African immigrant entrepreneurs should consider human capital constructs, given their unique impact on entrepreneurship outcomes (Cueto et al., 2021).

Various factors impact the outcomes of African immigrant-owned businesses. Across the literature, I found that these factors are vital to identify to help promote economic activity with positive sociopolitical consequences across the United States;

however, past researchers focused on entrepreneurs broadly, not specifically African immigrant entrepreneurs (Santos et al., 2024). Although this information provides the baseline for this study, the lack of focus on African immigrant entrepreneurs who wish to grow their businesses as United States–based entities is a knowledge gap. As Urban et al. (2024) indicated, social and human capital affect immigrant-owned businesses and minimize prospects of entrepreneurship, job creation, and wealth generation, thus impacting economic growth in the area. There is a need to address the specific support needed by African immigrant entrepreneurs, especially as they face additional pressures such as immigrant stress, lack of support systems in host countries, and financial constraints (Bates, 2022). Bates (2022), Griffin et al. (2021), and Musara and Nieuwenhuizen (2021) examined links between sustaining African immigrant-owned businesses and the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurship in international settings.

Past researchers have not directed attention to the means of human capital used by African immigrant entrepreneurs who work toward growing their businesses into nationally recognized names in the United States (Safii & Rahayu, 2021; Q. E. Wang et al., 2021). As a result, the theory of human capital remains largely unexplored among this population, creating a significant gap in knowledge, given that the theory of human capital relates to universal economic value, management, and entrepreneurship among business professionals (Safii & Rahayu, 2021; Taweesangrungroj et al., 2022). Empirical knowledge is not prevalent regarding which constructs of human capital are relevant to

the population of African immigrant entrepreneurs aiming to grow their businesses into nationally recognized names in the United States (Santos et al., 2024).

The objective of this qualitative study was to identify, explore, and explain the factors accounting for the inability of African-owned businesses to grow into nationally recognized names in the United States. Cueto et al. (2021) and Razin (2017) reviewed current research regarding the theory of human capital as it relates to the rate of entrepreneurship success among immigrant groups. Similarly, Q. E. Wang et al. (2021) assessed the role of human and social capital in entrepreneurs' innovation. Despite these studies and findings, a deeper understanding is needed regarding what constructs are relevant for the population of African immigrant groups who aim to grow into nationally recognized names in the United States (Taweesangrungroj et al., 2022; Q. E. Wang et al., 2021). A better understanding of these constructs and factors is vital because immigrant business owners face several challenges in utilizing human and social capital, which are influenced by institutional structures different from those of their host country. This could lead to the eventual failure of new business ventures by African immigrant groups (Urban et al., 2024). Similarly, Griffin et al. (2021) identified a necessity for policymakers and business leaders to be proactive in supporting the needs of African immigrant entrepreneurs in the context of human and social capital and overall financial knowledge. It is essential to widen access to finance for immigrant-owned businesses and enhance financial knowledge among this population to improve the success and growth of African immigrant-owned businesses in host countries.

Researchers of human capital have established a correlation between support systems and immigrant entrepreneurs' rate of success, primarily by viewing social and human capital as forms of coping with stressful environments—particularly those arising from social and racial contexts (Eresia-Eke & Okerue, 2022; Harris, 2023). Brieger and Gielnik (2021) explained further that immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States should be supported in breaking out from traditionally restricted markets, taking into account biases arising from social and racial contexts. Similarly, Harris (2023) and Feng et al. (2023) also underscored the role of social networks in achieving successful immigrant-owned businesses. Policymakers and leaders in the business field should ensure that these networks are available for this population, as human and social support act as crucial resources that help develop and sustain entrepreneurial strategies among immigrant entrepreneurs (Feng et al., 2023).

Researchers have proposed that human and social capital is a professional imperative related to the start-up and growth of immigrant-owned businesses (D. J. Lim, 2021). Overall, there is a need to focus not only on strong ties, but also on the development of weak ties in networking. Several researchers have delved into this phenomenon in relation to the population of immigrant business owners, identifying stronger overall networks as key foundations of immigrant business performance (D. J. Lim, 2021; Raimi et al., 2023). Raimi et al. (2023) found that social networking has a significant and positive effect on immigrant entrepreneurial success and activities. In fact, wide networking is sufficient in overcoming various business challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs (Raimi et al., 2023). As such, this pool of studies provides a

substantial body of literature on the significant factors correlated with the success of African immigrant business owners in growing their firms or ventures in host countries, and the role of human and social support in immigrant entrepreneurs' success (Feng et al., 2023; Raimi et al., 2023).

Research focused on the experiences and relevant success factors of African immigrant entrepreneurs is extremely limited (Karadal et al., 2021). In fact, there are no existing empirical studies, either quantitative or qualitative, in which researchers have examined the constructs related to the factors that impact African immigrant entrepreneurs' success in growing their businesses (Bruton et al., 2023; Seyoum et al., 2021; Yendaw et al., 2023). In general, past researchers examining factors related to entrepreneurs' success in growing their businesses have concentrated on the general population of entrepreneurs rather than on African immigrant entrepreneurs themselves.

The gap in the literature is the seeming lack of research on the challenges faced by African immigrant entrepreneurs and the specific drivers of growing a successful African immigrant-owned business. Past researchers have primarily focused on other populations, such as Korean and Chinese immigrant groups, and general entrepreneurs with a background in entrepreneurship (Bizri, 2024; Brieger & Gielnik, 2021; Sun & Fong, 2022; Tiemo, 2024). However, no findings are specific to the population of African immigrant entrepreneurs who aim to grow their businesses on a national scale in the United States.

Existing empirical studies are also lacking regarding the inability of African-owned businesses to grow into nationally recognized names in the United States (Appel,

2023). Santos et al. (2024) suggested the need for a more rigorous examination of challenges and hurdles related to ethnic, political, structural, and socioeconomic factors among African-owned businesses across the spectrum of entrepreneurship and economics (Dogan et al., 2022; Seraj et al., 2022). There is a call for more rigorous examination of the barriers preventing African-owned businesses from succeeding in host countries (Dogan et al., 2022). Furthermore, Safii and Rahayu (2021) found only limited literature on the application of human capital theory to examine links among human, social, and financial capital and their roles in growing African-owned businesses. Considering these findings, future researchers should delve further into this phenomenon and examine it according to the needs and challenges faced specifically by African-owned businesses aiming to grow into nationally recognized names in the United States.

Chapter 3 includes a discussion of this qualitative single case study and the systematic steps taken to address the research question on the topic of African immigrant–owned businesses. Following this is an outline of the research design, which coincides with the purpose of the study, the research population, and the sampling method used to ensure a randomized, balanced set of unbiased data. Chapter 3 also contains a detailed discussion of the methodology for collecting data, which includes the process of recruitment, participation, interviewing, and issues of trustworthiness of results.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the factors experienced as obstructions for African immigrant–owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States by African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States. This chapter includes a detailed description of the methodology for this study. The discussion includes details about the research method, research design, and the researcher's role. The chapter also includes a detailed description of the methodology for data collection, including participant selection logic; instruments for data collection; procedure for recruitment, participation, and data collection; and the data analysis plan. Issues of trustworthiness—particularly credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures—are also discussed. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

The research phenomenon explored was the obstructions experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs in growing their businesses into nationally recognized names in the United States. Despite widespread entrepreneurial involvement, African immigrant–owned businesses in the United States have rarely been able to match the success, growth, and name recognition of U.S. businesses owned by non-African immigrants (Dogan et al., 2022). To explore the research phenomenon, the following research question guided this study:

RQ1: What factors do African immigrants experience as obstructions for African immigrant–owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States?

For this study, a qualitative method was chosen. Researchers use the qualitative research method when exploring a phenomenon based on subjective experiences (W. M. Lim, 2024). By contrast, the focus in quantitative methodology is on quantifiable and empirical data (W. M. Lim, 2024). The qualitative research method was preferable to the quantitative research method in this study because qualitative data are richer and more detailed in meaning than quantitative data. The qualitative single case study design was useful for eliciting rich descriptions and exploring the subjective viewpoints of individuals in a study by responding to the *how* and *why* questions. When the rationale for research is to gain insights regarding experiences in relation to specific phenomena from in-depth human perspectives, the qualitative research method is considered most effective (W. M. Lim, 2024). As the focus of this study was to explore the factors experienced as barriers for African immigrant–owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States by African immigrant entrepreneurs, I found the qualitative method more appropriate.

Quantitative methodology was not preferred in the current study because the aim was to understand factors experienced as obstructions rather than to measure or quantify them. Quantitative methodology concentrates on answering *how many* or *how much* questions (Habib, 2021). As the focus in this study was on in-depth subjective experiences, with no preformulated hypotheses, the quantitative method was unsuitable.

In addition to the quantitative method, I also considered mixed-methods research for this study. In this approach, elements of both qualitative and quantitative research are used to explore a phenomenon (Mulisa, 2022). Because mixed-method research requires more resources for collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, and the research phenomenon in this study did not require quantitative elements, I found the mixed-methods approach unsuitable.

Qualitative research designs are developed to meet the specific needs of this research; they include case study, phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnographic research design. The single case study design was used in this study. According to Alam (2021), a case is a contemporary phenomenon that occurs in real life, where the boundaries between the context and the phenomenon are not clear. Based on this definition, Alam inferred the nature of a case study as an empirical investigation focused on a set of cases, as defined above, that addresses the *why* and *how* questions with respect to a phenomenon. Consequently, in this study, the research phenomenon of interest was the obstructions experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs in growing their businesses into nationally recognized names in the United States.

The case under consideration was the contemporary phenomenon in the context of African immigrant entrepreneurs. This study employed a single case bounded to African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States, which aligns with Alam's (2021) justification for case study research when examining a real-life phenomenon in depth. The unit of analysis in this single case study comprised one bounded system consisting of African immigrant entrepreneurs from California, New York, New Jersey, and Texas.

The unit of observation applied in this study was African immigrant entrepreneurs with a minimum of 5 years of business ownership experience and annual minimum gross sales of $1 million. Thus, the period of focus was their experiences as business owners for at least 5 years. This study was based on a research problem identified from past research (Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021; Portes & Martinez, 2021), highlighting the fact that U.S. businesses owned by African immigrants do not often achieve the same degree of widespread success, growth, and notoriety as businesses owned by immigrants from Asia, Europe, and Latin America.

I considered but rejected the phenomenological research design for this study. The focus in a phenomenological research study is on the lived experiences of people with the goal of exploring the meaning such people attach to those experiences (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). I found the phenomenological research design to be unsuitable for this study because the goal of this study was to explore the factors experienced as obstructions for African immigrant–owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States by African immigrant entrepreneurs, from multiple perspectives.

I considered but rejected the grounded theory research design for the study. Researchers use the grounded theory design when their goal is to explore a phenomenon with the intention of developing a theory as an explanation of the phenomenon (Susanto et al., 2024). I found the grounded theory design unsuitable for this study because the purpose of this research was not to develop a theory about the factors that obstruct African immigrant–owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in

the United States. Instead, the purpose was to explore the factors experienced as obstructions for African immigrant–owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States by African immigrant entrepreneurs. Finally, I also considered the ethnographic research design for this study. The ethnographic design is appropriate when the purpose of the research is to explore a phenomenon through an examination of the culture of the participants and their interactions with that culture. I rejected the ethnographic design for this study because an examination of cultural interactions of African immigrant entrepreneurs was not the purpose of this study.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this study was mainly that of an instrument, specifically for conducting the study. I was also responsible for designing the study and its protocol (Alam, 2021). Other responsibilities included obtaining approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), identifying the sample from the population, and recruiting the participants. I facilitated the data collection process. Additionally, resolving any issues that arose—especially among the participants—was part of the researcher's role in the study (W. M. Lim, 2024). Further, data security, participant confidentiality, and privacy were part of my responsibilities (W. M. Lim, 2024). I designed and verified the questions for the interview protocol (Akingbola & Brunt, 2023). Conducting the analysis of the data and ensuring the trustworthiness of the findings was also my responsibility.

A researcher should ensure there is no conflict of interest in a study (Akingbola & Brunt, 2023). With respect to possible conflicts of interest, I acknowledged that no

personal past relationships existed between the participants and me. I selected the participants from the target population through sample criteria. The initial contact made for conducting the study was the first time I had contacted any of the participants. A researcher should also acknowledge personal beliefs that could affect the research process. With respect to personal beliefs regarding the research, I acknowledged three beliefs. First, I believed that African immigrant–owned businesses becoming nationally recognized names in the United States would be a positive development. Second, I believed that identifying, exploring, and explaining the factors that obstruct African immigrant–owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States could help in that direction. For instance, African immigrant entrepreneurs who long for direction in the do's and don'ts of entrepreneurship could utilize the findings of this study to sharpen their entrepreneurial and business skills with the ultimate goal of growing their enterprises. Third, the growth of African-owned businesses, in turn, could lead to increased employment, especially for the population of African immigrants. Increased employment would stimulate economic activity with positive sociopolitical consequences across the United States. To ensure these personal beliefs did not affect the findings of the study, I adopted multiple strategies for trustworthiness, as outlined in a later section.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The general population comprised African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States. The target population was African immigrant entrepreneurs from the states with

some of the highest concentrations of African immigrants: California, New York, New Jersey, and Texas. For sampling, I used the purposive sampling technique. It is a nonprobability sampling technique in which the participant selection process is determined based on participant characteristics per the purpose of the study (F. B. Thomas, 2022). Specifically, the inclusion criteria in this study relied on the availability and willingness of African immigrant entrepreneurs to partake in the study. Although the gender or age of the participants was not considered as part of the inclusion criteria, the participants must have had a minimum of 5 years of business ownership experience and annual minimum gross sales of $1 million. Verification of these criteria was based on voluntary disclosure and publicly available information that I assessed.

The sample for this study comprised 15 African immigrant entrepreneurs from California, New York, New Jersey, and Texas, each with a minimum of 5 years of business ownership experience and annual minimum gross sales of $1 million. The choice regarding the sample size was based on recommendations from Mwita (2022), who noted that in most homogeneous qualitative studies, saturation occurs between 12–15 participants. At that point, no new meaningful information or major themes occur with the introduction of additional participants (Mwita, 2022). The unit of analysis in this study comprised one bounded system—African immigrant entrepreneurs from California, New York, New Jersey, and Texas. These states were selected because they include some of the highest concentrations of African immigrants. The unit of observation in this study was African immigrant entrepreneurs with a minimum of 5 years of business ownership experience and annual minimum gross sales of $1 million. Based on these characteristics,

I expected that participants could provide relevant data that would help identify, explore, and explain the factors that obstruct African immigrant–owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States. Participation in the study was voluntary (F. B. Thomas, 2022). If the required sample of participants was not found in the places identified, I considered broadening the locations to include more states.

Based on the final target population and sample criteria set for the study, I initiated the process of recruitment (Susanto et al., 2024). To identify participants who met the inclusion criteria and obtain contact information for initial interaction, I approached African ethnic associations, such as the Ghanaian Association of Southern California, Sacramento Association of Nigerians, Southern California Nigerian Association, Nigerians in Diaspora Organization, and National Council of Ghanaian Associations. I consulted African immigrant community and faith leaders personally from publicly available information to recommend potential participants who met the inclusion criteria. I also consulted the local chambers of commerce and other business associations in the selected states for recommendations. Additionally, I contacted notable African immigrant entrepreneurs directly from publicly available information. After identifying the appropriate individuals, I used their contact information to send an initial email in which a formal introduction to the research and the potential significance of the findings for the community were included (Allan, 2020). The email also contained an informed consent form, which I asked the participants to sign and return should they wish to participate in the study (see F. B. Thomas, 2022).

Instrumentation

To gather data in this study to explore the factors experienced as obstructions for African immigrant–owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States by African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States, I conducted semistructured face-to-face open-ended interviews and reviewed relevant documents. I also conducted open-ended interviews with African immigrant entrepreneurs, who were the participants in this study, with the help of a systematic interview protocol (see Appendix). Because participants were independent entrepreneurs, it was not necessary to obtain permission from an employer or organization. For the interviews, I selected 15 African immigrant entrepreneurs from California, New York, New Jersey, and Texas, with a minimum of 5 years of business ownership experience and annual minimum gross sales of $1 million. For the document review, I used secondary sources of data that could provide further context to the findings derived from the interviews (Allan, 2020). Semistructured interviews are a commonly used instrument for qualitative case studies. Researchers categorize qualitative interviews into three groups, namely structured, unstructured, and semistructured (Belina, 2023). Structured interviews encompass predetermined questions that do not allow a researcher to ask follow-up questions. On the contrary, unstructured interviews are based completely on participant responses. The semistructured interview technique provides the benefits of structured interviews by allowing the conduct of interviews within a reasonable time while enabling the flexibility of open-ended questions and follow-up questions associated with unstructured interviews (W. M. Lim, 2024). The semistructured interviews for the study involved me asking a set

of predetermined questions as part of the initial step in the interviews, followed by the participants providing responses that direct the inquiry (W. M. Lim, 2024). The semistructured interview technique was selected for this study as it allowed the in-depth data collection needed to answer the research question (Belina, 2023).

The interview questions were categorized into two main categories, namely open- and close-ended. Close-ended questions are suitable for quantitative data as they limit the scope of the participants' response (W. M. Lim, 2024). Qualitative studies involve open-ended questions, which enable participants to express their experiences in more detail (W. M. Lim, 2024). The specific qualitative open-ended interview questions that I developed for the study were based on the research phenomenon, research purpose, and the literature review (Belina, 2023). These questions were designed to generate the various themes needed to answer the research question. Some of the themes explored included reasons African immigrants enter entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial capabilities of African immigrant entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial education, human and social capital of the entrepreneur, educational attainment, structural influences, finances and availability of capital, attitude of fellow African immigrants, and language. I verified the instrument via a pilot study, as discussed in the following section.

I conducted the interviews in a private room within a public library, either face-to-face or through video conferencing on Zoom, depending on the convenience of the participant and me. The purpose of conducting the interviews in a private room was to ensure sufficient privacy and silence for the interview to be conducted without interruption (Belina, 2023). After identifying the appropriate individuals, I used their

contact information to send an initial email in which a formal introduction to the research and the potential significance of the findings for the community were included (Belina, 2023). The email also contained an informed consent form, which participants were asked to sign and return should they wish to participate in the study. Within the informed consent form, I obtained permission from the participants to use audio recording devices to record the interviews. I also informed the participants about the privacy and confidentiality arrangements, such as the use of pseudonyms to identify them and the removal of any personally identifiable information during the transcription stage (W. M. Lim, 2024). I used two audio recording devices during the interviews. Of these, one was the main device, and another was a backup device in case the first device malfunctioned (W. M. Lim, 2024). After the participants signed the informed consent forms, I contacted them to schedule a time and date for the interview sessions. Each interview was one-on-one and lasted 45 to 60 minutes, as recommended by Belina (2023).

In addition to semistructured interviews, the data collection instrument for this study also included a document review. The purpose of using a document review was to add an additional secondary source to the data, providing further context for the data obtained from the primary source (Belina, 2023). The document review comprised a diverse group of documents, including past peer-reviewed literature on the research phenomenon, relevant information from reports from organizations, such as the Migration Policy Institute, and governmental sources such as ICE. The documents included for the review were those published within the last 5 years at the time of the document review to ensure the most recent data were included. I searched for the

documents and reports through keywords and selected the documents based on their relevance to the research question (W. M. Lim, 2024). For instance, I used reports related to African immigrants' experiences—especially in entrepreneurship—to compare the responses of the participants and obtain more nuanced and in-depth data.

Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study to verify the interview instrument for this study. I conducted the pilot study to obtain data to improve the instrument and ensure it was effective in performing the task of collecting data to answer the research question (Belina, 2023). Specifically, the pilot study focused on whether the interview questions were understood by the participants and interpreted as I intended. The assessment regarding the pilot study was useful in ensuring the instrument was such that the data collected answered the research question (W. M. Lim, 2024). Further, the purpose of conducting the pilot study was to assess whether the relevant questions needed to answer the research question were included, ensure unimportant questions were excluded, and that no bias from a researcher's part reflected in the questions (F. B. Thomas, 2022). Through this process, I ensured the instrument used was appropriate for addressing the research question (see F. B. Thomas, 2022).

I conducted the pilot study using the same procedure for participant recruitment and data collection that was used for the main data collection process. Specifically, I recruited one participant for the pilot study who met the inclusion criteria, namely, an African immigrant entrepreneur with a minimum of 5 years of business ownership experience and annual minimum gross sales of $1 million. I identified the participant for

the pilot study during the recruitment process and asked the participant to read and sign an informed consent form. The participant who took part in the pilot study did not participate in the main data collection process. The purpose of the pilot study was strictly to assess the instrument (W. M. Lim, 2024). Following the interview, I asked the pilot study participant to provide feedback on ways to improve the instrument. Based on the feedback provided, I amended and finalized the instrument (W. M. Lim, 2024).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The first component of the data collection procedure was obtaining approval # 08-24-20-0660049 from the Walden University IRB. Afterward, I recruited the participants. To identify participants who met the inclusion criteria and obtain contact information for initial interaction, I approached African ethnic associations, such as the Ghanaian Association of Southern California, Sacramento Association of Nigerians, Southern California Nigerian Association, Nigerians in Diaspora Organization, and National Council of Ghanaian Associations. I also consulted African immigrant community and faith leaders personally from publicly available information to recommend potential participants who met the inclusion criteria. I also consulted the local chambers of commerce and other business associations in the selected states for recommendations. Additionally, I contacted notable African immigrant entrepreneurs directly from publicly available information to participate in the study. After identifying the appropriate individuals, I used their contact information to send an initial email in which a formal introduction to the research and the potential significance of the findings for the community were included. The email also contained an informed consent form. Within

the informed consent form, I obtained permission from the participants to use audio recording devices to record the interviews. I also informed the participants about the privacy and confidentiality arrangements, such as the use of pseudonyms to identify the participants and the removal of any personally identifiable information during the transcription stage (W. M. Lim, 2024). I required the participants to read, sign, and return the informed consent form. After the participants returned the signed informed consent forms, their participation was confirmed.

After the informed consent forms were signed and returned by the participants, I contacted the participants to schedule a time and date for the interview sessions. I conducted the interviews in a private room within a public library, either face-to-face or through video conferencing, as per the convenience of the researcher and the participants. The purpose of conducting the interviews in a private room was to ensure sufficient privacy and silence for the interview to be conducted without interruption (Belina, 2023). I used two audio recording devices during the interviews. One of the two audio recording devices was the main device, and another was a backup in case the first device malfunctioned (W. M. Lim, 2024). Each interview was one-on-one and lasted 45 to 60 minutes (Belina, 2023). After an interview ended, I held a debriefing session in which I conducted a discussion with the participant regarding the interview session. The purpose of the debriefing process was to allow the participants to share their experience regarding the interview and provide guidance regarding the next steps.

Before conducting the interviews, I collected data through a review of publicly available documents. The document review comprised a diverse group of documents,

including past peer-reviewed literature on the research phenomenon, relevant information from reports from organizations such as the Migration Policy Institute, and governmental sources such as ICE. The documents included for the review were published within the last 5 years at the time of the document review to ensure the inclusion of the most recent data. I searched for the documents and reports through keywords and selected the documents based on their relevance to the research question (W. M. Lim, 2024).

After collecting the data, I transcribed the interview recordings using Microsoft Word. Transcription enabled more accuracy regarding the responses provided by the participants (W. M. Lim, 2024). After the transcripts were prepared, I conducted member checking, during which I shared the documents via email with the respective participants and sought feedback to ensure their responses were reflected accurately (W. M. Lim, 2024). If any revision was suggested, I ensured the revision was made until the participant was satisfied. Subsequently, I eliminated any information that could be used to identify the participants from the transcripts. I stored all the data from the study on a personal, password-protected computer (see Belina, 2023). I am keeping physical transcripts in a locked cabinet within my home. I will keep the data for 5 years, after which they will be destroyed permanently (see Belina, 2023).

Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis included the analysis and synthesis of data from each data collection source. Additionally, I developed a case study summarization. The data analysis technique used in this study was thematic analysis, assisted with NVivo software (Allsop et al., 2022). Researchers have noted that the thematic analysis technique is

suitable for qualitative studies in which research questions can be answered through the development of patterns or themes from the collected qualitative data (W.M. Lim, 2024). A case study summary involves the synthesis of information that is coded, themed, and produced from the data analysis (Cole, 2024). I thematically analyzed the transcripts to obtain more understanding of the research phenomenon under consideration. Thematic analysis technique includes analysis of a whole set of data. In the context of this study, this included data from the semistructured, open-ended interviews and the document review (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The findings of the study were based on the analysis of the themes.

The development of themes in a thematic analysis process may include deductive or inductive methods. In this study, I used the inductive method for coding, as the inductive method allowed the emergence of codes from the transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I used NVivo software for developing the codes, as it helped obtain a more accurate understanding of the themes emerging from the research data (Allsop et al., 2022). The process of coding in the analysis comprised multiple steps, leading to the emergence of thematic analysis. I used a coding table to record the category of the data obtained from the interviews and the document review. After the transcripts from the interviews were prepared, along with the notes from the document review, I entered the obtained data into NVivo software as a Microsoft Word file. I used the software to generate patterns that emerged from the data and labeled the emerging codes. I altered these labels as the data analysis process progressed. When new definitions and content appeared, more data were analyzed and labeled, and the properties were refined in their

identification (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I provided descriptive titles to the emerging codes from the NVivo analysis that identified or described and defined the code's properties (Allsop et al., 2022).

The research question and the theoretical framework helped to develop a framework for the data codes. The next step in the data analysis process involved breaking up all the data from the two sources into individual incidents. Grouping the themes that emerged from this method into two characteristics: those that arise from the customs as well as the language of the individuals, and those recognized as significant to the focus of the study. With respect to the first type, the goal was to develop subjects and groups for the purpose of theorizing the participants' worldview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). With respect to the second type, the goal was to develop insights that were more theoretical in nature relating to the themes that would help obtain clarification regarding the social workings of the research phenomenon under consideration (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The use of descriptive coding in this study's qualitative research took the form of a short phrase accompanied by a label that represented summative characteristics capturing the essence of the data based on language. Codes represent themes or data characteristics. I accompanied the text-based data from the study with a respective code to symbolize similarities in themes and ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The use of a coding process helped obtain recognition of a text-based piece of information that represented a concept in relation to the patterns that emerged (Braun & Clarke, 2023). For this study, I utilized two coding levels for both sources. The first was open codes,

which differed based on the phrases or words the participants used in their expressions (Belina, 2023). Following the conclusion of the first coding level, data refinement occurred at the second coding level via focused coding, which helped identify the frequency of the descriptive codes first identified and develop categories of data (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

I achieved the unification of the codes through continuous pattern searching and referencing (Belina, 2023), resulting in the categorization of code groups. Combining and categorizing the codes necessitated the merging of common codes in relation to the research question. At the end of this process, a list of codes emerged that provided an overview of the codes obtained from the data. Following the review of the two code levels, I began the process of theme searching. This process included an analytical method for the second level of coded groups with the purpose of identifying probable themes (Braun & Clarke, 2023). After reviewing the second level of codes for themes, I joined the two types of codes through categories and copied them into a text-based file, which included a description for each theme in relation to the research question (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Once the codes were grouped systematically, the themes for the research emerged, and I provided a descriptive name relevant to each.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

In a qualitative study, credibility is one of the aspects of trustworthiness and refers to the degree to which a researcher can establish the findings of the study to reflect reality (Alam, 2021). Credibility in this study could have been threatened by the possibility of

misrepresenting the data provided by the participants (Susanto et al., 2024). The responses meant by the participants may not have been reflected in the transcribed data, which could threaten the trustworthiness of the findings (Alam, 2021). Data misrepresentation is likely during data analysis (Akingbola & Brunt, 2023). To ensure credibility was maintained in this study, I utilized saturation and member checking (Mwita, 2022). Saturation was reflected in the sample size. Mwita (2022) noted that in most homogeneous qualitative studies, saturation occurs between 12 and 15 participants. At that point, no new meaningful information or major themes emerge with the introduction of additional participants (Mwita, 2022). With 15 participants, I expected that data saturation would be easier to obtain. Additionally, I conducted member checking after the data collection process concluded. During member checking, I shared the documents prepared from the collected data via email with the respective participants and sought their feedback to ensure their responses were reflected accurately (W. M. Lim, 2024). If any revision was suggested, I ensured the revision was made until the participant was satisfied.

Transferability

In qualitative research, transferability refers to the possibility of applying the results of a study to other situations (W. M. Lim, 2024). To attain transferability in this study, I included sufficient information regarding the methodology (Susanto et al., 2024). While acknowledging the difficulty of ensuring the findings can be applied to different contexts, I used Lincoln and Guba's (1985) recommendations to provide thick descriptions that contained detailed information regarding the research process that would

assist others in understanding the transferability. Thick description is a technique, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba, which involves providing detailed descriptions of the research process to enhance transferability. This comprised detailed information about the data collection process and my experience with the process. Additionally, I supplemented important cultural context to obtain a better understanding of the data collection procedure (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), such as how I developed the interview questions, how I conducted the interviews, and how the participants exited the interviews. These descriptions help the reader of the research study obtain an understanding of the research process.

Dependability

In this qualitative study, dependability refers to the techniques used to ensure the ability to repeat procedures, such as this study, to obtain similar results (Silverman & Patterson, 2021). Threats to the dependability of the research include inconsistency in the methods used (Alam, 2021). Lack of a systematic instrument could introduce inconsistencies in the research, leading to participants responding to different questions from each other, resulting in failure to answer the research question. To ensure dependability in the research, I generated and utilized a systematic interview protocol and tested and refined the protocol through a pilot study to be distributed to all participants (W. M. Lim, 2024). The use of audio recording devices further ensured a systematic documentation of the research process (Susanto et al., 2024). Through these methods, I eliminated ad hoc decisions and established dependability.

Confirmability

In this qualitative study, confirmability describes the degree to which I could ensure the findings were objective (Susanto et al., 2024). Confirmability could be threatened by bias (Silverman & Patterson, 2021). Bias in the research may have arisen from my personal beliefs. I used member checking and audio recording of the interviews to ensure confirmability (Motulsky, 2021). I acknowledged personal beliefs as part of my role. No conflict of interest existed, as the participants did not have any past relationship with the researcher (Akingbola & Brunt, 2023). I used two audio recording devices during the interviews, one of which was the main device and another was a backup in case the first device malfunctioned (W. M. Lim, 2024). I also obtained permission from the participants to use audio recording devices to record the interviews. I minimized the possibility of bias through the member checking process, during which I shared the prepared documents via email with the respective participants and sought their feedback to ensure their responses were reflected accurately (W. M. Lim, 2024). If any revision was suggested, I ensured the revision was made to the participant's satisfaction.

Ethical Procedures

Possible concerns regarding ethics in this study included issues related to confidentiality, conflict of interest, coercion, and lack of permission to conduct the study (W. M. Lim, 2024). I obtained approval #08-24-20-0660049 from the Walden University IRB before beginning the data collection process. Because no personal past relationship existed between the participants and the researcher, there was no possibility of a conflict of interest (Alam, 2021). I selected the participants as per the target population and

sample criteria. The initial contact made for conducting the study was the first time I contacted any of the individuals. With respect to personal beliefs regarding research, I acknowledged three beliefs. First, I believed that the success of African immigrant–owned businesses in becoming nationally recognized names in the United States would be a positive development. I also considered that identifying, exploring, and explaining the factors that obstruct African immigrant–owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States could help in that direction. To ensure these personal beliefs did not affect the findings of the study, I adopted multiple strategies for trustworthiness.

I resolved issues related to coercion using informed consent forms (Silverman & Patterson, 2021). After I had identified the appropriate individuals, I used their contact information to send an initial email. The email contained a formal introduction to the research, accompanied by an informed consent form, which I asked the participants to sign and return should they wish to partake in the study. Through the informed consent form, I educated the participants regarding their rights and expectations (Akingbola & Brunt, 2023). I informed the participants that participation in this study was entirely voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the research at any point without any repercussions (W. M. Lim, 2024). I also used the informed consent form to obtain permission to use audio recording devices to record the interviews. No participant was considered recruited until they had signed and returned the informed consent form, indicating their approval and consent (Habib, 2021).

Finally, regarding confidentiality, I used pseudonyms to identify the participants and removed any personally identifiable information during the transcription stage (W. M. Lim, 2024). I secured data by storing all digital data in a personal, password-protected computer (see Belina, 2023). I am keeping physical transcripts in a locked cabinet in my home. I will keep the data for 5 years, after which they will be permanently destroyed.

Summary

Chapter 3 contained the detailed description of the methodology for this study. I found the qualitative method more appropriate for this study, as its purpose involved gaining insights regarding experiences in relation to a specific phenomenon from the in-depth perspectives of humans (W. M. Lim, 2024). Additionally, I selected the single case study research design for the study because it allowed the exploration of the research phenomenon from multiple perspectives with more diverse and richer data (Alam, 2021). The general population comprised African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States. The target population was African immigrant entrepreneurs from the U.S. states with some of the highest concentrations of African immigrants, namely California, New York, New Jersey, and Texas.

The sample for this study included 15 African immigrant entrepreneurs from California, New York, New Jersey, and Texas, each with a minimum of 5 years of business ownership experience and an annual minimum gross sale of $1 million. The unit of analysis in this study was one bounded system—African immigrant entrepreneurs from California, New York, New Jersey, and Texas. The unit of observation in this study was African immigrant entrepreneurs with a minimum of 5 years of business ownership

experience and an annual minimum gross sale of $1 million. The instrumentation for data collection in this study included semistructured, face-to-face, open-ended interviews and a review of documents (Belina, 2023). To verify the interview instrument for this study, I conducted a pilot study. After the participants signed the informed consent forms, I contacted the participants to schedule a time and date for the interview sessions. Each interview was one-on-one and lasted 45 to 60 minutes.

The document review comprised a diverse group of documents, including past peer-reviewed literature on the research phenomenon, relevant information from reports from organizations such as the Migration Policy Institute, and governmental sources such as ICE. I used the thematic analysis technique for data analysis, assisted with NVivo software (Allsop et al., 2022; Braun & Clarke, 2021). The chapter included a discussion on the strategies for ensuring trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures. In Chapter 4, I present the findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore the factors experienced as obstructions for African immigrant–owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States by African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States. The specific problem was that, without understanding the obstructions they experience, it may not be possible to achieve change in African immigrant entrepreneurs' existing practices regarding business and entrepreneurship for the better (Portes & Martinez, 2021), which could have implications not only for their employment, wealth creation, and lifestyle, but also for the overall economy of the United States, which may fail to benefit from their potential contributions (Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021). The following overarching question guided this qualitative single case study:

RQ1: What factors do African immigrants experience as obstructions for African immigrant–owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States?

This chapter is divided into six major sections. The *Demographics* section includes an overview of the research participants and describes their backgrounds and characteristics. *Data Collection* includes details of the procedures used to gather information relevant to the research question. *Data Analysis* explains the data interpretation methods used. *Evidence of Trustworthiness* contains the description of credibility and reliability in the findings. *Results* describes the findings derived from the

analysis. The *Summary* recaps the chapter's key points and provides a transition to Chapter 5.

Research Setting

The context for this qualitative single-case study was several major U.S. states: California, New York, New Jersey, and Texas, because they have large African immigrant populations. These destinations were strategically selected because of their thriving, diverse entrepreneurial communities, with numerous African immigrant–owned establishments. The thriving metropolitan settings of Los Angeles, New York City, Newark, and Houston provided a rich context setting from which to gain an understanding of the specific challenges and prospects of these entrepreneurs. Amidst this backdrop, I intended to investigate the hurdles that impeded African immigrant–owned businesses from becoming household names nationally.

Apart from geographical factors, the community dynamics and cultures of these states significantly influenced the entrepreneurial experiences of African immigrant entrepreneurs. Community organizations and local ethnic associations acted as essential support networks that provided resources, guidance, and a sense of belonging. Nevertheless, even with these support structures, entrepreneurs still faced system-level impediments, including limited access to finance, market exposure, and networks essential for expansion. By positioning the research within these multicultural communities, the study offered an understanding of the contextual factors that shaped the entrepreneurial experience of African immigrant entrepreneurs, including both the

nuances of the experience and the possible avenues to overcoming the mentioned obstructions.

Demographics

The participant population for this research included 15 immigrant entrepreneurs from California, New York, New Jersey, and Texas. These states were selected because they have large numbers of African immigrants, enabling diverse representation in terms of entrepreneurial experiences. Through this selection of states, the research aimed to capture diverse views and experiences from entrepreneurs engaged in different industries.

The age of participants in this research ranged from 32 to 65 years, reflecting diverse ages and stages in life as well as in business ownership. Most participants were experienced entrepreneurs with at least 5 years of business ownership experience. This long period of business ownership was vital, as this experience allowed participants to share useful knowledge about the challenges and obstacles of African immigrant entrepreneurs in business growth.

The firms in this research spanned various industries, such as real estate, hospitality, human resources, food and supply, healthcare, and education. This diversity demonstrated entrepreneurial flexibility among African immigrants and emphasized their adaptability in different industries. Each participant's unique industry experience helped create an extensive perspective of the variables affecting business growth and success among African immigrant communities in the United States.

The demographic profile of research participants portrayed an intricate mosaic of professional backgrounds and cultures. Inclusion within the research of entrepreneurs

from Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Liberia, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe, and Togo underscored the relevance of recognizing the complex realities of African immigrant entrepreneurship. Such diversity enriched the research findings, offering an in-depth insight into the challenges experienced in gaining national recognition for businesses by those entrepreneurs. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of all participants.

Table 1

Demographic Information

Participant	Age (years)	Country of origin	Years business has been active	Business industry
Participant 1	62	Ghana	14	Real estate
Participant 2	58	Ethiopia	6	Transport industry
Participant 3	47	Liberia	10	Hospitality industry
Participant 4	32	Nigeria	8	Food and supply
Participant 5	60	Morocco	10	Food industry
Participant 6	33	Ghana	5	Consulting, educational, and research
Participant 7	37	Nigeria	5	Education industry
Participant 8	56	Cote d'Ivoire	10	Human resource management
Participant 9	58	Zimbabwe	5	Counseling and psychology services
Participant 10	61	Ghana	17	Pharmaceutical
Participant 11	47	Liberia	11	Healthcare
Participant 12	46	Ghana	19	Project management.
Participant 13	52	Kenya	20	Sole proprietorship
Participant 14	40	Ghana	12	Health sector
Participant 15	65	Togo	15	Healthcare industry

Data Collection

Data for this research were collected using semistructured, face-to-face, open-ended interviews and analysis of related documents. I recruited 15 African immigrant

entrepreneurs who lived in California, New York, New Jersey, and Texas. Each participant fulfilled the inclusion requirements of at least 5 years of business experience and at least $1 million in annual gross sales. Recruitment was conducted over 3 months, during which I contacted participants via African ethnic associations, churches, and local business associations to provide connections and an incentive to participate.

The interviews were held privately, mostly at public libraries or participants' offices, based on participants' preference. The length of each interview session lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes to ensure adequate time for thorough discussions. This time permitted me to delve into the problems and experiences of the participants adequately. The interview guide used systematically included a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions formulated to elicit rich details about the challenges of African immigrant entrepreneurs.

To ensure reliability as well as accuracy in capturing participants' perceptions, two recording devices were used for each interview. Using two recording devices was essential to maintain the integrity of the data, as it served as an alternative in case one device failed. I recorded notes on the participants' facial expressions as well as emotional responses following each interview—an exercise that added context to the recorded interviews. This method was intended to increase the overall data quality and depth.

After the interviews, I undertook an exhaustive review of documents derived from secondary sources to complement the interview results. The review involved documents, articles, and other materials related to African immigrant entrepreneurship. These documents were accessed from scholarly databases, government documents, as well as

credible organization reports. Integrating qualitative interview data with document analysis aimed to provide a broader understanding of the challenges experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States.

Data capture followed the initial strategy laid out in Chapter 3 closely, with only minor adjustments to accommodate participant availability. A few interviews were rearranged due to scheduling conflicts around participant business obligations—an example of the hectic lifestyle of entrepreneurs. I was flexible in such cases so that each participant was at ease and felt respected throughout the data collection process. These accommodations ultimately served to develop rapport and establish trust, both of which aimed to promote honest, frank discussion throughout the interviews.

At the data collection stage, I was confronted with some extraordinary situations that called for urgent resolution. In one case, one of the participants was hesitant to talk about some of the challenges because of fear of possible consequences on the reputation of the business. To mitigate this fear, I reassured the participant about confidentiality procedures and the use of pseudonyms to report results. Not only did the discussion help ease the participant's fear, but it also highlighted the value of trust throughout the research process, ultimately facilitating a more productive and honest discussion.

Data Analysis

Data for this research were analyzed using thematic analysis in conjunction with Braun and Clarke's (2021) process and facilitated through NVivo software. I sought to integrate semistructured interview data and document review data to discern patterns and themes related to the challenges experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs.

Thematic analysis was done through multiple stages to gain an in-depth understanding of the data and implications for the research questions.

I immersed myself in the data during the initial phase by reading and re-reading transcripts and notes from the document review. This helped in gaining an in-depth understanding of the information to identify key patterns. Through engaging in an extensive level of data analysis, I prepared for the next step in coding, which helped recognize nuances in respondents' answers.

In the second phase, I derived initial codes representing meaningful elements of content from the data. This also included using open coding, which involved labeling segments of data using descriptive labels reflecting key themes and ideas. NVivo software was used for this coding step to organize and retrieve data efficiently. When codes were produced, they were clarified and modified according to continuous analysis for precision and relevance to the research questions.

During the third phase, I searched for themes by combining the discovered codes into larger categories. This involved accumulating similar codes, which assisted in identifying general themes within the data. I carefully examined ways in which these themes connected to the research questions and the theoretical framework so that the analysis remained tight and context-specific to the research aims.

During the fourth phase, I went back over the themes, checking whether they were an accurate representation of the data and answered the research questions. This meant developing the themes further and verifying their coherence and uniqueness. Peer

discussions were conducted for validation of the findings and to ensure that the themes captured participants' entrepreneurial experiences and challenges.

In the fifth stage, I labeled and named the themes, offering rich descriptions articulating their meanings in terms of relevance to research questions. This led to a thematic map visually depicting inter-relationships among themes and subthemes. I documented them in an organized manner, enriching overall knowledge about the challenges of African immigrant entrepreneurs in gaining national acknowledgment for their businesses. Table 2 illustrates the codes, categories, and themes that emerged after conducting the thematic analysis.

Table 2

Codes, *Categories*, *and Themes for Research Question*

Codes	Categories	Themes
Difficult to raise capital Not easy to get loan facilities High cost of technology Unfavorable government policies Unfriendly government employees	Systemic, policy-driven, and economic obstacles that hinder the growth of African immigrant-owned businesses.	Theme 1: Structural and institutional barriers
Language barrier Having an accent was a problem Lack of information Cultural barriers Market entry barriers Networking was a challenge Envy among African immigrants	Social, linguistic, and cultural obstacles that African immigrant entrepreneurs face	Theme 2: Social and cultural integration challenges

During the final stage, I created a report summarizing the outputs of the thematic analysis. In this report, an in-depth presentation of the themes was given, supplemented by quotes from participants for illustration. Care was taken to relate the findings back to

the research questions and highlight the implications for understanding barriers for African immigrant entrepreneurs. This final documentation provided a basis for further discussion and recommendations, drawing from the knowledge gained through the research.

During data analysis, I also addressed discrepant cases—those where the participant's experience conflicted with the overarching themes. A prime example is an entrepreneur who shared an atypical success story contradicting the dominant assumption of limited availability of capital, where he said, "I found investors who believed in my vision regardless of the odds." These cases were included in the analysis to present an enhanced, balanced understanding of the African immigrant entrepreneurs' experience. By recognizing these exceptions, I added depth to the overall findings while ensuring that the findings portrayed the variance of experience within the entrepreneurial community.

Finally, the analysis of data led to an elaborate presentation of the themes and their meaning. I recorded the results systematically, increasing the overall knowledge of the difficulties experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs in receiving national endorsement of their businesses. The thematic map, coupled with related explanations, acted as useful instruments for the representation of multifaceted interaction factors determining the success of entrepreneurs, thus contributing to the body of knowledge on immigrant entrepreneurship and informing potential future research and policy efforts.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Establishing trustworthiness within qualitative research ensures the results represent the experience and views of participants. The steps taken in this study to

promote credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are detailed below. Using systematic procedures and involving participants within the research process, I sought to provide a sound framework that not only supported the quality of the information but also maximized the reliability and applicability of the results within similar contexts.

Credibility

In this research, credibility was assured using different measures aimed at reflecting participants' views accurately. A sample size of 15 African immigrant entrepreneurs was used to attain data saturation, as noted by Mwita (2022). With this level of data saturation, sampling became sufficient for the study because new meaningful information ceased to arise. In addition, member checking was done by sharing transcribed documents among participants to ensure their views were captured accurately and to allow revisions as needed.

In an additional attempt to ensure credibility, I was keenly aware of avoiding any misinterpretation while conducting data analysis. Through careful review of transcripts and using NVivo software for thematic coding, I sought to remain objective in the process. This dedication to precisely reflecting participants' experiences helped ensure the overall credibility of the research, lending strength to the trustworthiness of the findings and their concordance with the lived experiences of the participating entrepreneurs.

Transferability

Transferability was facilitated by offering rich descriptions of methodology, which gave insight into the process of research. I followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) proposal for rich descriptions, which included extensive information regarding data collection procedures and the circumstances in which the research took place. Readers were able to see beyond the immediacy of the research and appreciate nuances of the research, enabling them to apply the findings in other similar settings or populations.

In addition, I incorporated rich contextual information in the descriptions to facilitate transferability. In outlining the process of developing interview questions and conducting interviews, I presented an improved understanding of the research setting. Such contextual information enabled future researchers to judge whether the resulting findings applied to their research, which further fortified the likelihood of applicability in various settings or populations.

Dependability

Dependability in this research was achieved through systematic data collection and analysis. A structured interviewing protocol was developed by me, which was pilot-tested and perfected ahead of data collection. Such a systematic instrument assisted in promoting consistency in terms of questions asked during interviews, avoiding variability in responses. Through diligent documentation of the research process, I created an unambiguous record on which future research can be replicated, thereby making the findings dependable.

Additionally, audio recording equipment helped ensure the reliability of the research. Through accurate recordings of interviews, I avoided the risk of misinterpretation or incomplete information. Having an additional recording device in place prevented data loss, further assuring reliability in the research. I built a foundation for gaining consistent information that can be replicated in future qualitative research.

Confirmability

Confirmability was an essential part of this research, aiming to limit researcher bias and objectivity in the outcome. I openly discussed their views and possible biases, attempting to reduce their impact while interpreting data. Through member checking, feedback from participants helped ensure that what was said by them was correctly collected and portrayed in the outcome. This helped participants confirm and explain themselves, making the research even more confirmable.

The utilization of audio recordings further contributed to securing confirmability. Through seeking explicit consent from the participants to record the interviews, transparency in data collection was assured. Because the recordings offered an available account of the interviews, accurate transcription and analysis were facilitated. Through this combination, I aimed to secure high confirmability so that findings were derived from participants' experiences rather than imposed upon them by my subjectivity.

Study Results

The results of this research include the implications developed from the thematic analysis of data gathered during document reviews and semistructured interviews. Thematic analysis revealed multiple salient themes in data, highlighting challenges

experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs in America. These themes summarized participants' experiences, views, and insights into obstacles to gaining national acceptance for their businesses. These themes are explained in detail in the following sections, incorporated with supporting quotes and contextual data to ensure an in-depth understanding of the implications. Table 3 illustrates the research question, and the themes developed to answer the research question.

Table 3

RQ and Themes Generated

Research question	Themes
RQ: What factors do African immigrants experience as obstructions for African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States?	Theme 1: Structural and institutional barriers Theme 2: Social and cultural integration challenges Theme 3: Discrimination and perceptual biases

RQ: What factors do African immigrants experience as obstructions for African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States?

The aim of this overarching research question was to explore factors that African immigrants experience as obstacles for African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States. After carrying out thematic analysis, three themes emerged that helped to answer the research question. The themes were (a) structural and institutional barriers, (b) social and cultural integration challenges, and (c) discrimination and perceptual biases.

Theme 1: Structural and Institutional Barriers

Theme 1 centered on the systemic, policy-driven, and economic obstacles that hinder the growth of African immigrant-owned businesses in the United States. Thirteen participants contributed to the development of this theme. Study participants mentioned how challenging it was to raise capital in a foreign country. For example, Participant 1 said that a person had to have some credit history or friends who would help one raise capital. Participant 1 said:

> I will also say that I will place the same thing on finance. Finance is okay because if I come over here to educate myself. And after completion of your education, what do you do? How do you start a business? You have to do a couple of things, working at the areas and will be able to collect, to have resources to do that. So, where do you get it from? Friends, from banking institutions, you have to build up credits and things like that. So, all these things were just challenging.

Participant 13 acknowledged that raising capital was very difficult because business owners had to come up with convincing proposals on how they were going to make money. Once the proposals were presented, the business owner would sometimes not get feedback from the financial institutions. Participant 13 said:

> It wasn't easy. Getting financial assistance or capital was very difficult. Trying to create a proposal to get loans from banks, and families, was very hard. But as I did the business just by mouth-to-mouth, I gained some income. And using that with a proposal I was able to get an additional loan to set up the business properly.

Participant 3 mentioned that it had been difficult to get access to credit facilities while in a foreign country. Financial institutions would require a long corporate credit score or for business owners to have guarantors and collaterals, which most of the immigrants did not have. The nature of the businesses also limited immigrants from getting credit facilities from financial institutions. Participant 3 said:

> Everyone wants a long corporate credit, which, of course, I do not have. People are seeking guarantors, which I don't have, and, of course, collaterals, which I don't have. So, these have kind of been a big setback for me as well. But because of the nature of the industry in providing service, it's also difficult to get loans from the banks because banks, don't want to give loans to service people, people who provide service. So, it makes it a bit difficult.

The high cost of technology was also mentioned as a barrier limiting immigrant-owned businesses from growing. Participant 14 mentioned that the cost of technology in the health sector is very expensive. Companies could end up spending up to 10% of their revenue on technology. Participant 14 said:

> The cost of technology for the health sector is very expensive. And so, some facilities are spending like 10% of their revenue on technology. So, it's very, very expensive. So, if you don't have the technology and you can't match up with those, then you are losing patience and all that. So, yes, technology could be said to be one of them. I think, yeah, if I'm not mistaking, that is a major thing right now.

Some government policies were said to be unfavorable to immigrant-owned businesses. For example, Participant 3 proposed that the U.S federal government should set up credit or loan facilities that would encourage minorities and business owners such as African entrepreneurs. Participant 3 said:

> I would love for the federal to set up credit and loan facilities to encourage minorities and business owners such as African entrepreneurs. I would love to see increased business information, more education given to immigrants, and increased favorable policies to encourage minorities or African businesses to thrive.

Theme 1 highlighted the policy and system-level hurdles encountered by African immigrant businesses in the United States. Thirteen participants mentioned capital-raising difficulties based on needing to provide credit histories and guarantors many did not possess. Challenges accessing facilities on account of the nature of the businesses and high costs associated with the use of technology were mentioned, together with ways in which participants felt the governments' policies closed off options and proposed offering credit facilities and learning resources to minority firms.

Theme 2: Social and Cultural Integration Challenges

Theme 2 described the social, linguistic, and cultural obstacles that African immigrant entrepreneurs face in the United States. All 15 participants contributed to the development of Theme 2. Language barrier was mentioned by participants to be an obstacle limiting the growth of immigrant-owned businesses. This was evidenced by Participant 5, who said:

> And you have an issue of language barrier. If you're employing Hispanic people, they may be able to speak English. So that would be an advantage. The other side of it is that when they're speaking their language, we don't even understand it. And sometimes worse, it's easier for maybe our next-door neighbors to easily get an employee if an employee quits. In our case, it takes a while to get somebody to come and do that work. And in our community, we don't have that many people who are really into this kind of work, like parking staff and doing all those things. So that's a problem from an employee standpoint.

Having an accent was also mentioned as a limiting factor. Participant 8 said that some customers would hesitate to do business with an African immediately after they hear a different accent. Talented employees would also drop from working in an immigrant-owned business just because of having an African accent. Participant 8 said:

> And then when you tell them that, "Oh, I am this, the CEO of this company, and you apply for a job," and they say, "Oh, yes, sir. Yes, sir." Because as soon as they hear your voice, they feel like, "Hey, this accent, where is it from?" And so, it is a limiting factor for most of the people who are not from here because of the way we speak. Sometimes, there are talented people who probably could have worked for you, but just because of your accent, they drop down.

Business owners mentioned that cultural barriers also limited the growth of their businesses. For example, Participant 15 mentioned that he was culturally shocked at how many opportunities were closed even before getting into the market. Competitors from

other races were able to get easier access to facilities than African business owners. Participant 15 said:

> As a Black businessman, or start out to own my own business, it came as a cultural shock to me how many doors were closed in my face before they were even opened. And how other competitors of other races were able to get through doors that I wasn't able to. But you know what? It made me even more resolved to be more self-reliant with the desire to prove others wrong in this business journey of mine.

African immigrants find it difficult to network with other business owners due to their immigrant status. Participant 12 mentioned that there was a limited social and professional network for new business owners. This lack of networking made it difficult for African business owners to take a lot of time before understanding the U.S. market and its regulations. Participant 12 said:

> I faced challenges in networking, getting clients, securing them, and gaining credibility. There are limited social and professional networks, you're starting from scratch without established connections. And understanding the US market and regulations, adjusting to new tax laws, employment rules, those kinds of things, and business forms. So that's that. Lack of network and mentorship among African businesspeople. And what else would I say? And there are market barriers. Yeah, that's what I would say. Funding, race, lack of networking, and mentorships.

Market entry barriers were also mentioned as limiting factors to the growth of immigrant-owned businesses. For example, Participant 14 mentioned market entry barriers, such as stiff competition, difficult market structures, and new terrains. Business owners had to overcome all these barriers for them to succeed in the U.S. market. Participant 14 said:

> It's not easy. Very, very, very difficult. I believe that no successful business started on a silver platter, so I can surely say that it's not been an easy route. It's been challenging, very difficult market structures, new terrains, competition, all those are things that you need to... they are like hurdles you need to jump over. So, it's not been easy. But once you have the drive, you keep pushing.

Theme 2 addressed the linguistic, cultural, and social issues faced by African immigrant businesses in America. All 15 participants mentioned that inadequacies in language acted against effective communication and firm growth and those accents gave rise to customers' reluctance and loss of skilled workers to work with them. Participants also mentioned cultural shocks and finding it hard to access opportunities to similar competitors from other races. Moreover, networking and market entry limitations added to the difficulties in integrating and succeeding in doing business in America.

Theme 3: Discrimination and Perceptual Biases

The third theme was contributed by all 15 participants. Theme 3 described the social and institutional prejudices that African immigrant entrepreneurs face in the United States. Codes such as immigrants are stereotyped by others, experiencing discrimination due to race, visa and immigration paperwork is an issue, vendor and customer biases, and

trust deficit on immigrants were used when developing the third theme. Regarding immigrants being stereotyped, Participant 11 said:

> But you find out that, let's say, I would use the word Nigerians. A lot of Nigerians have gone to dupe the system or fraud the system. So, we're all going to audit. Once you start talking to an auditor and you realize that you have that asset in the [inaudible 00:17:58]. Yeah, the Nigerian kicks in, then it kicks in. Everybody wants to really dig in and look for stuff that is not necessary. And sometimes people come and they apologize and they say, "You know what? We're just doing our job." But you realize that you are stereotyping.

Participant 12 also mentioned that there was a lot of demonization of immigrants and painting all of them as criminals. Participant 12 said that African immigrants faced a lot of hurdles, making them the hardest-working people in the United States. Participant 12 said:

> There's a lot of demonization of immigrants right now, and there's lots of painting all immigrants with the same brush, that we're criminals and such, and that couldn't be further from the truth. African immigrants are one of the hardest working people. So, I think I'm optimistic about people going out and taking risks and starting businesses and being successful, but I'm pessimistic due to the national climate on thoughts on immigration and immigrants.

African business owners face a lot of discrimination especially due to race. Participant 2 mentioned that several people are not willing to patronize Black businesses

due to the issue of race. Most people immediately form an opinion of whether to work with an immigrant business owner or not. Participant 2 said:

> Regarding race, there are a number of people who are not willing to patronize Black businesses. Or being a Black business owner, many people who do not want, you are limited to certain people who are openly willing to do business with you. And contracts that seem to be approved through the Internet or through some communication that didn't require your presence. When I arrived at the scene, at the last meeting to get the final conclusion, suddenly it got canceled. And then you wonder, hey, what's happening? I thought I was okay. So those are many challenges. So, when you appear, your race definitely affects the people that you're dealing with, especially if they are another race.

Participant 5 mentioned that race and being an African put someone in double jeopardy. Business owners found it difficult to conduct sales and employment recruitment because people were not willing to associate with immigrants due to their race. African immigrants also faced discrimination when trying to get financial assistance to boost their businesses. Participant 5 said:

> Like I said, it's the same issue, the race. Whether you like it or not, you are Black. You are an African in addition to that. So that puts you in a double jeopardy, if I may say that. So in terms of sales and employee recruitment, it can be sometimes challenging. And then also getting a loan or maybe financial assistance, you still also have the hurdle. Because most businesses grow because of social networks. And so, the limited your social network is, the harder it is for you to move ahead.

Getting the legal immigration status was also a challenge, thus delaying the commencement of most businesses. Participant 6 had to get an American citizen as a partner to be able to do business. Participant 6 said:

> I think it's been challenging, actually. My immigrant status has been challenging, because when I started, I actually had to get an American citizen to be my partner in order to be able to be in this business, which I felt like, "Well, if I have a great business idea, I should just be able to do it. Why do I need to be a citizen of this country in order to run a business that benefits the country?" After all, if it succeeds, I employ United States citizens, I employ other people here. So, I think it has created some barriers definitely to be able to start. There are other businesses I would like to start, but because my business partner is not really an expert in those things, I can't do them, right?

Biases in the industry from customers and vendors were also mentioned to be a challenge that immigrant business owners faced while in the United States. Participant 12 mentioned that it was difficult to gain customers over time due to the biases in the market. African business owners were also excluded from some networking opportunities and even denied space to start a business due to discrimination. Participant 12 said:

> There are also market and customer challenges. I've had difficulty gaining customers due to biases in the industry. I've been excluded from certain business network opportunities and just facing negative stereotypes. There have been operational barriers. I've struggled to secure prime business locations due to discrimination. There are challenges in hiring and retaining diverse talent. There's

> difficulty in forming strategic partnerships. There's an emotional and a psychological toll, increased stress from burnout, and the pressure to work twice as hard to prove everything. And feelings of isolation sometimes, in the entrepreneurial community.

Theme 3 revealed the social and institutional biases experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States. All 15 participants mentioned experiencing problems with racial discrimination, stereotyping, and customer and vendor biases against them, which impeded opportunities to do business. Participants discussed how being an immigrant created necessary collaborations with American-born individuals, which acted to obstruct opportunities for entrepreneurship. The stigmatization of immigrants further meant there were fewer networks to access, resources to utilize, and customers to serve and engage with, leading to sources of emotional stress and feelings of being an outsider to the entrepreneurial society.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to identify factors perceived to act as hindrances to African immigrant–owned enterprises in America. From the thematic analysis of data obtained through semistructured interviews and review of documents, the investigation revealed major challenges faced by these entrepreneurs. Knowing these problems would make it possible to identify prospects for improvement in business operations that could maximize individual performance and benefit the overall economy.

Three main themes emerged through the analysis: (a) structural and institutional barriers, (b) social and cultural integration challenges, and (c) discrimination and perceptual biases. Participants indicated that raising capital was hard for them, they experienced complex immigration procedures, and biases obstructed their enterprise growth. Furthermore, social and cultural integration problems, such as language difficulties and networking constraints, added to these problems, depicting the multidimensional nature of the challenges faced by African immigrant entrepreneurs.

Overall, Chapter 4 included an extensive overview of the findings and concentrated on the systemic obstacles and individual experiences of the participants. The findings from this study not only shed insight into the difficulties experienced by African immigrants entering business but also presented ways in which changes could be made to policies and support systems to promote their development. The findings pointed to the need to deal with these obstacles so that African immigrant firms can succeed and be recognized nationally. Chapter 5 contains a summary of the study, interpretation of findings, and implications and recommendations for practice and future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore the factors that African immigrant entrepreneurs experience as obstructions in growing their businesses into nationally recognized brands in the United States. Although African immigrants show entrepreneurial potential coupled with the educational success of the business owners, their businesses have not achieved the same level of diffusion as immigrant-owned businesses from Asia, Europe, and Latin America. I sought to uncover these challenges by determining factors inhibiting African immigrant business development and contribute to a best practice guide toward the attainment of national recognition. A qualitative methodology and single-case study design were adopted for this study to help establish the experiences of African immigrants in business. In this study, data were obtained through recorded and transcribed semistructured interviews and document analysis, where I interviewed participants and collected secondary data for the study.

The findings of this study suggest that state and institutional factors, cultural integration factors, and prejudice and stereotyping aspects are the most significant inhibitors to the development of businesses by African immigrants. The responses of the participants included systematic factors, such as restricted access to capital, high costs of technology, and poor government policies. Other community integration factors that played a key role in influencing the achievement of African immigrant entrepreneurs include language and culture, and barriers that impacted their performance in the new selling environment. Another important finding of the study is discrimination and racial bias—the respondents complained of challenges in networking, market entry, and

stereotypes. These insights suggest that the obstacles are numerous and not unique in forging a successful and lucrative business empire in America for an African immigrant entrepreneur.

Interpretation of Findings

This section includes an interpretation of the findings from this study. The findings reveal key themes, including structural and institutional barriers, social and cultural integration challenges, and discrimination, all of which significantly hinder the growth of these businesses. In the subsequent section, the findings are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and the implications of the research study for human capital theory.

Structural and Institutional Barriers

This theme included the structural, policy, and economic challenges that affect African immigrants in running their businesses in the United States. Participants noted concerns over issues, such as inadequate capital, difficulties in securing loans, high costs of technology, and unfavorable government policies. These barriers significantly hinder their ability to scale their businesses and achieve national recognition.

Several participants emphasized that raising capital was particularly challenging for African immigrants. As Participant 1 shared, “You have to build up credits and things like that. So, all these things were just challenging.” Similarly, Participant 13 described the difficulties in getting financial support, noting, “It wasn’t easy. Getting financial assistance or capital was very difficult. Trying to create a proposal to get loans from banks, and families, was very hard.” Moreover, securing loan facilities was frequently

cited as a significant hurdle. Participant 3 expressed frustration by stating, “Everyone wants a long corporate credit, which, people are seeking guarantors, which I don’t have, and, of course, collaterals, which I don’t have. So, these have kind of been a big setback for me as well.” This finding reveals how loan acquisition becomes unattainable for many African immigrant entrepreneurs who often lack the conventional credit histories or assets required by mainstream financial institutions.

Dogan et al. (2022) and Ekwonye et al. (2021) findings align with this research in asserting that a significant challenge African immigrant business owners face is the ability to secure enough capital to fund business growth. Due to a lack of security and credit history, most young business ventures struggle to access loans. This finding is consistent with past research, which revealed that African immigrant entrepreneurs often lack credit history or guarantors as required by financial institutions (Ashourizadeh et al., 2022; Bates, 2022). Furthermore, the barriers to capital formation are compounded by the fact that African immigrants are absent from government policies and support programs, a factor discussed by Portes and Martinez (2021), who noted that immigrant entrepreneurs encounter institutional disadvantages that deny them access to such opportunities for growth. Additionally, the high cost, or cost constraints, of technology—especially in health departments—was reported as another impediment, as captured by the findings of this study. This cost issue has a negative impact, especially on firms facing stiff competition from larger firms that are likely to fund research. The challenges in affording essentials include technological and infrastructural constraints, as observed by Griffin et al. (2021), whereby immigrant businesspeople find it difficult to effectively

compete in the market due to high operational costs stemming from constraints in acquiring technology and infrastructure.

Accordingly, from the perspective of human capital theory (Becker, 1964), it can be stated that African immigrant businesspeople are weakened not only by a shortage of funds as a means of production but also by a shortage of social and institutional capital resources that would allow an increase in human capital. Education, training, and experience present another perspective of Becker's (1964) human capital as critical to the success of an entrepreneur. In this study, however, the institutional barriers were perceived as a major drawback to the utilization of human capital by African immigrants in entrepreneurship because little or no financial support is provided. Specifically, Safii and Rahayu (2021) explained how financial, social, and human capital are interrelated, and the absence of one can offset the overall gain of the others. Because African immigrants do not benefit from institutional support and favorable policies, the application of their human capital in business is only restricted by their education and skills.

Social and Cultural Integration Challenges

This theme centered on the linguistic, cultural, and social issues faced by African immigrant entrepreneurs while pursuing the goal of venturing into the next level of business in the United States. The following were five major barriers reported by the participants: (a) language barrier, (b) accent discrimination, (c) cultural differences, (d) limited social capital, and (e) market access barriers. These hurdles limit their capacity to

communicate with clients, employees, and suppliers, thus constraining the growth of their business and their recognition in the nation.

Participants emphasized the role of language barriers in hindering communication with both customers and employees. As Participant 5 noted, “And you have an issue of language barrier. If you’re employing Hispanic people, they may be able to speak English. The other side of it is that when they’re speaking their language, we don’t even understand it.” This inability to fully communicate in a diverse market environment creates operational challenges that slow business development. Accent discrimination was another significant barrier. Participant 8 explained, “As soon as they hear your voice, they feel like, ‘Hey, this accent, where is it from?’… there are talented people who probably could have worked for you, but just because of your accent, they drop down.” This shows how prejudices based on speech patterns can limit both hiring opportunities and customer trust.

Networking difficulties further compounded these challenges. Participant 12 shared, “I faced challenges in networking, getting clients, securing them, and gaining credibility. There are limited social and professional networks; you’re starting from scratch without established connections.” Without strong networks, entrepreneurs struggle to find mentorship, clients, and business opportunities essential for scaling. Cultural differences led to feelings of exclusion and limited market access. Participant 15 expressed, “As a Black businessman … it came as a cultural shock to me how many doors were closed in my face before they were even opened.” This cultural disconnect

hindered African immigrant entrepreneurs from accessing resources and navigating unfamiliar business environments.

In addition to practical business challenges, cultural barriers took an emotional toll on participants. Feelings of stress, isolation, burnout, and identity conflicts were recurrent. Participant 12 described the emotional burden, stating, “There’s an emotional and psychological toll, increased stress from burnout, and the pressure to work twice as hard to prove everything. And feelings of isolation sometimes, in the entrepreneurial community.” These emotional struggles not only affect mental health but also undermine resilience, reducing entrepreneurs’ ability to persist through business hardships.

The results of this research support and elaborate on past literature regarding the issues affecting immigrants who engage in business activities in the United States. These issues include language and other cultural differences, which have a negative impact on the growth of immigrant businesses (Bates, 2022; Musara & Nieuwenhuizen, 2021). The study participants also indicated that language difficulties, which can be encountered especially while dealing with customers and employees of another language, made communication and operations challenging. This finding is in line with the results of the study by Bates (2022), who established that language and cultural barriers are challenges that affect the formation of social capital and business transactions among immigrant businesspeople. Moreover, the study’s findings on accent discrimination—whereby potential customers or employers refuse to do business or employ immigrants based on an African accent—expands the existing literature on prejudices experienced by immigrants in business (Griffin et al., 2021). These are major challenges compounded

with what most of the participants reported as challenges in the social and professional network, the lack of which Musara and Nieuwenhuizen (2021) established as affecting business growth.

Regarding human capital theory (Becker, 1964), the findings revealed that social and cultural integration interferes with the utilization of human capital by African immigrant entrepreneurs. According to Becker (1964), human capital refers to the attributes, such as skills, experience, and knowledge, that an entrepreneur possesses. However, communication and social and business networks in the U.S. environment lower the value of entrepreneurs' human capital. Therefore, when cultural and linguistic factors prevent a businessperson from networking and interacting with clients, it becomes much more challenging to transform one's experience and expertise into actual business prospects (Safii & Rahayu, 2021). This interpretation underlines the necessity of their inclusion in U.S. networks and structures to realize the potential of human capital.

Discrimination and Perceptual Biases

This theme addressed discrimination and barriers that African immigrants face when they are involved in entrepreneurship. Stigma experiences included racism, perceiving ethnic biases from vendors, low levels of trust, and visa/immigration paperwork challenges. As noted by the respondents, these prejudices inhibit African immigrant entrepreneurs from procuring inputs, finding customers, and obtaining credibility, thereby diminishing opportunities for implementing their businesses at the national level. Several participants highlighted vivid examples of these discriminatory barriers. Participant 2 described how race immediately impacted business dealings,

stating, “Regarding race, there are a number of people who are not willing to patronize Black businesses … When I arrived at the scene, at the last meeting to get the final conclusion, suddenly it got canceled.” Similarly, Participant 5 noted, “You are Black. You are an African in addition to that. So that puts you in a double jeopardy … it can sometimes be challenging to conduct sales and recruit employees.” These accounts show how racial prejudice severely limits opportunities for African immigrant entrepreneurs to secure partnerships, customers, and credibility.

Specific market entry barriers were described as well. Participant 12 shared difficulties securing prime business locations, saying, “I’ve struggled to secure prime business locations due to discrimination. There are challenges in hiring and retaining diverse talent and difficulty forming strategic partnerships.” Similarly, Participant 6 explained visa-related obstacles, noting, “I had to get an American citizen to be my partner in order to be able to be in this business, which I felt was unfair.” These examples show how racial stereotypes, immigration policies, and exclusionary practices act as systemic barriers to market access and growth. These barriers not only block business transactions but also deeply inhibit business growth and national visibility. When African immigrant entrepreneurs are denied networking opportunities, prime locations, fair partnerships, and customer trust, their ability to scale up is diminished. Without the ability to access larger markets, African immigrant–owned businesses remain small, localized, and unable to build the brand recognition necessary for national prominence. Discriminatory practices marginalize African entrepreneurs into smaller, often ethnic-specific markets, limiting diversification and growth potential.

The findings of this theme support and add to existing literature regarding discrimination in immigrant entrepreneurship. A review of past research noted that race and ethnic factors continue to have a discriminatory influence on immigrant business opportunities (Ekwonye et al., 2021; Portes & Martinez, 2021). This study supports these findings by revealing how physical and national racial preconceptions limit African immigrants' chances in the American market. This aspect is in line with the study by Dogan et al. (2022), who concluded that racism hinders the chances of African immigrants accessing business opportunities. Similarly, the study pointed to the participants' experiences of a lack of trust from potential customers, where the lack of trust might have stemmed from factors such as social exclusion and marginalization in the business context, as discussed by Urban et al. (2024) on the role of trust in operating an immigrant business.

From the human capital theory perspective, discrimination and perceptual bias hinder the accumulation of social capital (Becker, 1964), which is critical in entrepreneurship. Although human capital emphasizes skills, knowledge, and experience for an entrepreneur to succeed, social capital—concerning social relations—has a critical aspect (A. Thomas & Gupta, 2021). The prejudices identified in this study prevent African immigrant entrepreneurs from gaining essential social capital, which includes access to mentorship, partners, and customers. As a result, the entrepreneurs' human capital, despite its potential, is underutilized due to exclusion from key social and business networks that are necessary for growth.

Limitations of the Study

Although the findings of this research highlighted the experiences and obstacles of African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States, it is crucial to identify a few limitations observed during the study. One of the primary limitations of the study was that the collection of data entailed the use of self-developed semistructured interviews, which are inherently subject to researcher bias. Conducting interviews to obtain firsthand and honest experiences from the participants is not without some limitations because the participants might present a favorable or overly negative image of their experiences to appease the interviewer. For instance, participants may have minimized certain difficulties due to fear of negative perception or personal reasons, such as their businesses being closely tied to their identity. However, there was potential for bias because, even though member checking was conducted and participants were informed that the study was confidential and non-journalistic in nature, there is still a possibility of bias. In future research, in addition to the use of semistructured interviews, observational data should also be considered to gain a better insight into the experiences of African immigrants who are involved in business.

Additionally, the absence of participants from states other than California, New York, New Jersey, and Texas also reduced the transferability of the findings across areas with fewer numbers of African immigrant populations. Even though these states were chosen due to the high concentration of African immigrants, they do not cover all U.S. states, and there may be some contextual factors in these states that do not exist in other parts of the country. Thus, the findings might not be transferable to African immigrant

entrepreneurs from other parts of the United States, particularly in areas that are not cosmopolitan. Future researchers may further extend the geographic area by engaging participants from other states, especially those with smaller African immigrant populations, to increase the external validity of the findings.

Finally, my potential influence on the interpretation of data could also represent a limitation. Despite objective measures taken to reduce bias through thematic analysis and using NVivo software to manage data, personal biases and interpretations could still have influenced the analysis, particularly in a study where the researcher plays a central role in data collection and analysis. To enhance confirmability, data were collected via multiple sources, and member checking was conducted; nonetheless, attaining total objectivity in a qualitative study is challenging. Future researchers could reduce this limitation by involving multiple researchers to conduct data analysis independently, thereby ensuring more robust findings through inter-rater reliability.

Recommendations

Based on the strengths and limitations of this study and insights from the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, several key recommendations for future research can be made. First, although this study includes valuable qualitative insights, a quantitative approach could complement the findings and offer broader generalizability. The use of qualitative data was a strength in that it helped achieve depth, but the results of the study cannot be extended to African immigrant entrepreneurs in general. Qualitative and quantitative data from questionnaires could enable researchers assess the degree of the problems existing in the entrepreneurial sector and test the effects of concrete factors,

including access to funding sources, on the enterprise's development. For instance, including large-scale surveys would help demonstrate the prevalence of these challenges and the extent to which they may affect an entrepreneur's success.

Second, the results of this research reveal structural and institutional barriers to African immigrants' entrepreneurial incorporation, including inadequate credit, the absence of government support, and problems associated with obtaining loans from other financial sources. Further research is required to show how policies and support from the institutions can help overcome these barriers. Thus, for future research, it is necessary to identify the impacts of government initiatives and policies on immigrant entrepreneurship. Researchers may focus on the specific ways in which government agencies may assist African immigrants, given the unique challenges that they encounter. Further research on policy implementation and the support structures in place can help identify which programs are the most beneficial for business development and whether current support measures require enhancement to assist African immigrants adequately. This line of research would not only extend knowledge in the field of immigrant business start-ups but also create awareness among policymakers on how to foster businesses from various immigrant groups.

Furthermore, based on the challenges identified, it is recommended that policymakers actively develop and implement supportive government policies aimed at fostering African immigrant entrepreneurship. Specific strategies may include expanding access to government-backed microloans and grant programs, creating mentorship and training initiatives tailored to immigrant entrepreneurs, simplifying visa and business

licensing processes, and providing targeted outreach programs to build trust and encourage African immigrants to seek available resources. Establishing government partnerships with community organizations serving African immigrants could enhance resource accessibility and ensure culturally relevant support (Giglitto et al., 2022). Such policies would not only alleviate capital access barriers but would also help African immigrant entrepreneurs scale their businesses and enhance their prospects for national recognition.

Thirdly, the findings of this study established that African immigrants who start own businesses experience social and cultural challenges, which include language barriers, discrimination because of accent, and a lack of connections to professional circles. It would therefore be possible for future researchers to focus on how social capital can be used to address these challenges. Future researchers may examine the strategies through which African immigrants can create and manage social capital for increased business performance. Social capital, which includes the resources available through social networks, such as access to information, mentorship, and potential clients, can be a critical tool for overcoming barriers to growth (Bates, 2022). One area that could be examined in future research is the benefits of social networks, mentorship programs, and peer support systems for African immigrant business owners. A focus on the employment of social capital may, therefore, provide useful suggestions on how African immigrants can navigate through the social environment to access the necessary resources for business in America.

Additionally, future researchers could consider incorporating observational data alongside interviews to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of African immigrant entrepreneurs. Observational data would provide an opportunity to capture real-time challenges and interactions that cannot be fully conveyed through interviews alone. This approach could help in gaining a broader insight into the daily realities and behavioral patterns of African immigrant entrepreneurs. These recommendations for future research aim to build on the findings of the current study and extend the understanding of the challenges faced by African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States. Specific market entry barriers were described as well. Participant 12 shared difficulties securing prime business locations, saying, “I’ve struggled to secure prime business locations due to discrimination. There are challenges in hiring and retaining diverse talent and difficulty forming strategic partnerships.” Similarly, Participant 6 explained visa-related obstacles, noting, “I had to get an American citizen to be my partner in order to be able to be in this business, which I felt was unfair.” These examples show how racial stereotypes, immigration policies, and exclusionary practices act as systemic barriers to market access and growth. These barriers not only block business transactions but also deeply inhibit business growth and national visibility. When African immigrant entrepreneurs are denied networking opportunities, prime locations, fair partnerships, and customer trust, their ability to scale up is diminished. Without the ability to access larger markets, African immigrant–owned businesses remain small, localized, and unable to build the brand recognition necessary for national

prominence. Discriminatory practices marginalize African entrepreneurs into smaller, often ethnic-specific markets, limiting diversification and growth potential.

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From the human capital theory perspective, discrimination and perceptual bias hinder the accumulation of social capital (Becker, 1964), which is critical in entrepreneurship. Although human capital emphasizes skills, knowledge, and experience for an entrepreneur to succeed, social capital—concerning social relations—has a critical aspect (A. Thomas & Gupta, 2021). The prejudices identified in this study prevent African immigrant entrepreneurs from gaining essential social capital, which includes access to mentorship, partners, and customers. As a result, the entrepreneurs' human

capital, despite its potential, is underutilized due to exclusion from key social and business networks that are necessary for growth.

Implications

This study's findings have important implications for positive social change at multiple levels, including individual, organizational, and societal levels. At the individual level, the conclusions provide insights that may be useful to African immigrant entrepreneurs in actualizing the potential of approaching their ventures with better practices when overcoming barriers and mobilizing their human capital and social capital more effectively. By recognizing and addressing challenges, such as the unavailability of financial capital, cultural differences, and market entry barriers, African immigrant entrepreneurs can focus on improving key areas of their business practices. Specifically, adopting strategies, such as seeking alternative funding sources, enhancing cultural competence, and establishing stronger networks, could significantly increase their business revenue, create more employment opportunities, and improve overall standards of living. This would lead to the generation of more wealth, further empowering them to break through entrepreneurial barriers. Consequently, information on the support systems and possible strategies for countering discrimination may help African immigrant entrepreneurs overcome these obstacles and create a favorable environment for entrepreneurs in the immigrant population.

At the family and organizational level, the findings of this study highlight the importance of social support for the family and the role of the family in supporting entrepreneurial ventures. Immigrants from African countries have problems establishing

proper business networks and social and professional contacts that promote their business growth and development (Makgamatha, 2024). Efforts should therefore be made to foster stronger relationships between family members and businesses, providing emotional and financial support that can positively influence business performance. Mentorship programs and professional networks should be expanded while integrating culturally relevant support systems that align with the needs of African immigrant businesses. These enhancements would not only lead to the growth of businesses but also improve the financial and social well-being of immigrant households, resulting in an improved quality of life. From a societal or policy perspective, the study has the potential to influence broader systemic changes. There is a need to enhance institutional/training support for African immigrants and eliminate barriers and policies that hinder the creation of new businesses. Policies that address access to capital, access to networks, and cultural integration barriers would enable such businesses to compete on a level playing field.

As for the methodological implication, the study showed how a qualitative single-case study technique would be useful in understanding the details of the experience of African immigrants who are in business. However, incorporating mixed-methods research, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches, could provide more comprehensive insights into the factors hindering growth of sustainable entrepreneurship. Although qualitative data offered rich insights, quantitative data would enable the measurement of the specific obstacles and provide empirical evidence on how these factors correlate with business outcomes. This integrated approach could provide a

holistic view of the challenges faced by African immigrant entrepreneurs and better inform policymaking.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study is relevant to the human capital theory advanced by Becker (1964), which suggested the value of education, skill, and experience in business ventures. However, this theory is expanded in the study by the inclusion of social capital and cultural dimensions that are relevant to the achievement of immigrant businesspeople. Future research could deepen this understanding by focusing specifically on how human and social capital work together to affect immigrant entrepreneurship. Additionally, exploring how institutional support, cultural adaptation, and networking capacity influence human capital could enhance the theoretical framework of immigrant entrepreneurship. Integrating these factors within human capital theory could offer a more comprehensive view of the multifaceted nature of entrepreneurial success for immigrants.

Some of the practice recommendations include the provision of specialized programs for immigrants from African countries. For instance, general business incubation centers aimed at African immigrants could be used to offer guidance, funds, and referrals. Specifically, governments should ensure adequate redress of the financial constraints that hinder African immigrant businesses' access to capital, including increasing microloan program grants. Local chambers of commerce, immigrant organizations, and financial institutions should also significantly encourage support for African immigrants by promoting the enterprise’s success. These tangible efforts would not only favor individual business development but would also play a positive role in

assimilating African immigrants into the U.S. economy. The implications for positive social change include the potential for business leaders and policymakers to develop programs and policies that remove obstructions to support African immigrant entrepreneurs' business growth and economic sustainability.

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to explore the barriers faced by African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States, which prevent their businesses from growing into nationally recognized entities. African immigrants also have higher education levels, cultural orientation, human capital, and social capital, which, however, subject them to new structural and institutional constraints, social and cultural integration issues, and discrimination. These factors reduce the opportunities for African immigrant entrepreneurs to grow their businesses to be comparable to those from Asia, Europe, and Latin America.

The results of this study highlighted that the barriers faced by African immigrant business owners are multiple and intricate in nature. The business constraints include structural and institutional factors such as the lack of financial capital, inequality in financial systems, social and cultural factors such as language, and lack of networks. Further, consumers' prejudice and racism experienced by African immigrant entrepreneurs affect their attempts to attain competitive and credible business status nationwide.

The findings of this research add to the understanding of the discriminatory challenges that affect African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States, highlighting

the need to develop targeted strategies for mitigating them. The study also suggests more specific directions for future research that would elaborate on governmental policies, financial support systems, and social capital networks for addressing these challenges. As a result, the study encourages the creation of a supportive climate for African immigrant businesses, which should enhance the chances of their development and prominence at the national level.

The recommendations arising from this study, ranging from the expansion of access to financial capital to fostering better integration and support systems, are critical steps in empowering African immigrant entrepreneurs to realize their full potential. Tackling the structural, societal, and cultural hurdles that African immigrants encounter can improve business fortunes and, in the long term, contribute to the American dream. Therefore, this study helped advance research and policy to enhance the standard of living and growth of African immigrant businesspeople who face multiple hurdles to their growth. By tackling these challenges, both individual entrepreneurs and society could significantly benefit the entrepreneurial sector.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

General Problem

The general problem is that United States businesses owned by African immigrants do not often achieve the same degree of widespread success, growth, and notoriety as businesses owned by immigrants from Asia, Europe, and Latin America (Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021; Portes & Martinez, 2021).

Specific Problem

The specific problem is that, without the understanding of particular obstructions they experience, it may not be possible to achieve change in African immigrant entrepreneurs' existing practices regarding business and entrepreneurship for the better (Portes & Martinez, 2021), which could have implications not only for their employment, wealth creation, and lifestyle, but also for the overall economy of the United States, which may fail to benefit from their potential contributions (Dogan et al., 2022; Ekwonye et al., 2021).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative single case study is to explore the factors experienced as obstructions for African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States by African immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States.

Research Question

What factors do African immigrants experience as obstructions for African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States?

Preparations Before Participant's Arrival

On the interview day, I will appear at the agreed-upon location of the semistructured interview 30 minutes prior to the arrival of the participant and make the following preparations:

- Ensure the private room is adequately lighted and the room temperature is comfortable.
- Check the quality of audio recorded by the recording device in the room. Ensure the backup recording device is functioning.
- Arrange for fresh water, snacks, and tissues. Lay out the stationary.
- Remind the library staff about the interview. Ensure a door hanger that requests privacy and silence is placed outside the room.
- Check for the restroom location in case the participant asks.
- Ensure the Informed Consent form signed by the participant is handy for review.

After Participant's Arrival

When the participant arrives, I will welcome them with a greeting and carry out the following formalities:

- Review the participant's ID for identity verification.

- Thank the participant for agreeing to take part in the interview.
- Ask the participant to help themselves with water and refreshments. Ask the participant if they wish to take a bathroom break, and indicate the direction to the restroom if they do. Indicate the participant that the recording will be paused should they wish to take a break.

Before Beginning the Interview

- Read the informed consent form to remind the participant of their rights and confirm their consent, including for audio recording.
- Inform the participant about the transcript review process, which will be part of the process. They will receive the transcript generated from the interview 10 days from the day of the interview.
- Ask if the participant has any questions regarding the informed consent form or the study.
- Complete the demographic information. The participant will be asked to provide answers to closed-ended demographic questions that I will fill out.
- Inform the participant that if they do not have any further questions, we will now begin the interview. Point out that the semistructured interview does not have right or wrong responses, and that my expectation is to understand the factors that obstruct African immigrant-owned businesses from growing into nationally recognized names in the United States based on the participants' experiences and views.
- I will then turn on the audio recorder.

After Finishing the Interview

- Turn off the audio recorder.
- Conduct a briefing asking participant about their experience.
- Ask if the participant has anything else they wish to talk about.
- Thank the participant and convey my appreciation for their time and effort.
- See the participant to the door and open it for them.

Demographic Questions

1. Please specify your age.
2. Please specify your country of origin.
3. Please specify the city/cities and country/countries where you grew up.
4. Please specify the number of years you have lived in the United States.
5. Which of the following educational levels applies to you at present?
    a. Lower than high school
    b. High school diploma or equivalent
    c. Bachelor's degree
    d. Master's degree
    e. Doctoral degree
6. Please specify whether you grew up in a two-parent home.
7. Please specify the city/cities and country/countries where your father grew up.
8. Please specify the city/cities and country/countries where your mother grew up.

9. Which of the following socioeconomic statuses applies to your family?
    a. Poor
    b. Working class
    c. Middle class
    d. Upper class
10. Please specify the industry applicable to your business.
11. Please specify the number of years your current business has been active.
12. Which of the following applies to your business?
    a. Limited Liability Company (LLC)
    b. S Corporation
    c. Corporation
    d. Partnership
    e. Sole Proprietorship

Interview Questions

1. What made you interested in becoming an entrepreneur?
2. How would you describe your experience in getting started as an entrepreneur?
3. How would you describe the role of your status as an immigrant in your journey as an entrepreneur?
4. How would you describe the role of your race in your journey as an entrepreneur?

5. How would you identify and separate the aspects of your experience as an entrepreneur that are influenced by your immigrant status and the aspects that are influenced by your race?
6. Can you describe the instances in your career as an entrepreneur where you experienced overt discrimination?
    a. Which of your characteristics do you believe caused it?
    b. How have you learned to cope with overt discrimination as you seek the success of your business?
7. Can you describe the instances in your career as an entrepreneur where you experienced covert or subtle discrimination?
    a. Which of your characteristics do you believe caused it?
    b. How have you learned to cope with covert or subtle discrimination as you seek the success of your business?
8. How would you describe the impact discrimination has had on your journey as a business owner?
9. What industry-specific factors would you describe as holding you back from expanding your business further?
10. What other general factors would you describe as holding you back in expanding your business more?
11. What general factors do you think have held other African immigrant entrepreneurs back from expanding their businesses further?

12. What specific current challenges do you encounter as you seek to expand your business further?
13. How would you describe your experience in securing capital for your business?
14. How would you describe your interactions with government employees in relation to your business?
15. What are your thoughts about the current federal policies that are relevant to you as an African immigrant entrepreneur?
16. What are your thoughts about the current state policies in your state that are relevant to you as an African immigrant entrepreneur?
17. Please outline the federal policy reforms you desire as an African immigrant entrepreneur.
18. Please outline the state policy reforms you desire as an African immigrant entrepreneur.
19. Does the current state of African immigrant business make you optimistic or pessimistic about the future? Why?
20. If you could start over again, would you have started your business in the United States? Why?
21. If given the opportunity, would you like to move to another country? Please specify which country and why.

22. Any other thoughts you would like to share regarding the factors that obstruct the growth and/or success of African immigrant-owned businesses in the United States?