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Career Challenges Faced by Professional Black Women in Sweden

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Walden University

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Herta Boakye-Yiadom Dahl

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Career Challenges Faced by Professional Black Women in Sweden

by

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MA, Webster University, Vienna, Austria, 2006

BS, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, 2004

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

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Abstract

Academically and professionally qualified Black women who immigrated to Sweden from the United States and the continent of Africa encounter barriers that may hinder their career opportunities. The unstable labor market position of foreigners required efforts by the Swedish government to address the problem. Little is known about the unique and specific challenges that qualified Black immigrant women experience when integrating into the Swedish labor market with foreign qualifications and professional experience. Guided by Durkheim's social integration theory, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to evaluate the lived experiences of Black immigrant women as they integrated into the Swedish labor market with foreign education and professional experience. Using a Facebook group and an organization promoting Black women in Europe, data were collected through 9 semistructured, open-ended interviews with Black immigrant women who lived in Sweden for at least 7 years. Data were then coded and analyzed using Moustakas' framework. Using thematic analysis produced the following themes: reevaluation of labor market policy and Swedish language, networking, and discrimination. Results from this research provide a framework for the Swedish government, public, and private organizations to direct future research, enhance labor market integration opportunities for academically and professionally qualified Black women and other immigrants, and inform the public about current debates and propositions for modifications to labor integration policies.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research to family and friends (you know who you are) whose loyalty was a dynamic and influential force during the years I spent at Walden University. A special dedication to my husband, Patrik Boakye-Yiadom Dahl, for his unconditional love and support, and to our beautiful sons, Julian and Mateo.

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With a heart of gratitude, I wish to thank the Almighty God for His grace and His mercy that saw me through my studies.

*“God’s love is meteoric, his loyalty astronomic,
His purpose titanic, his verdicts oceanic.
Yet in his largeness nothing gets lost;
Not a man, not a mouse, slips through the cracks.”*
-- Psalm 36:5-6 The Message (MSG)

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they have not communicated with each other.

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a hero of the Civil Rights movement in the United States and an outspoken advocate of nonviolence and communication from the mid-1950s until his assassination in 1968. Dr. King believed that the only way to bridge the gap between the races was to openly discuss the issues hindering equal opportunity (Garrow & Donald, 2015). King advocated this for Americans as well as the rest of the world, including Sweden. In this dissertation, I openly discussed issues hindering equal opportunity for Black women who immigrated to Sweden.

Sweden is the largest country in Scandinavia with a population of 10 million (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2017). The Swedish government implemented a liberal immigration policy in the 1950s (Focus Migration, 2015). Duvander (2015) found that many immigrants travel to Sweden to find humanitarian assistance, a better life, employment, or to be with a Swedish partner. In recent years, Sweden welcomed asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and their families, and foreign students (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2017). Statistiska Centralbyrån (2015) reported that 1.5 million people, 15%, of the country's population, were born abroad. According to the Statistiska

Centralbyrån (2015), this changed the dynamics of Swedish society; it provided benefits to the economy and society but also introduced challenges.

For this research, the term *Black immigration* refers to both Black African-Americans and Black Africans who immigrated to Sweden. Burundi-born minister, Nyamko Sabuni, is an example of the positive influence of immigration. Sabuni became Minister for Integration and Gender Equality in Sweden in 2006. Despite such successful integrations, it remains unknown how Sweden's labor integration policies influence most Black immigrant women who immigrated to Sweden. This question has not been discussed nor researched in any detail.

The language barrier can be a factor in hiring foreign applicants, but it is not the only factor. Azmat (2014) argued that distrust of immigrants, racial discrimination, and employers' comfort levels were also factors in most countries. However, there are additional factors in Sweden that cut across many levels of education. Colic-Peisker (2017) concurred that immigrants in Sweden struggle to obtain employment that reflects the level of their foreign education and professional experience, despite residing in Sweden for 7 years or more. A significant percent of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women struggle to acquire jobs in their field (Azmat, 2014).

My purpose in this qualitative phenomenological study was to evaluate the lived experiences of Black immigrant women as they integrated into the Swedish labor market with foreign education and professional experience. Existing barriers negatively influence the professional opportunities of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women who were unable to find a job that used their foreign education and

professional experience within the first 7 years of living in Sweden. I chose 7 years because researchers indicated that it takes 7 years for a person to adjust and eventually feel comfortable in a new environment (Christensen & Guldvik, 2014). I explored the causes of these existing barriers and suggested potential solutions.

Overview of Immigration in Sweden

Immigration is not a new phenomenon, nor does it occur in a vacuum. Minister for Integration Ullehag (Regeringskansliet, 2014) strongly contended that Sweden would continue to be an open and tolerant country. As a liberal, he welcomed immigration, regardless of whether people came to Sweden as refugees, to work, or to study (Regeringskansliet, 2014). Fredlund-Blomst (2014) acknowledged Ullehag's statement and added that the Swedish immigration policy was one of the most open and tolerant in the world. Miles and Thränhardt (1997) and Lavenex (2008) researched European immigration to Sweden but ignored Black immigration. Black immigration is not new, but there is no exact record of when Black people began immigrating to Sweden (Diakité, 2005; Scott, 2015). A summary of Sweden's immigration history and current policies helped provide the context of the current situation in Sweden for this study.

The Institute for Migration and Intercultural Studies (IMIS) (2014) found that during the 17th and 18th centuries, Sweden exhibited multilingual, religious, and ethnically heterogeneous aspirations. At that time, leading government officials supported immigration because immigrants brought capital and specialized skills (IMIS, 2014). During the years 1850 to 1939, Germans arrived in Sweden from merchant trading communities and the Finnish followed soon after. Roma people and the Walloons

(French-speaking people from Belgium) also immigrated to Sweden as the country's iron industry began to develop (IMIS, 2014). Other key immigrant groups include Jews who arrived after the Walloons, French artists and intellectuals, and Italian bricklayers and stucco workers (IMIS, 2014).

Immigration continued through the 20th century. During World War II (WWII), neutral Sweden welcomed 180,000 refugees escaping the horror of Nazi brutality (IMIS, 2014). Sweden's economy grew significantly following WWII. The need for skilled labor quickly outgrew the availability of the native population. In the 1960s and 1970s, Sweden recruited many migrant laborers from countries such as the Netherlands, West Germany, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Greece, and later Yugoslavia and Turkey (IMIS, 2014).

In the last half of the 20th century, Black immigration resulted again from the chaos of war. A high number of Black people (mostly from the African continent) immigrated to Sweden beginning in the 1970s and this trend continued through the 1990s because of civil war and unrest in countries such as Uganda, Congo, South Africa, Somalia, and Eritrea (Sharif, 2013). The census of 2009 recorded 103,007 Black people officially living in Sweden (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2015). They resided predominantly in the three largest cities of Sweden: Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö. In 2014, Statistiska Centralbyrån reported that there were slightly more than 350,000 Black people living in Sweden. These figures do not include undocumented migrants and persons unaccounted for in the national database system. The Swedish Migration Board (2015) reported that 15% of the total Swedish population was not Swedish; Statistiska Centralbyrån (2017) reported that 3% of the immigrant population were Black.

The African diaspora consists of communities and individuals throughout the world that descended from Africa, predominantly in the Americas, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Scott (2015) referred to migration from Africa to Europe as the African diaspora. These communities and individuals often retain economic, cultural, and ideological connections with their homeland. Unfortunately, the African diaspora to Sweden remains largely undocumented (Scott, 2015). People continue to seek asylum in Sweden due to ongoing instability in their home countries; however, not all migration is a result of continental unrest. A small percent of Black people migrates to Sweden because of a career choice, to study, to be with family members, or to be with the person they love (Migrationsverket, 2015).

Sweden's Integration Policies and Practices

Swedish integration policy has changed with time. Currently, Sweden's integration policy emphasizes the importance of equal opportunity and treatment to all citizens regardless of ethnicity and cultural heritage (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015). Sweden's job integration policy states that everyone has equal rights, obligations, and opportunities in Sweden. Ethnic, cultural, and religious background should not be a factor in labor integration. Newly arrived immigrants have the same rights as any native Swede (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015).

Sweden had a cultural assimilation policy to make ethnic minorities more like the majority population (Malik, 2015). The great immigration during the post-WWII period, however, rendered such a policy unsustainable. In the 1960s, both immigrants and domestic minorities demanded increased opportunities to preserve their cultural and

linguistic heritage (Malik, 2015). In a study on ethnic discrimination, Carlsson and Rooth (2014) found that Sweden's immigration and job integration policies were inadequate. Jobs tended to go to Swedish natives rather than qualified, highly educated foreigners. This problem persisted for the last 2 decades as Sweden continued to welcome immigrants to their borders (Carlsson & Rooth, 2014). The results of Carlsson and Rooth's (2014) experimental study of human experiences demonstrated that foreigners were at a distinct disadvantage in the Swedish job market. From a policy perspective, this revealed a disparity between Sweden's labor integration policy and the policy's outcome.

In 2014, the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise reported unemployment was considerably higher among immigrant women than among native Swedish women. Mikulski (2014) found that skilled foreign professionals remained unemployed in the Swedish labor market for several reasons: lack of fluency in the Swedish language, prejudice, and afrophobiaism (racism toward Black immigrants). Lemaître (2013) and Mikulski (2014) suggested that language deficiencies might explain a slower convergence of immigrants in the labor market. However, Lemaître (2013) proposed that the larger problem was Sweden's entry policy and that employers did not trust foreign educational qualifications and work experience.

The Swedish Public Employment Services (2015) proposed that to procure a job in Sweden, immigrants must work hard, be persistent, and know the language of the country. However, frustrated immigrant job seekers believed that the only way to find a job in Sweden is to be Swedish (Swedish Public Employment Services, 2015).

Academically and professionally qualified Black women immigrants arrived in Sweden

with the hope of acquiring jobs that valued their foreign education and professional experience. According to the Swedish Public Employment Services (2015), many qualified Black immigrants were frustrated with Swedish immigration policies regarding foreign qualifications to acquire employment. Sweden's resources and favorable immigration policies generally helped refugees and asylum seekers who lacked university or professional qualifications (Lemaître, 2013). Little revenue was set aside by the Swedish government to invest and develop initiatives that would enable highly educated immigrants to integrate into the Swedish labor market. (Lemaître, 2013). In 2014, Sweden provided help to 165,000 refugees (Swedish Migration Board, 2015), but it was unknown how many academically and career qualified immigrants received the help they needed to attain suitable jobs (Swedish Public Employment Services, 2015).

In my literature review, I identified the socioeconomic and political dynamics that accounted for the engagement of hindrance tools, such as economic and or social tools. I made no assumptions without analyzing the factors that underpinned the practice of underemployment of Black immigrant women in Sweden. In the literature review, I also examined the current challenges for practitioners and researchers. Gaps in the research included studies of the obstacles academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women face when integrating into the Swedish labor market. Results from this research provide a framework for the Swedish government and public and private organizations that may direct future research, enhance labor market integration opportunities for academically and professionally qualified Black women and other

immigrants, and inform the general public about current propositions for modifications to labor integration policy.

Statement of the Problem

Various obstacles affect the career opportunities for Black women who immigrated to Sweden. In this phenomenological study, I explored these obstacles as they related to the foreign qualifications and professional experience of these women and their inability to fully integrate into and succeed in the Swedish labor market. This problem persisted during the last decade as Sweden continues to welcome academically and professionally competent immigrants into the country. Bursell (2015) and Carlson and Rooth (2014) found evidence that employers often recruited people with Swedish names rather than those with foreign names.

Specific Swedish policies must change to achieve a platform for academically and professionally qualified immigrants in Sweden; evaluation protocols are necessary to determine types of adequate support. This study is warranted because policy designed to support labor integration of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrants is lacking and there was no research specifically focused on the labor integration experiences of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women in Sweden.

Purpose of the Study

Academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women in Sweden continue to experience professional challenges. Existing barriers negatively affect the professional opportunities of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant

women who are unable to find a job that uses their foreign education and professional experience within the first 7 years of living in Sweden. My purpose in this qualitative phenomenological study was to evaluate the lived experiences of Black immigrant women as they integrated into the Swedish labor market. By examining Swedish labor integration policies, I explored why academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women often struggle to use their foreign qualifications and professional experience in finding work. The following are some examples of existing barriers that lead to unemployment of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women: social exclusion, labor integration policies, and a possible gap in the Swedish labor market. I examined these factors in detail via the individual, phenomenological experiences of the sample group in relation to their foreign education and professional work experience.

A phenomenological study was the most appropriate approach for this investigation because it enabled me to focus on the participants' insights and personal stories. The phenomenological approach gave me the ability to motivate and personally fuel interest in the study (Maxwell, 2013). Another strength was the collection of data through subjective and direct responses. I gained first-hand knowledge about what participants experienced through broad and open-ended inquiry (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2002; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Last, the human factor was the greatest strength of this approach (Patton, 2002). I learned about the lived experiences of integration into the Swedish labor market. I referenced Lemaitre's (2013) research on the perception of

foreign qualifications as it pertained to my research topic. I present the method of data collection and in Chapter 3. The interview questions appear in Appendix C.

Research Questions

In this research, I addressed the following questions:

1. How do academically qualified Black immigrant women perceive career opportunities in Sweden?
2. How do professionally qualified Black immigrant women perceive career opportunities in Sweden?
3. What context do they give to career opportunities considering their personal experiences in their home country?

Theoretical Framework

Articulating the theoretical assumptions of a research study addresses questions of *why* and *how* and permits the researcher to intellectually transition from merely describing an observed phenomenon to generalizing various aspects of that event. According to Swanson (2014), theories describe, forecast, and comprehend facts and experiences; they confront and encompass present knowledge within the parameters of analytical norms. A theoretical framework acts as a foundation for a research study. The theoretical base presents and defines the theory that explains why the research problem exists (Swanson, 2014). The theoretical foundation that formed the base of this research was social integration theory. The granting of permanent residential status to academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women by the Swedish

government was a function of social integration; therefore, this theory is relevant to the current study.

Academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women often struggle to find jobs that correspond with their foreign qualifications and professional work experiences after they move to Sweden. Several researchers advocated social integration theory; per Durkheim, one universal factor of the theory is that knowledge of the language of a country leads to faster labor integration. Durkheim (1858-1917) was one of the founders of modern sociology and wrote frequently about social integration. In *The Division of Labor in Society* (1984), Durkheim described society as the cumulative consciousness of people and argued that social integration depends on solidarity bonds. First, *mechanical solidarity* binds primitive or smaller societies together, such as kinship and shared beliefs that hold the group together. Second, *organic solidarity* dictates that the complex division of labor and the need to rely on each other increases social integration (Coser & Durkheim, 1997). According to Durkheim, *anomie* is the opposite of social integration, a disconnection from others in a specific community (Coser & Durkheim, 1997).

As an extension on Durkheim's notion of mechanical and organic solidarity and anomie, Blau (1960) retheorized social integration theory and argued that social integration would succeed in a group if strong cords of attraction united members within the group. People interested in becoming members of a group are under pressure to impress the existing members of the group by demonstrating their value to the group. The

hope is that existing members will see the new member as a valuable contributor to the group.

The Swedish Migration Board is the authority responsible for regulating immigration to Sweden. The Swedish Migration Board receives its mandate from the parliament and government, which create and enforce the Swedish asylum and migration policy (Migrationsverket, 2016). The Swedish Migration Board considers applications from people who want to become permanent residents of Sweden, visit, seek protection in Sweden, or become Swedish citizens. The Swedish Migration Board's vision is one of global migration with an emphasis on social integration.

More and more people around the world consider immigrating or emigrating to Sweden to search for better opportunities. Per Keely (2009), immigration has always been part of human history but the reasons for it have differed. Immigrants encounter different barriers in different societies, but they all must face the challenge of integration the moment they settle in a new country. Integration has many layers and many definitions. Bosswick and Heckman (2006) proposed that *integration* is an interactive process between immigrants and the host society. Lacroix (2010) concurred that integration was the "joining of various parts into one entity" (p. 6). Different meanings of integration are often the basis of national policies that improved immigrant integration and had consecutive effects on measuring, analyzing, and studying the levels of integration (Lacroix, 2010). This in turn determined when integration has been successful. Penninx (2003) viewed integration as a process by which immigrants become accepted into society and suggested that the definition of *integration* be intentionally left

open because the specific requirements for acceptance by the receiving society vary considerably from country to country.

In Sweden, the government is responsible for creating guidelines for Swedish integration. The Swedish government wants everyone to be a part of the community, regardless of where they were born and what ethnic background they have. However, academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women find obstacles in integrating into the labor market with their foreign qualifications and professional experience (Carlsson & Rooth, 2014). My research participants were academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women who migrated to Sweden and were unable to integrate into the labor market using their foreign qualifications and professional experience. I used the theoretical premise of social integration theory as an appropriate lens to examine the causes for academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women's difficulties in the Swedish labor market. I used social integration theory to gain an understanding of the Swedish labor market for these immigrant women.

The personal stories of these women cannot be understood solely via a theoretical framework. Theoretical frameworks provide a stepping stone to identify the theory identified in the research. Discussion stimulated ideas concerning policy improvements that facilitated the development of positive social change. I explain this theory further in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

This study was a qualitative investigation with a post-positivist philosophical perspective. Swedish labor integration policy reflects challenges that are present in Sweden's public policy and administration (Aldén & Hammarstedt, 2014). Academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women find themselves at a clear disadvantage in the labor market; the need to understand why this is the case was paramount. I wanted to develop an understanding from the perspective of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women as they navigated the Swedish labor market and dealt with the process of labor integration. I focused on the beliefs and perceptions of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women who lived in Sweden for at least 7 years because it takes approximately 7 years for a person to adjust and eventually feel comfortable in a new environment (Christensen & Guldvik, 2014). A phenomenological study was the most fitting because of my focus on the lived experiences of this group of people and their experiences regarding labor integration in Sweden. I used semistructured, open-ended interview questions to collect data from a sample group of nine women. I used data analysis techniques recommended by Creswell (1998) combined with the framework by Moustakas (1994).

Definitions

Definitions are necessary to understand the specific nature of any study. I used specific terms to clarify the underemployment of Black immigrant women in Sweden.

Academically and professionally qualified: An academic qualification involves the study of a subject within an academic discipline. The overriding purpose of the

qualification is a contribution to the learner's specialized knowledge of a subject, not necessarily its application. A professional qualification represents knowledge, understanding, and practical experience that enable the learner to apply knowledge in a practical manner in a professional practice (Skill Portal, 2017).

African diaspora: This term refers to Black people who migrated; however, they continue to hold important economic, cultural, and ideological links with a homeland and community outside the national borders of their present country of domicile (Tololyan, 1996).

Afrophobia: Afrophobia is a label for a range of negative attitudes and feelings toward Black people or people of African descent. Afrophobia relates to an irrational fear with the implication of antipathy, contempt, and aversion. Afrophobia is observable as discrimination and violence based on a person's skin color, ethnic origin, and nationality. Afrophobia dehumanizes a group of individuals and denies their humanity, intellectual ability, dignity, and personhood (Red Network, 2015).

Black immigration: Black Africans who moved from the continent of Africa and Black African Americans who moved from the United States. This type of immigration involves the migration of people with Africa origins to continents or countries other than their own. A large majority of this group has dark skin. Reasons for this emigration may be to find work, escape political unrest, to study, for love, or for adventure (Thränhardt, 1992).

Black woman: A female with dark skin who comes from the continent of Africa or one whose ancestors came from the continent of Africa (Dictionary, 2017).

Integration: The concept of integration, as it relates to immigrants, has many meanings. For the purposes of this research, the definition of *social integration* I use is per Durkheim (1984) regarding incorporation of minority groups. Outcomes of different studies vary and the intent of this study is to limit its scope to something of manageable proportions. Lemaître (2010) asserted that integration of labor does not necessarily guarantee social integration nor does social integration guarantee labor integration; rather, what is important is that immigrants are able to function as independent citizens in the host country. According to Diaz (1996), *labor integration* focuses on income and occupational positions and *social integration* is a connection to a Swedish social network where immigrants can develop contacts with natives.

Job overqualification: This term refers to a circumstance in which a person's training, skill set, or professional experience exceeds their occupational position (Ryan, 2015).

Assumptions and Limitations

Acknowledgement of assumptions and limitations clarifies any phenomenological study. Goes and Simon (2013) argued that assumptions could not be controlled and are relevant to all research studies and that limitations could weaken a researcher's case and are also beyond a researcher's control. The research in any phenomenological study must define the limitations and assumptions of the research to protect against bias and sweeping conclusions. I identified the following assumptions regarding this research. Afrophobia and discrimination prevented academically and professionally qualified

Black immigrant women from acquiring positions that fit their foreign qualifications and professional experience. The Swedish language is an additional barrier.

From the process of data collection to data analysis, I was a limitation to the study from a qualitative phenomenological perspective. I was the main instrument of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Creswell (2013), Goulding (2010), Nachmias and Nachmias (2007) observed that bias is evident in the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. I retained a keen sense of self-awareness throughout the entire process to diminish subjectivity and biases. Participants shared experiences specifically related to labor integration obstacles in Sweden. I applied Goulding's (2010) process of member checking and data analysis, in the form of triangulation, to check and confirm the acquired results.

A phenomenological study of nine academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women who lived in Sweden for at least 7 years required I be familiar with the phenomenon. I applied Creswell's (2013) suggestion of purposive sampling to select participants. I asked all the participants the same questions and used data triangulation to assure the validity of the findings. This research also had characteristics of epoch, whereby I noted the underlying feelings about the research topic, withheld biases, and looked at the topic with fresh eyes (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenological Significance of the Study

The information gathered from this study may serve as a conceptual framework for future studies of the Black community in Sweden. The significance of this study is to

help Swedish policymakers re-examine integration policies and revisit labor integration and recruitment procedures for academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women. This process may help explain the mismatch between the goals of Sweden's labor integration policy and its outcomes. This study may have significant social change implications for the research participants. At present, Sweden has an unprecedented influx of immigrants (Swedish Migration Board, 2018). Examining the barriers that academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women face when attempting to find appropriate employment could contribute to positive social change.

Dialogue is paramount to bringing about change in policy. Open dialogue may facilitate policy change so that academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women will have more opportunities to obtain appropriate jobs based on their foreign qualifications and professional experiences. Results of this research will also provide a framework for the Swedish government, public organizations, and private organizations to direct future research, enhance labor market integration opportunities for academically and professionally qualified Black women and other immigrants, and inform the general public about the current debate and propositions for modifications to labor integration policy.

Hall and Trager (1953) studied enthusiasm for policy that aids and assists strategies for progressive integration and job security and found the best of an immigrant's cultural differences to be nonthreatening, such as, to give suggestions or keep to yourself in the workplace, to shake hands or bow when sharing a greeting or to

share or not to share about oneself and family with co-workers in the first introduction.

Culture, on its own, can aid in integration. Culture was not a hindrance to progression and integration but instead was a collection of practices that resembled, were the same, or differed between different societies (Hall & Trager, 1953).

Cultures are living entities that must embrace change or die; social integration strengthens cultures (Laurensyeva & Venturini, 2017). The lessons learned through social integration are essential for integration and job security. Labor integration is vital because it reduces social exclusion and aids in the development of an inclusive multicultural, professional, experienced, and academic civil society. The vision, mission, and goals of Walden University support and define positive social change as a conscious development, incorporation, and implementation of ideas, incentives, and actions to promote the self-respect, self-worth, and advancement of everyone regardless of origin (Walden University, 2017).

The development of strong public-sector institutions and good governance is another by-product of social integration. There is also a theoretical significance to this investigation. There is a need for constant reliance on foreign labor to increase domestic production in a host country (Jordaan, 2017). However, there is an underuse of existing highly qualified immigrant workers in Sweden (Fuller & Martin, 2014). From a theoretical point of view, labor integration of highly qualified immigrants is inefficient. Qualified candidates fail to obtain positions that reflect their qualifications and competence.

The importance of this study is the potential for a new integrative approach to understanding the career development decisions of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women. The findings offer insight into the personal modifications and professional experiences of this group of women who pursue careers in an unstable international economic environment where talent is scarce (Van den Bergh & Plessis, 2013).

Summary

Immigrants experience less favorable outcome than natives in the job market regardless of age, sex, marital status, educational attainment, and work experience (Lemaître, 2013). Sweden's job integration policies influence this trend. A reorientation of efforts is necessary to yield demonstrable returns. Sweden's imbalance of an outgoing baby-boomer labor force and the incoming labor force (25%) is among the highest of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. The immigrant's role in making up the Swedish workforce deficit is vital (Lemaître, 2013). The next chapter includes a review of relevant literature regarding this phenomenon.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women in Sweden often struggle to obtain work at a level that reflects their foreign degrees and professional experience. Often, academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women's occupations do not require their foreign qualifications or professional experience. Research regarding this group was somewhat scarce; however, a literature review was necessary to study and synthesize the factors that hinder academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women from acquiring professions that fit their foreign qualifications and professional experience. Guided by social integration theory, in Chapter 2, I focus on the following topics:

- The history of immigration in Sweden and current policies.
- The known challenges that immigrants face when integrating into the Swedish labor market, particularly Black immigrant women.
- The known challenges that academically and professionally qualified adult immigrants face when integrating into the Swedish labor market.

I defined *social integration* through the lens of labor integration and researched the following topics:

- The examination and analysis of tools for social and labor market integration.
- The dilemma of specific policy choices for social and labor market integration with an emphasis on foreign education.

- The criticisms against social and labor market integration with an emphasis on foreign education.
- A review of education concepts, evaluation, and conclusions in past studies.

I also briefly reviewed research on labor integration and the migration of academically and professionally qualified Africans to Canada.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search for this study was varied. I used statistics from Sweden's Central Board (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2017) and annual reports on immigration, integration, and labor force characteristics by immigrant groups in Sweden. I used four major Swedish resources on immigration and employment: Swedish Migration Board, Swedish Public Employment Services, IMIS, and Migration Policy Institute (MPI). I also searched the OECD database, the government of Sweden's website, and the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (SACO).

I used Walden library's EBSCO (Academic Search Premier and Business Search Premier), ProQuest Dissertations, Theses-Full Text databases, and Google Scholar as search engines. I searched for literature using the following search terms: *integration, labor integration, social integration, Afrophobia, African diaspora, foreign education, job security, Swedish language, immigration, multiculturalism, diversity, professional women, leadership, Sweden, Black women, immigration, leadership, African women, immigrants, migrants, and professional qualifications*. I discovered many articles through search words, references, and previous authors' research. However, I found no literature that directly dealt with the topic of the present study.

Many of the articles referred to general immigration, integration, and migration to Europe. Therefore, the contents of this review were limited largely to works focusing on the history of immigration in Sweden, including current policies and the known challenges that immigrants face while integrating into the Swedish labor market. The contents of this review targeted social integration related to labor integration policies that require revisions to accommodate academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women.

Theoretical Foundation

I used social integration theory to frame this study. According to Blau (1960), social integration is necessary to make sense of the social world. With social integration theory, the idea of creating unity, inclusion, and participation at all levels of society within the diversity of personal attributes, human rights dictate that every person is free to be the person they want to or can be. Some examples of personal attributes include socioeconomic class, age, gender, political ideas, ethnicity and cultural traits, citizenship (national origin), and geographical region of origin (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015). The basis of granting permanent residential status to academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women by the Swedish government is a function of social integration. This group of people should easily integrate and find employment in their specific professions in Sweden. However, this is not the case. This group struggled to integrate into the Swedish labor market.

Knowing the language of the country leads to faster labor integration (Rogova, 2014). Durkheim described society as the cumulative consciousness of people based on

solidarity bonds (Coser & Durkheim, 1997). First, Durkheim (1984) reasoned that mechanical solidarity was what bonded primitive or smaller societies together (e.g., kinship and shared beliefs). An example of this was found in the mid-1970s; Swedish integration policy changed to give immigrants settling permanently in Sweden the right to partake in the same privileges as other Swedish citizens, including access to the welfare system (Rogova, 2014). Second, Durkheim argued that organic solidarity dictated a complex division of labor and the need to rely on each other, which increased social integration. Individuals needed one another's services. A society, based on organic solidarity generally has a greater division on labor; individuals function interdependently but as differentiated organs of a living body (Coser & Durkheim, 1997). Labor integration, central to social integration theory, confirms that institutions and individuals must be dependent on each other in the complex division of labor.

Durkheim (1984) supported a view of social integration as the glue that holds a society together. In Sweden, foreign qualifications and professional experiences should be valuable in the job market. Foreign qualification and professional experience that academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women brought into the labor market were both inherent and acquired. They learned acquired skills over time through education and training. Shared experiences, training, values, and beliefs allow people to feel like they are a part of a group. Durkheim's described what holds society together and what divides individuals and groups; however, Durkheim's original definition of *social integration* now includes the migration of minority groups, refugees, and other underprivileged members of a society into the mainstream society. Social integration

requires competence in a common language, an agreement with the laws of the society, and the endorsement of a common set of values.

Durkheim's theory influenced the development of anthropology and sociology and influenced many thinkers from the school of sociology such as Mauss, Halbwachs, Parsons, Radcliffe-Brown, and Levi-Strauss (Carls, 2017). More recently, Durkheim influenced sociologists such as Lukes, Bellah, and Bourdieu (Carls, 2017). The portrayal of shared consciousness also profoundly motivated the Turkish nationalism of *Ziya Gökalp*, founding father of Turkish sociology (Nefes, 2013). Aside from sociology, Durkheim influenced philosophers, Bergson and Levinas and structuralist thinkers of the 1960s, such as Badiou, Althusser, and Foucault (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1967). As an extension on Durkheim's notion of mechanical and organic solidarity, Blau (1960) argued that social integration succeeds if strong cords of attraction unite group members; those interested in joining a group try to impress existing members.

The Swedish Migration Board is the authority responsible for regulating immigration to Sweden. The Swedish Migration Board receives its mandate from the parliament and the government (Swedish Migration Board, 2016). The Swedish Migration office considers applications from people who want to become permanent residents of Sweden, visit, seek protection, or become Swedish citizens. The Swedish Migration Board emphasizes social integration.

Immigration has always been part of human history, although the reasons for it have differed (Keely, 2009). More and more people immigrate or emigrate to search for new and better opportunities. All immigrants face challenges of integration the moment

they settle in a new country. The Swedish Migration Board aids in the groundwork of this process.

Integration is an interactive process between immigrants and the host society (Bosswick & Heckman, 2006). Lacroix's (2010) definition of integration was "joining various parts into one entity," however, its practical interpretation and social connotation could differ significantly (p. 6). Lacroix (2010) noted that different meanings of integration form the basis of national policies that improved immigrant integration and had consecutive effects on measuring, analyzing, and studying the levels of integration. This determined when integration was successful. Penninx (2003) confirmed that integration was a process by which immigrants become accepted members of society and that the definition of integration should intentionally be left open because the specific requirements for acceptance by the receiving society vary considerably from country to country.

In Sweden, the government is responsible for creating guidelines for Swedish integration policy. The Swedish government wants everyone to be a part of the community, regardless of birthplace and ethnic background. However, academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women found obstacles when integrating into the labor market with foreign qualifications and professional experience. Aldén and Hammarstedt (2014) stated that in Sweden, between 2005 and 2012, employment increased somewhat for most groups and was generally higher among men than among women. Yet, 58% of immigrant Black men were unemployed in 2012 and 65% of Black immigrant women were unemployed (Aldén & Hammarstedt, 2014). A probable cause

for these unfortunate figures was a possible connection between length of residence (first 7 years of residence) in the country and labor market outcome. Groups that spent longer in Sweden had a higher employment rate than those with a shorter time of residence. Among immigrant Black men who spent between 8 and 10 years in Sweden, 50% were employed. Those who spent more than 20 years had an employment rate of 70% (Aldén & Hammarstedt, 2014). Among immigrant Black women with a short period of residency in Sweden, the employment rate was considerably lower than men with the corresponding length of residence. Likewise, the employment rate regarding the longer period of residency was also considerably lower than among immigrant Black men (Aldén & Hammarstedt, 2014). Other factors also hinder the progress of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women with foreign qualifications and professional experiences. Literature regarding these factors appears in the review of the literature.

Review of Literature

Academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women encountered obstacles that prevented them from integrating into the Swedish labor market. Foreign qualifications and professional experience less valuable to employers, which influence their experiences with public, private, and governmental organizations. A review of the relevant literature on Sweden's history of immigration, known challenges that immigrants face while integrating into the Swedish labor market, and academically and professionally qualified immigrants informed my view of current immigration and labor integration policies. Several public agencies (e.g., Swedish Public Employment Services)

and social integration actors (e.g., Swedish Migration Board) acknowledged that changes are necessary at multiple levels to provide fair and equal opportunity to academically and professionally qualified immigrants in the labor market.

Immigration, Integration, and Current Policies

Nonwestern immigrants began to arrive in Sweden in the late 1940s. During the 1950s, there were more women than men who immigrated to Sweden; however, these were mainly Finnish and German immigrants (Bevelander, 2006). Many of these immigrants worked as domestic servants. However, after the late 1950s, the employment rate of immigrant women decreased (Bevelander, 2006). McLaren (2014) found that from the late 1950s to the late 1980s, the Swedish public developed a sense of fear because many believed immigrants would negatively influence the country.

In the late 1970s, Eritreans were the largest African population to arrive in Sweden, followed by Gambians, Kenyans, and Tanzanians; there were also population activists from South Africa, Namibia, and Liberia (Yamba, 1983). These immigrants came to Sweden because of special economic programs between their nations and the Swedish government (Yamba, 1983). These first groups of African immigrants were relatively small, learned Swedish reasonably quickly, and Swedish society tolerated them. However, the social climate of Swedish tolerance eventually began to shift (Yamba, 1983). Cases of Black people fighting in the streets and committing crimes became common (Wagner & Yamba, 1986). With an escalation in immigration and refugee intake, hostility and fear increased towards immigrants. This caused hostility towards foreigners (*främlingfientlighet*) (Jederlund & Kayfetz, 1999).

The early labor immigrants from neighboring European countries were small in number, provided services the Swedish government required, and contributed to the Swedish economy. Ajani (2002) found that Swedes harbored immigrant hostility when refugees were large in number because they often struggled to find work or pay their taxes, took time to learn the Swedish language, and drew on public assistance funded by citizens who paid their taxes. Most Swedes considered them to be “gobblers of their old age pensions” because the government now had to financially support immigrants (Ajani, 2002, p. 45).

Fear of immigrants had diverse roots extending from racist and ancestral traditions of the extreme right to major defenders of the conformist tradition of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution on the left (Kane & Lucassen, 2006). European integration and the founding of the European Union (EU) required integration to cooperate with others and minimize conflict (Grimmel, 2014). However, this prompted defenders of the right and left to examine why European integration became more concrete and institutionalized after WWII. Three schools of thought emerged: idealism, functionalism, and realism.

The idealists asserted that the influence of persons and ideology explained the origins and development of European integration. Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, and Konrad Adenauer were founding fathers of the EU who persuaded the European states to build a system of integration with the goal of federalism (Van Ham, 2013). The functionalists or institutionalists asserted that local actors engaged in decision-making regarding strategy and pursued integration based on the concept of *spill over* that

assumed standard policies in matters that were not categorically important to the survival of the state triggered a snowball effect that ended in an amalgamated structure for Europe. Van Ham (2013) concluded that although established governments in the functionalist school introduced international integration, this process was arduous. Multinational policy solutions were necessary for the success of the states. The realists or intergovernmental group argued that European states decided to cooperate and integrate with one another while simultaneously making sure that cost benefits analysis exhibited clear conceptions of their national interests (Van Ham, 2013).

Moravcsik (1992), a realist, suggested that European integration stemmed from a series of coherent choices by national leaders who steadily followed their national interest. When such interests converged, integration advanced. European integration did not replace or avoid the political will of national leaders, rather it mirrored their will. The EU became an idea of convenience between states that were eager to preserve their national sovereignty and optimize their power and prosperity (Van Ham, 2013).

Foreign onlookers often view Sweden as one of the more precarious member states of the EU (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Miles et al. (2014) argued that Sweden's reputation was fortified by public opinion surveys that implied widespread apprehension among the general population due to Sweden's accord to remain outside the Euro-zone. According to the Swedish government policy on immigration and integration, their objective is to ensure a sustainable migration policy that safeguards the right to asylum, manages immigration, facilitates mobility across borders, promotes needs-based

labor migration, and considers the effects of migration on development while deepening European and international cooperation (Government of Sweden, 2016).

In 2017, the Swedish government introduced temporary border controls at internal borders and temporary ID checks on all modes of public transport to Sweden from Denmark to ensure public order, internal security, and a well-ordered reception system. The Swedish government also introduced a temporary law revised by Sweden's asylum rules to the minimum levels under EU law. Under this temporary law, refugees and persons eligible for subsidiary protection (quota refugees excepted) received temporary residence permits and opportunities for limited family reunification (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017). The Swedish government is undertaking several initiatives to improve the introduction of newly arrived immigrants, such as improving schools and housing to help new immigrants move more quickly into the labor market (Government of Sweden, 2016). Per the Swedish Migration Board (2016), the goals of the integration policy are equal rights, accountability, and opportunities for all despite ethnic or cultural background. These policy goals are for the entire population.

Consequences of Immigration and Integration

According to the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) (2013), European states reacted negatively to issues of immigration as early as the 1990s. The GCIM (2013) noted a general fear of immigration that resulted in restrictions on immigration policies and intensified border controls. The deployment of semi-military forces to prevent migration by sea through the Straits of Gibraltar and Canary Islands is one example of the immigration restriction policy (GCIM, 2013). Border controls on

Maghreb or North African countries and incentives to these countries to cease irregular migration in exchange for development aid, military, and financial support from European countries is another example of immigration restriction policy (GCIM, 2013). Restrictions on migration continue today within the realms of the EU.

Van Ham (2013) argued that Europe was cloaked in cultural and political ambiguity; its politics conflicted between divergent and centralized forces of integration and assimilation. European integration is inclusive and everyone should be welcome: poor people, women and children, racial or other minorities, and other sub-cultures contribute to a successful European future. Europe should have an predictive and comprehensive objective, a civic responsibility to its citizens (Van Ham, 2013).

Definition of Civic Integration

Immigrants, whether newly arrived or established, often fail to integrate due to Sweden's immigration policies. McLaren (2014) found that global immigrant integration in liberal democracies continued to be a core challenge considering recent political discourse in Europe. Swedish integration policy challenges followed two distinct patterns. At one end of the scale was the idea of an economic/social merging of immigrant and native populations with respect to the following factors: unemployment rate, employment/population ratio, average earnings, school achievement, home ownership, home country culture, and beliefs. At the other end of the scale, integration policy challenges related to assimilation, acceptance, and behaving in a manner that respected the host country's values, morals, and beliefs (McLaren, 2014).

Political integration formed the foundation of civic integration. Individual commitments to characteristics that personified national citizenship included: knowledge of the country's language and acceptance of foreign background and education, which promoted the individual, the host country, and liberal social values (Green, 2007; Joppke, 2014). Green (2007) and Joppke (2014) viewed civic integration as an incorporation of the economic/social aspect within the assimilation/acceptance aspect. However, Green (2007) and Joppke (2014) also suggested that civic integration focused largely on labor integration, civic engagement, and political integration. The difference between *civic* integration and *political* integration is the focus on culture. Civic integration focuses on the degree to which immigrants' attitudes and behaviors approach the values of the host society (Spencer & Cooper, 2006).

As Goodman (2010) explained, the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair often stated, "The purpose of civic integration was not transforming culture affinities or assimilationist uniformity but promoting functional, individual autonomy. Civic integration aims were to establish respect for diversity that was maintained, and not undermine commitments to 'common values'" (p. #). Blair argued that civic skills and value promised for newly arrived immigrants were the responsibility of the government (Goodman, 2010). The host government needed to aid in the integration process via integration contracts, job internship placements, training opportunities, classes, tests, and ceremonies (Goodman, 2010).

Hanson (2007) found that civic requirements in North America referred to steps leading to citizenship. Such demands promoted various strata of membership within the

scope of skills and values of citizenship. According to Green (2007), civic integration begins at the point of entry by those seeking a permanent settlement. Civic integration facilitates economic, political, and social perspectives that enable a country to acquire an individual's knowledge and abilities; hence, the host country determines how the immigrant contributes to the country's national goals (Green, 2008; Joppke, 2014; Joppke & Morawska, 2003; Odmalm, 2007). To contribute to the country's national goals, immigrants must first know the host's language (Green, 2008; Joppke, 2014; Joppke & Morawska, 2003; Odmalm, 2007).

European case studies for the International Migration, Integration, and Social Cohesion (IMISCOE) Network of Excellence included language and civic requirements as part of the process in promoting immigrant integration (Waldrauch, 2006). Joppke (2014) supported the requirement of language as an instrument of immigrant integration. Eranilli and Koopmans (2010) included language requirements as a social responsibility for citizenship as well. Joppke (2014) found that civic integration was a part of integration and citizenship. Scholastic observation should be systematically precise concerning the situation and the alteration between integration and citizenship. Observation should determine if civic integration requirements, as active tools for job integration, are ideas that need further examination. Without a clear expression of the way in which scholars use the term *civic integration*, citizenship requirements are needlessly cultural and general integration is unnecessarily nationalistic (Joppke, 2014).

This literature review also included integration in terms of the African diaspora, specifically African diaspora studies in Europe (Gilroy, 1987; Hall & Rist, 1999; Hesse,

2000). Tololyan (1996) found that the term *diaspora* traditionally referred to a group of people who migrated to other countries and kept strong links to their home country (e.g., economy, culture, and traditions). There was a sense of belonging that suggested a memory of a shared adversity and separation. Essed (1992) examined the accounts of Black Surinamese women in the Netherlands. Ajani (1999, 2000, 2002) explored racialized criminalization of African female immigrants in Italy. Andall (2000) examined how African women working as live-in domestics lived under distinct patterns of social marginality yet asserted an ideology of the Italian family. As Koser (2003) suggested, without neglecting the historical and psychological understanding of slavery for contemporary African migrants, new diasporas center on recent African and Black (and African diaspora) migrations. Most current literature on the African diaspora concentrated on migrations connected to colonialism and slavery.

Challenges of Integrating into the Swedish Labor Market

According to the Swedish Public Employment Services (2015), a lack of contacts was the most common reason why foreign-born persons struggled to find work within their field. The next most common reason was limited Swedish language skills. Sweden's labor integration policy does not require organizations to provide enough assistance for academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women trying to integrate into the Swedish labor market.

Foreign education. Education is an investment that boosts a person's productivity and career (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2014). With higher levels of education, both immigrants and natives are usually more likely to find employment. However, this

was not the case for academically and professionally qualified Black female immigrants living in Sweden. Bevelander and Pendakur (2014) found that academically and professionally qualified immigrants often struggled because Swedish employers did not trust the content and quality of their foreign education. Lundh (2005) found that advanced levels of foreign education decreased the likelihood of finding employment in Sweden; however, having a Swedish education increased the opportunity to find employment. To have a Swedish degree is more beneficial than having a foreign degree, which has serious consequences for integration. The validation of education similarities often depended on similarities between the origin and destination countries (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2014). If the country of origin was like the country of destination, employers were more likely to value the education.

A person with higher levels of education is more likely to culturally and socially integrate than someone with low education. According to Hosseini-Kaladjahi (2013), education is undoubtedly connected to integration. Ager and Strang (2013) found that education often influenced labor integration due to the connection between employment and education. Education is important to understanding why some minorities attain better labor market positions than others. Individuals with a higher educational achievement than the norm are overly academically qualified. Verdugo and Ortega (2014) suggested that terms like *overeducated* and *deskilling* refer to those who are academically overqualified. Individuals with lower educational accomplishments than the norm are *undereducated*. Verdugo and Ortega identified the educational norm within occupations with a match methodology similar to a statistical analysis (e.g., some years of schooling

within a one standard deviation range around the mean). Individuals were either undereducated, overly academically qualified, or had the necessary education in relation to this norm. No past researchers, however, examined perceptions of overqualifications of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women in Sweden.

Chuba (2016) researched overqualification of African immigrants in Alberta, Canada and discovered that overqualification was more severe with internationally trained recent immigrants, particularly at the point of labor market inquiry and introduction. Labor market inquiry is knowledge of available employment and labor (Chuba, 2016). Dean and Wilson (2009) found that newcomers to the Canadian labor market represented about 60% of the total population growth. Statistics from 2013 revealed that 4 years after arrival in Canada, 54% of qualified African immigrants continued to look for full-time work. Of those who found a job, 60% worked in jobs that were inferior to their foreign education, professional competence, and professional training (Chuba, 2016). Overly qualified professional immigrants in Canada found it hard to integrate into the labor market. This may be due to the devaluation of degrees and credentials, that immigrants lack Canadian work experience, or that there is a language barrier (Chuba, 2016). Language is quintessential for success in the labor market; many qualified African immigrants who migrated to Canada had English and French as their mother tongues (Chuba, 2016). In the case of Sweden, language was an obstacle for job integration. According to Guerrero and Rothstein (2012) and Guo (2013a, 2013b), modern economies and industrialized countries consider country-specific language skills a requirement for immigrants in the labor market.

Adult immigrants, foreign education, and professional experience.

In 2009, the employment rate for foreign-born men in Sweden was 38%, compared to 78% of native-born men. The employment rate of foreign-born men and women from countries outside Europe was 15% (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2017). Probable explanations for this gap include education, length of residency in Sweden, work experience, Swedish language proficiency, and discrimination. Dahlstedt (2011) and Nielsen and Birch Andreasen (2015) confirmed that the employment situation of immigrants required researchers explore why immigrants' jobs fail to match their levels of training. In Sweden, 20 to 30% of immigrants who were academically and professionally qualified could not find suitable employment (Dahlstedt, 2011; Nielsen & Birch Andreasen, 2015).

Sicherman and Galor (1990) proposed that being academically and professionally qualified was parallel to career mobility but was a temporary phenomenon. Immigrants needed to invest in work experience in the host country to get better employment opportunities in the future. However, this was not always the case. Immigrants came to the host country looking for better opportunities with adequate qualifications but only found lower skilled employment. Various reasons for this include: employers failing to recognize foreign credentials, discrimination toward education of immigrants, ethnic discrimination, or a tendency of employers to require higher educational levels from immigrant applicants than was necessary for the job (Dahlstedt, 2011; Nielsen & Birch Andreasen, 2015; Wald & Fang, 2008).

Wages are another issue for academically and professionally qualified immigrants; the financial return on being academically and professionally qualified was lower for them than for natives (Nielsen & Birch Andreasen, 2015; Wald & Fang, 2008). Discrimination was not a rare phenomenon. Carlsson and Rooth (2007) defined discrimination as an aggressive unequal treatment of people based on the differences between them. Ethnic discrimination reflects ethnic traits, backgrounds, allegiances, or associations (i.e., racial, linguistic, or religious characteristics). In Sweden, employers screened the names and addresses of applicants while recruiting for a position, which hindered fair opportunities to demonstrate foreign qualifications, professional experience, and skills (Carlsson & Rooth, 2007). This literature review was a comprehensive account of research regarding factors that hinder academically and professionally qualified immigrants. The goal of this study was to evaluate the lived experiences of Black immigrant women as they integrated the Swedish labor market with their foreign education and professional experience.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Immigrants made up approximately 1.3 million of the 8 million citizens in Sweden in 2015; the number of academically and professionally qualified immigrants in Sweden continues to increase (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2015). Statistiska Centralbyrån (2017) reported that most Swedes favor immigration but labor market aspirations of academically and professionally qualified immigrants remained unmet because most qualified immigrants failed to attain employment in their areas of expertise. There was a gap in the research on academically and professionally qualified immigrants in Sweden,

specifically qualified Black immigrant women and job integration. I chose a phenomenological approach to investigate the obstacles that academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women in Sweden faced while integrating into the Swedish labor market with foreign qualification and professional experience. The present study fills a gap in the current literature regarding the lived experiences of Black immigrant women integrating into the Swedish labor market with foreign education and professional experiences. The findings may increase awareness of this issue and inform recommendations for policy makers to increase career opportunities for this group. Chapter 2 included an exploration of concepts of integration in a European context and aspects of foreign education as a hinderance to job integration. Chapter 3 will include additional details regarding the research methods, participants selection, and data organization and analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

My purpose in this study was to understand obstacles that hinder academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women from integrating into the Swedish labor market with foreign qualifications and professional experience. In Chapters 1 and 2, I detailed the history of European emigration and Black immigration in Sweden and discussed criticisms of Sweden's immigration policies. According to Taguma, Kim, Brink, and Teltemann (2010), critics took issue with the lack of consideration given to foreign education in Sweden. Harmonious coexistence of integration mechanisms is a restorative method of trust and honesty; this was necessary to match the right qualifications for the right job based on having a foreign education. Bevelander and Pendakur (2014) found that studying integration factors leads to understanding how factors of job integration either help or hinder the career process of qualified immigrants.

According to the OECD (2016), 15% of academically and professionally qualified immigrants remain unemployed within their field in Sweden. My purpose in this qualitative phenomenological study was to evaluate the lived experiences of Black immigrant women as they integrated into the Swedish labor market with foreign education and professional experience. These women were not born in Sweden but lived in Sweden for at least 7 years. They immigrated to Sweden for various reasons. I explored individual phenomenological experiences using a sample group who had foreign education and professional experience. Participants' insights and personal stories revealed their perspectives on individual professional identity with foreign qualifications.

Their interviews reflected how this point of view related to job integration policies. In this chapter, I present the methodology that I used to understand this research problem.

Research Design and Rationale

The following questions guided the research:

1. How do academically qualified Black immigrant women perceive career opportunities in Sweden?
2. How do professionally qualified Black immigrant women perceive career opportunities in Sweden?
3. What context do they give to career opportunities considering their personal experiences in their home country?

In phenomenological studies, the researcher works with the sample group to generate firsthand records (i.e., a back-and-forth dialogue with inductive reasoning that constructs lived experiences). Creswell (2013) stated that phenomenological studies, “involved collaborating with participants interactively; so that they had a chance to shape the themes or abstractions that emerged from the process” (p. 45). According to Moran (2000), the phenomenon could be anything that surfaced in cognizant experience; thus, I extracted in-depth understanding and data from each participants’ experience.

I selected a qualitative methodology for this research study. Creswell (2013) contended that researchers use qualitative studies when “variables could not be easily identified; theories were not available to explain behavior...rather theories needed to be developed” (p. 17). Qualitative research design includes a theoretical framework, purpose for the study, sample and population group, methods of data collection, data analysis,

consideration of ethics and the role of the researcher, researcher bias, and participant protection. Brown and Sleath (2016) confirmed that qualitative methods diverge from scientific explanation models regarding the need for hypothesis testing, which is more common for background theory or when a proposition's validity depended on empirical confirmation.

Husserl (1973, 2001) was the founder of *descriptive* phenomenological methodologies that researchers use to describe the base core of experiences. Phenomenology “must bring pure expression, must be described in terms of its essential concepts, the (core) which directly makes itself known in intuition” (Husserl, 2001, p. 86). The core was the base for all additional knowledge and phenomenological methodologies. Heidegger (1996), a student of Husserl, established a phenomenology that varied both subject and method, inspiring hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenological methodologies. Husserl focused on the epistemological; Heidegger considered the question of being and explored the human experience of being (i.e., *dasein*) (Heidegger, 1996). I chose the tradition of phenomenology to examine the experiences of Black immigrant women in Sweden who experienced obstacles due to foreign qualifications and professional experience when applying for jobs within their field. I used phenomenological inquiry to discern the lived experiences of these women in an unfamiliar environment attempting to gain employment in roles traditionally held by natives of the country with Swedish qualifications.

A phenomenological inquiry, based on accounts of lived experience, provided a comprehensive description of what these experiences mean for these women. Sanders

(1982) described phenomenology as a research technique that sought to “make explicit the implicit structure and meaning of human experiences” by revealing the general core that motivated human consciousness (p. 354). The qualitative tradition of inquiry was appropriate because my research topic lacked theories and variables. Creswell (2013) defined *qualitative research* as an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explored a social or human problem. The researcher must narrate the viewpoint of the sample group by creating a complex, holistic picture through analysis of detailed reports from informants in a natural setting. Moustakas (1994) defined phenomenological inquiry as the process of “revealing the essence of experiences in which others could derive knowledge about a unified meaning of an experience” (p. 84). Strauss and Corbi (2007) clarified the concept through an exploratory method. I could, per this methodology of inquiry, discover the reasons for integration. The methodology of inquiry is notable from an analytical perspective because it established a causal effect or relationship among variables to explain the existence of the phenomenon (Salkind, 2000).

Some researchers associated phenomenology with grounded theory (Baker, Wuest, & Noerager Stern, 1992; Suddaby, 2006) and ethnography (Goulding, 2010). However, current literature offers an examination of how the phenomenological approach remained unique from other qualitative methodologies. For this study, I evaluated numerous qualitative models to determine the most suitable method: ethnography, grounded theory, case study, and biography. I also considered a quantitative survey

questionnaire method. The selection of the most suitable design depended on the purpose of the study and the types of data that I gathered.

Ethnographic research involves examining a group or groups' cultural behavior to describe or interpret (Creswell, 2013). My research study was not based on the behavior of any group; rather, I examined the individual lived experiences of a person.

Observation is one of the primary data collection techniques for ethnographic studies and was limited for this research because other sources of data may be required, such as letters, logs or diaries (Creswell, 2013). My intention was not to understand the culture of any group of persons.

Grounded theory research finds a theory as the result of a study. The principle of grounded theory is to apply data acquired from the study to build a theory to establish findings (Creswell, 2013). My aim in this research was not to create or produce a theory. Instead, my aim was to have an intense and comprehensive description of the phenomenon. It was unclear to make claims as to whether the Swedish Public Employment Services and the Swedish Migration Board were represented in a way that allowed both agencies to accomplish their functions in meeting the goal of assisting academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women integrating into the Swedish labor system. Therefore, I did not select grounded theory for this study.

I considered data collection via survey, but I found it to be inappropriate. In comparison with interviews, a survey has the advantage of reducing researcher bias and is cost effective (Singleton & Straits, 2009). However, I did not use a survey because this would require testing variables from pre-existing theories to assess hypotheses and a

theory of integration. To illustrate the career success of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women was not available to make hypothesis testing possible. Hence, the use of a survey would not produce complete information to offer an understanding of the contemporaneous use of retaliatory and recuperative mechanisms during the integration processes.

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear (Singleton & Straits, 2009). Case study research is suitable for answering questions that start with *how*, *who*, and *why* or that need more practical conversation data collection and analysis. Creswell (2013) defined case studies as an “exploration of a bounded system or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (p. 61). A case study is an in-depth study of a phenomenon from a wider sphere bounded by time, events, activities, and individuals that draws data from several sources (Creswell, 2013). A case study was a tradition best suited for studying a given context (Trochim, 2006). It provides multiple sources of data to build a comprehensive picture of the research topic (Jacelon & O’Dell, 2005). However, I did not use a case study approach because the research was not concerned with occurrences over time. The study involved current experiences due to the phenomenon under investigation.

The rationale for choosing a phenomenological approach for this study was strategic. Exploring the obstacles that academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women faced while integrating into the Swedish labor market could be best

achieved through qualitative, phenomenological. According to Giorgi (2009), the indicative word in phenomenological research is *describe*. My aim was to precisely describe the phenomenon according to the facts. According to Gubrium and Holstein (2001) “phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved” (p. 488-489). Phenomenological researchers concentrate on life activities, experiences, or situations to explain or describe a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). They discover events that were previously unearthed, unnoticed, or overlooked. This research revealed hidden meanings and influences of the phenomenon. Data provided rich descriptions that aided in understanding uncovered knowledge. Phenomenological research does not damage or dehumanize the experience under studied. It aided my commitment to understanding the full experiences of the phenomenon rather than parts of that experience.

I carefully selected participants to ensure they experienced the phenomenon I wanted to study. I used phenomenology to understand participants’ experiences rather than to provide a causal explanation of those occurrences. I used semi-structured interviews as the data collection method. This method was flexible. I asked important questions in the same way each time; however, there was room to alter the sequence of questions and probe for further information. My participants were free to answer the questions in any way they chose. Semi-structured interviews included several key questions; I also deviated from set questions to follow an idea or response in more detail (Moustakas, 1994). The responses informed a general meaning of the phenomenon. The descriptions of the experience were rich enough to determine what it meant to be a person

in their world. This is the reason I chose the phenomenological approach as the most appropriate method to answer my research questions.

Role of the Researcher

The root of phenomenological studies is information taken from the lived experiences of an individual or group of persons. I was responsible for the entire study (i.e., data collection, data analysis, and report writing). I conducted interviews in Gothenburg, Sweden. I personally recruited participants and requested the necessary consent and permission forms from the participants before I conducted interviews and collected documents. I used e-mail, word of mouth, and the telephone to contact participants and introduce the research subject. I was constantly aware of researcher bias and relegated my beliefs and opinions to the background to avoid prejudgment of my participants or their information. I personally conducted and audiotaped the interviews. I took notes during the interviews that aided in the analysis of the narrative report. I was the instrument of data collection in this nature (Creswell, 2013; Goulding, 2010).

Patton (2002) clarified that qualitative researchers must be skilled and practiced in interviewing. Goulding (2010) and Polkinghorne (2005) concurred that questions should eventually lead to getting answers that further the research. I needed to perform certain tasks based on my personal experiences of immigrating to Sweden 8 years ago. I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before I began this study. After I received IRB approval, I began data collection and analysis. This process continued until my dissertation was complete.

Research Methodology

Moustakas (1994) defined phenomenological research as a scientific method of inquiry via inductive exploration and collection of scientific evidence with appreciation for the purposeful selection of an information and experience rich sample. My sample group fit the selection criteria. Moustakas (1994) defined *epoch* as imaginative distinction, synthesis, creation, and phenomenological reduction. I used these strategies throughout the data collection process. I used data analysis techniques as recommended by Creswell (1998): strengthening of a data management, use of a reading and memo system, description, classification, interpretation, and representation. I was aware that data collection and analysis in qualitative studies was exploratory and should not be restricted by the extent of a predesigned analytical tool or framework.

I interviewed nine academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women who lived in Sweden for at least 7 years. These women experienced obstacles during job integration in Sweden. Sampling was purposeful with five mandatory criteria. Participants were Black immigrant women, academically and professionally qualified, had at least one foreign degree, could understand and speak English, and lived in Sweden for at least 7 years. The lived experiences of this sample generated data for the descriptive, narrative study.

Interviews

The interview is one of the key sources of data collection in a qualitative study (Creswell, 1998; Hall & Rist, 1999; McReynolds, Koch & Rumrill, 2001; Polkinghorne, 2005). Creswell (2013) advocated for a general interview technique in phenomenology

studies. I used interviews to obtain information from participants about their lived experiences regarding employment during their first 7 years in Sweden. Interviews were semi-structured with open-ended, giving space for themes and patterns to emerge. The questions generated information regarding obstacles participants experienced during the job integration process. This was important because qualitative study interview questions should result in data that answers the research questions (Maxwell, 2013). Interview techniques were individual by telephone.

I conducted a one-on-one in-depth interview with each participant. One-on-one referred to “interviews that were conducted with the respondent during which the subject matter of the interview was explored in detail” (Hall & Rist, 1999, p. 298). I followed participants’ answers and regulated the interview process by adding questions that they needed to answer in the correct order or manner. This flexibility allowed me to probe for details, explain ambiguities, and gather supplementary data (Singleton & Straits, 2009). Individual interviews permitted me to examine and categorize data in the analysis stage (Hall & Rist, 1999). Group interviews were inappropriate because I wanted the participants to feel open and comfortable while relating their lived experiences without feeling the influence of bias from other participants (Hall & Rist, 1999).

A disadvantage of the individual interview process was the expense and time consumption. I would not get complete information if a participant was cautious, as might be the case in a group interview or focus group setting (Creswell, 1998; Hall & Rist, 1999). The comprehensive information I received from the individual interview far outweighed any disadvantages. The interviews were open-ended and semi-structured with

prepared questions that concentrated on the research objectives and served as a guide (Goulding, 2010; Singleton & Straits, 2009).

I provided an interview protocol with open-ended questions for all sections of the participants' interview (see Appendix C). I modified questions during the interview, when necessary, according to the participant I was interviewing. The open-ended questions permitted me to rearticulate the questions and take cues from the participants' responses (McReynolds et al., 2001). The nature of questions was participant-guided. The interview protocol was flexible so I could document responses to questions. I recorded interviews for safekeeping and backup. The participants, after each interview, listened to their interview to make sure they felt satisfied with what we discussed. Stakes (1995) referred to this method as "facsimile and interpretative commentary" (p. 22). The participants described their unique lived experiences, and I used a recording device and semi-structured, open-ended questions to gather their descriptions of their experiences.

In addition to the interviews, I also kept notes about different stories and experiences regarding my research topic that appeared in daily Swedish newspapers. This supported field observations during the interviews over the period of the study. My notes formed part of the analysis and findings. Creswell (1998) and McReynolds et al. (2001) recognized observational field notes as a reliable source of data. Merriam (2009) described field notes as "analogous to the interview transcript" (p. 104).

Documents

I used primary and secondary sources of existing data regarding the political and socioeconomic dynamics of job integration in Europe and Sweden and their effects on

immigrants in the host country. I used available data because the phenomenon needed context and not enough information was available on this subject. Per Singleton and Straits (2009), the use of available data is likely a more credible source because, at times, the memory of those associated with a phenomenon may not be reliable.

Available data, because of the nature of this study, involved the history and background of job integration. These details supported the lived experiences of the participants. Singleton and Straits (2009) recognized five main categories of data: (a) public documents; (b) mass media; (c) personal or private documents; (d) nonverbal sources; and (e) archival sources. Available data that I gathered for this research included peer review articles, policy and law related to the research, newspaper clippings, and information from public office websites. I organized, examined, and assessed the documents to determine the basis for integration and how this affected the role of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women integrating into the Swedish labor market.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the research:

1. How do academically qualified Black immigrant women perceive career opportunities in Sweden?
2. How do professionally qualified Black immigrant women perceive career opportunities in Sweden?
3. What context do they give to career opportunities considering their personal experiences in their home country?

Participants for the Study

According to Nachmias and Nachmias (2007), gaining contact and building rapport with participants is critical in the research process. To build rapport with potential participants, I gained the trust of the participants, helped them understand the significance of the research, and explained the interview method. To build trust, I communicated directly with prospective participants through telephone calls, personal contacts, and emails. I presented myself as a student and colleague in their lived experience of integration in Sweden. I clarified the purpose of the research to the participants and why I chose them for this study. I guaranteed complete anonymity and discretion throughout and after the research.

I clarified to participants that this research was a chance for them to express their opinions and views on issues of job integration in Sweden. I informed the participants that their experiences added to the body of knowledge and may improve dialogue regarding job integration policies for academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women in Sweden in the future. Any probable risk in participation was brought to the participants' attention. I informed participants that the interview could bring back the first memories of unpleasant job situations and difficulties in Sweden. I guaranteed that they could remove themselves from the research at any time without any adverse effect and could stop the interview if inclined.

My methods allowed for unlimited personal contact and safeguarded the confidentiality of participants. I confirmed participants' consent before conducting

interviews (Creswell, 2013; Patton, Clark, & Sawick, 2012). I fostered trust between myself and the participants to gain access to the required data.

My participants were academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women who lived in Sweden for at least 7 years. These women had at least one foreign degree and many years of professional experience. I recruited participants via a purposeful, snowball technique via collaboration with organizations such a Black anti-racist, Pan-African Facebook group and an organization promoting Black women in Europe. I used word of mouth and referrals to recruit the sample group. My steps to recruit the sample, collect data, and validate results included:

1. I contacted the Facebook group and the organization promoting Black women in Europe via email to introduce myself and provide them with information about my study. I later sent them the letter for group managers (Appendix A).
2. I sent group managers examples of my interview questions and my research questions.
3. After I received responses from the group managers, I sent them the letter for the participants (Appendix B). The group managers reassured me that they would forward this letter to members of their organization.
4. I received emails from many potential participants from both organizations who received the letter for participants (Appendix B) asking for further information.
5. To those who sent me an email of interest, I sent individual emails to answer their questions.

6. I called those who met the research and sample group criteria to review the requirements for my research and explain the importance of the consent form before they committed to interviews.

7. I set a date and time with each participant and sent them the consent form via email.

8. I reviewed the consent form with each participant before the interview. I received all but three signed individual consent forms via mail before I interviewed the participants.

9. I set interview appointments for each participant by telephone.

10. I audiotaped, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed interview data according to Creswell's (2013) analysis technique.

11. Final contact with research participants was by email and phone. First, I provided participants with transcribed copies of their responses to gain validation. Second, I provided the results of my analysis as a two-page summary to gain validation of my findings.

12. I will destroy all written and audio-recorded material after the research is complete and approved.

My study was a description of the obstacles that hindered academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women from integrating into the Sweden labor market. Data analysis was inductive.

Sample, Population, and Sampling Procedures

Understanding integration issues required knowledge of the sample group, sample size, sampling procedures, and approaches for selecting participants. Sample size in phenomenological studies is not set; any sample size could provide adequate data (Polkinghorne, 2005). However, new themes and perspectives may not materialize after sampling a small number of participants. The target research population consisted of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women who lived in Sweden for 7 years and had at least one foreign academic degree. Polkinghorne (2005) explained that sampling signified the collection of participants and documents appropriate for a given study. I chose participants and documents based on their ability to provide an understanding of the phenomenon by describing and clarifying a human experience (Polkinghorne, 2005). The basis for sample selection was to find participants whose experiences most fully and authentically manifested the research topic (Wertz, 2005). They provided a “series of an intense, full, and saturated description of the experience under investigation” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 139).

The result of a qualitative, phenomenological study is an understanding of the phenomenon via lived experiences of the population under study. Therefore, “purposeful selection of participants represented a key decision point in qualitative study” (Creswell, 1998, p. 118). A quantitative study, on the other hand, highlights claims from a sample and oversimplifies it to the entire population. Sampling was illustrative of the population, not experienced (Polkinghorne, 2005). Creswell (1998) recommended purposive sampling; I chose participants who provided comprehensive data regarding the

phenomenon as the main informants. They offered valuable information about the research topic and could recognize others with valuable knowledge on the subject (Goulding, 2010). The main informants were nine academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women. They were well-informed and possessed experience of relevant lived experiences.

National agents from the Swedish Public Employment Services and SACO were also familiar with policies of job integration within Swedish society. Their assessments were essential to the dialogue regarding obstacles that academically and professionally qualified immigrants often face. I used a snowballing approach to gain informants by asking people for names of others who had knowledge of the phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 2005). There are numerous approaches to purposeful selection of participants: (a) maximum variation (diverse forms of experiences); (b) homogenous sampling (same kind of experiences); (c) extreme and deviant cases (experience that was typical of the phenomenon or deviant from it); (d) critical sampling (experiences that were significant to the event); (e) criterion sampling (predetermined criteria considered relevant); (f) theory based sampling (experiences that contributed to theory development); and (g) confirmatory sampling (experiences that confirmed or disproved earlier findings) (Creswell, 2013).

Per Creswell (2013), phenomenological researchers could select any of these approaches. I used maximum variation, theory-based, and confirmatory sampling strategies to enlist participants. The maximum variation strategy attained various explanations of participants' experiences with integration in Sweden for a comprehensive

account and explanation of the phenomenon. I used the informants' approach to ask participants to mention others who were well informed about the phenomenon and might have relevant information relating to the research. I gained expert knowledge on exact issues during the research to enhance the data. The confirmatory sampling approach allowed me to interview others to verify or discount initial results; it is one way to confirm qualitative findings (Creswell, 2013).

I determined the sample size of nine participants was adequate according to the type of research questions and the "potential yield of findings" (Wertz, 2005, p. 171). I did not determine the number of participants at the beginning of the study. Wertz (2005) proposed that researchers should add participants until they accomplish the objective of the research. I gathered information until reaching data saturation plus. Creswell (2013) stated that 5 to 25 participants were necessary for a reliable phenomenology study. My sample size of nine left room for the opinions of various categories of participants as well as for confirmatory sampling. Diversity from nine subjects reflected the multiple data sources.

Data Collection

Data collection began after IRB approval. In phenomenological studies, data collection includes periodic cooperation between participants and the researcher. The procedure allowed for efficient data analysis because in phenomenological studies processes and measures are guided by data collection. I used as many data collection methods as possible (Creswell, 2013). Thus, I reduced the risk of missing something important. The two data sets I employed for this study included:

1. Interviews: Interview questions guided the data collection procedure and did not restrict the interviewees. The questions were open-ended and semi-structured to give respondents the freedom to discuss matters of their choosing and provide data about their perceptions of obstacles during job integration. I gave each participant an identification code to mask their identity during and after data collection.

2. Documentary sources: I used primary and secondary sources covering political and socioeconomic dynamics of integration in Europe and Sweden to support participant reports because there was not enough information available elsewhere on this subject.

I transcribed texts and compared transcripts to audio recordings for consistency. Each participant received a transcribed copy of their interview to verify the data.

I sent emails to thank the participants for their time after the interviews. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gather data regarding the lived experiences of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women who experienced obstacles during job integration in Sweden. Interviews and documents were essential to data collection to avoid missing tacit data.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data analysis section includes an examination of the methods I used to analyze the data: data management, analysis, and representation. Data analysis began at the start of data collection (Goulding, 2010). Creswell (2013) recognized that “building on the data from the first and second research questions, data analysis goes through the

data” (p. 82). Phenomenological research has a pattern for data analysis; I borrowed this pattern to guide my data analysis process (see Figure 1).

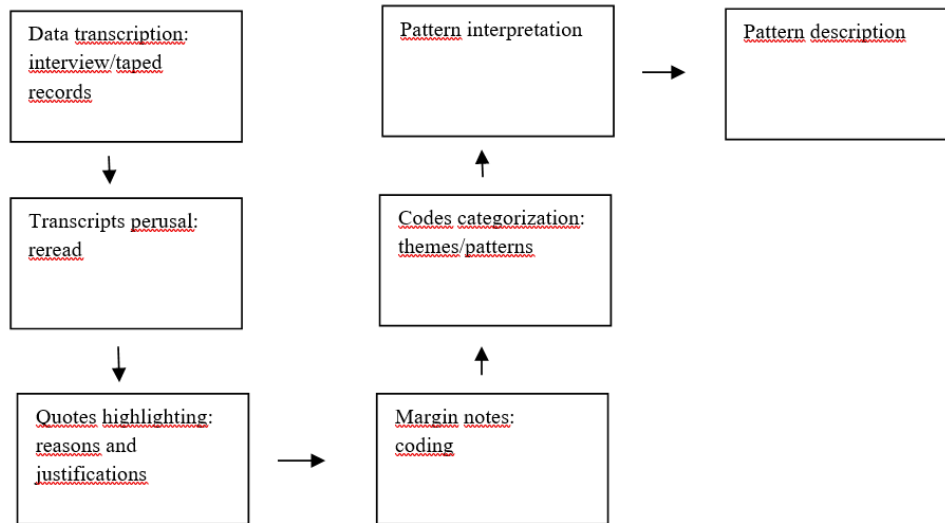


Figure 1. Pattern of phenomenological data analysis and interpretation.

I used data analysis techniques recommended by Creswell (1998) for phenomenology. The step-by-step processes included: (a) strengthened data management; (b) reading and memo system; (c) description; (d) classification; (e) interpretation; and (f) representation. With the help of NVivo programing in the first stage of data analyses, I analyzed only interview data. Due to the large volumes of data. I created a list of all data and organized it into files according to subject. I then created methodical codes using terms to exemplify the subjects as locators for easy retrieval and analysis (Creswell, 2013).

In the second stage, I read the transcripts from the interviews and documents until I became well-versed with the information. Creswell (2013) described this step as the “reading and memo technique” (p. 143). I made introspective notes at the margin of the records and documented original results in the form of memos that were “short phrases, ideas, or key concepts that occur to the reader” (Creswell, 2013, p. 144).

I used axial coding and sent initial findings to selected participants for their comments. Axial coding was the process whereby I organized concepts and categories as I re-read the text from interviews and confirmed that my concepts and categories correctly represented the interview responses. I also explored how my concepts and categories related to one another. This process requires the researcher to ask some self-reflexive questions. What conditions caused or influenced the following concepts and categories? What was the social context? What were the associated effects or consequences? Per Saldana (2013), a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that allegorically gives a cumulative, prominent, essence arresting or/and suggestive characteristic for a portion of language based or visual data. In relation to axial coding, I used an inductive approach as I prepared my codes through direct content analysis (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). Codes, categories, and themes emerged from relevant research before and during data analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In preparing the codes, I used the constant comparative method. I familiarized myself with all the data to gain new understandings until no new or hidden meaning or insight could be gained. I then produced original codes.

The ideas produced by introductory codes resulted in iterative development (i.e., an inductive approach to sorting qualitative data). I organized data according to meanings, categories, patterns, and themes that formed sets of abstract information (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2009; Punch, 2009). My plan was to use this process for both transcribing and coding the data. I combined the introductory codes with similar concepts to form categories. I compared the categories and codes to develop new insights to form additional codes, and continued this process until the data was second nature. I applied categories to the research questions to provide an understanding of integration.

The third stage dealt with data analysis that involved description, classification, and interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) stated that the qualitative researcher should follow,

...a systematic method to describe what was seen in the data, foster categories and themes, decode the emerging themes and concepts, and made statements and conclusions from the data based on hunches, perceptions, intuition, an interpretation within social sciences ideas or a grouping of personal assessments as contrasted with a social science construct or idea. (p. 145)

During the process of categorical aggregation, I acknowledged ideas from different bases and organized them into categories and ideas as meanings from the data (i.e., varied forms of evidence). I engaged in direct interpretation to recognize evidence from a single instance as *meaning* and used this mechanism to clarify what a participant said through a separate instance or clue, which appeared once in documents or as a

singular statement by me. I placed categories together to show patterns. Using data as codes, I combined instances into sets and grouped these sets together to establish patterns. I explained the data, made statements, and arrived at conclusions based on insights regarding integration to present the lessons I learned from it (Creswell, 2013).

The fourth stage in the data analysis involved packaging and exhibiting what I found in the data in the form of a matrix to understand the material. I used iterative code mapping to indicate how I built the initial codes into sets and applied them to the research questions to form emerging themes. Conostas (1995) established a “documentation table for the development of categories” (p. 262) to show how to establish sets and make analysis an open course. A major shortfall of the qualitative process is bias and the private nature of data analysis. To guarantee the credibility of qualitative findings, it is vital to make the process of analysis a public event (Conostas, 1995).

Conostas (1995) offered a two-dimensional model to document category development. This model included a table with a component of categorization and temporal designation. The first feature reported movements to develop a category. The first feature defined the source of authority for creating a category, the source for justifying a category, and documentation of the source developed. The second feature explained the stages of the research process after establishment of a set: (a) priori (before data collection); (b) posteriori (after data collection); and (c) iterative (any point throughout data collection). Displaying a matrix of category growth brought development into the public domain and improved the credibility of findings (Conostas, 1995).

Developments offered a detailed account of how I formed the findings on frameworks

and dynamics of integration processes in Sweden. The details of these frameworks appear in more detail in Chapter 5.

Validity and Trustworthiness

It is essential in phenomenological research for researchers to supply quality evidence for the results of their research. No single adequate way of confirming qualitative findings exists; however, a qualitative study can be validated (Fielding, 2004). Creswell (2013) explained that determining quality standards in a qualitative study differs from standard measures in quantitative research. Some qualitative researchers sought to create “qualitative equivalents that parallel traditional quantitative approaches to validity” (Creswell, 2013, p. 197). However, the language of quantitative research uses positivist beliefs and does not fit qualitative research. McReynolds et al. (2001) stated that dependability and rationality within the context of qualitative research do not have the same significance as they do in quantitative research. Qualitative researchers use terms like credibility, honesty, and validity instead of reliability (McReynolds et al., 2001).

Creswell (2013) used *confirmation* for validity to ground qualitative research as an individual methodological approach to research. Richardson (2006) noted that in a qualitative study, “validity was not the triangle; a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object” but a process like crystallization (p. 60). Qualitative researchers corroborate findings through processes of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Trochim, 2007).

To be credible, qualitative researchers should determine whether findings agree with participants’ perspectives and beliefs. Transferability required me to offer detailed

characteristics of the research so that readers can make external appraisals as to whether the findings might apply elsewhere. I did not make this decision, but offered information to make such appraisal possible. For reliability, I reported changing circumstances during the research and how the results changed. Lastly, the need for conformability required me to record actions that confirmed the results (Trochim, 2006).

Creswell (2013) and McReynolds et al. (2001) suggested adequate measures included: field notes and memos, multiple researchers, multiple sources of data, peer review, continued engagement and determined observation in the field, working with inconclusive data, explaining researcher's bias, member checking, transferability, offering detailed descriptions, and external audit. Creswell (2013) stated that at least any two of these approaches could evaluate the quality of qualitative findings.

Creswell (2013) encouraged detailed confirmation or quality checks, searching for convergence of information, in phenomenological research. For this study, I ensured the validity of the research methodology and results via member checking and transferability (Creswell, 1998). Member checking is the process of verifying respondents' data with the resultant interpretation made by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Respondents read the transcripts of their interviews, the themes, and the interpretations I made from them. All my participants received a copy of their interview via mail and confirmed or edited their statements, if necessary. No participant made significant changes. They all validated the data and the themes in the transcript and analysis.

I validated results in terms of transferability. Trochim (2006) described transferability as "the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be

generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings” (para. 4). Throughout the data collection process, I produced descriptions for themes such as factors hindering employment, overqualification, preconceived ideas of Sweden, finding work, integration into society, and job integration policies. The data could be applicable in other similar contexts. The literature review confirmed resources for immigrants; however, refugees received most of these resources. There was a lack of understanding regarding hindering factors during job integration for overly qualified Black immigrant women in Sweden. The results of this investigation were limited to nine participants who completed interviews for the research. In sharing the results with other academically and professionally qualified immigrants in varying social platforms, these results associated with the labor market in Sweden seemed to also resonate with them.

I used several sources of data to confirm findings (e.g., cooperating assertions and interpretations that materialized from different participant categories). I reviewed preliminary findings with a few chosen participants to gain feedback to ensure my analysis corresponded to the participants’ experiences. The actions guaranteed the quality of the study (Creswell, 2013; Hall & Rist, 1999; McReynolds et al., 2001).

Ethics and Participant Protection

Participants’ protection was essential to the success of the study. The participants were protected by the voluntarily recruitment process, the purpose of the research, and how I explained the interview to them. The informed consent form provided information about the project and the protocol of the interview (Appendix C). I ensured participants that they could remove themselves at any time from the research. The sensitive topic of

job integration in Sweden could trigger memories of anger, resentment, and failure. I informed participants of this possible trauma before requesting their consent to participate. Participants could stop the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable without any negative consequences.

The nature of the interview required me to demonstrate sensitivity. My primary task was to safeguard against participants becoming emotional. I assured participants of their privacy and confidentiality throughout the research process. I concealed the identities of participants and removed identifying information by using codes. I kept all data confidential and respected participants' privacy. This was a telephone interview and participants chose when the interview would occur. I applied methods to safeguard the protection of participants (Creswell, 2013; Goulding, 2010; Nachmias & Nachmias, 2007). I stored recorded material and transcripts in a safe place in my home. I will destroy all data after the project is complete and approved.

Structure of the Narrative Report

The findings of this research reflected the realist tradition, as recommended by Creswell (2013), known as a phenomenological narrative. I used the realist approach and offered a detailed description with quotes from participants, an explanation within the framework of job integration, and my intellectual insights. Words, rhetoric, and illustrations supplement the narration to capture the readers' interest and maintain the significance of the work. There is "no standard format for reporting a phenomenological research" (Creswell, 2013, p. 227). Nonetheless, there was a correct balance between "background information versus analysis, interpretation, and discussion" (Creswell, 2013,

p. 192). Creswell (2013) insisted that the “overall intent of phenomenological research could influence the narrative structure” (p. 48). This mattered because the structure should be left “to writers to decide” (Creswell, 1998, p. 196). My objective was to deliver a deeper understanding of the process of job integration and employment success for academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women in Sweden. The strength of the research was that it provided an in-depth, thorough analysis of the phenomenon and filled a gap in the existing literature. The structure of the narrative was composed of 35% for analysis, interpretation, and 65% discussion in relation to the background information.

Dealing with Researcher Bias

My role was to be the primary instrument of data collection. My background and experiences put me in close contact with the participants. According to Goulding (2010), the likelihood of a qualitative researcher exhibiting bias in this context is understood. I detected several measures that could assist with the possibility of subjectivity. I preserved a high degree of consciousness concerning the likelihood of bias and applied objectivity throughout the process. I recorded any unusual incidents during the study. Member checking and transferability enhanced the credibility of the research (Goulding, 2010).

I shared initial findings with the selected participants and integrated their remarks into the report. Using numerous sources of data to corroborate findings also enhanced the integrity of research outcomes. I acknowledged the process of category development and opened data analysis to increase credibility of the findings (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Conostas, 1995). These measures reduced incidences of researcher bias.

Summary

By investigating perceptions on the obstacles that academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women experience during the process of job integration in Sweden, I discovered a gap in the literature. Within the parameters of public policy and administration, Sweden's policy on job integration was lacking. Chapter 3 described the phenomenological method of inquiry and design of the study. I chose this method to give participants voice and regarding their lived experiences. I explored the concurrent processes of job integration of Europe and the lived experiences of academically and professionally qualified immigrants in Sweden. No in-depth study existed to explain the dynamics involved in experiences of this group. I employed a phenomenological approach to present an in-depth contextual perspective on the subject. I used individual telephone interviews and available documents for this study.

Interviews were semi-structured and included open-ended questions. I interviewed nine participants for the study. I selected them by using all-out variation, informants, theory-based, and confirmatory sampling strategies (Creswell, 1998). Inclusion criteria included: (a) participants were Black and female; (b) they were academically and professionally qualified; (c) they had at least one foreign degree; (d) they could speak and understand the English language; and (e) they lived in Sweden for at least 7 years. I recorded, de-identified, and transcribed all interview data before coding. I analyzed the data using detailed descriptions, categorical aggregation, direct interpretation, establishment of patterns, and naturalistic generalizations. I validated the

results using several sources of data, detailed descriptions, member checking, and transferability.

The narrative report followed the realist approach. I assured participants of the anonymity and confidentiality of data they offered in the study and respected participants' privacy. The methodology produced information that added to new understandings of job integration according to the following research questions:

1. How do academically qualified Black immigrant women perceive career opportunities in Sweden?
2. How do professionally qualified Black immigrant women perceive career opportunities in Sweden?
3. What context do they give to career opportunities considering their personal experiences in their home country?

Chapter 4 includes details of the data analysis and findings that I generated from the data to answer the research questions. According to Nekby (2010), social integration played a role in integration in Sweden regarding the language of the country and it will continue to shape the Swedish immigration and integration policies.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

“I always looked upon the acts of racist exclusion, or insult, as pitiable, from the other person. I never absorbed that. I always thought that there was something deficient about such people.”

– Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison, born Chloe Anthony Wofford, is an American novelist, editor, and professor who focuses on rural Afro-American communities’ cultural inheritance.

Morrison’s sophisticated style of writing informs the reader about issues concerning African-Americans and allows the reader to empathize and sympathize with the characters (Li, 2008). Guided by Morrison’s writing style, I used this phenomenological study to describe the obstacles that academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women faced while attempting to integrate into the labor market in Sweden.

The following questions guided the research:

1. How do academically qualified Black immigrant women perceive career opportunities in Sweden?
2. How do professionally qualified Black immigrant women perceive career opportunities in Sweden?
3. What context do they give to career opportunities considering their personal experiences in their home country?

At the commencement of each interview, I thanked the participants for voluntarily taking the time to participate in this study. I briefed them about the interview protocols

and explained the content of the interview. Participants gave permission to record and take notes as they spoke. I told participants about the transcription they would receive after their interview and that they could withdraw at any point if they felt uncomfortable during the interview. I explained the consent form before they signed the document. I conducted interviews by telephone with the participants and transcribed the data. The longest interview lasted 50 minutes and the shortest interview lasted 20 minutes.

In 2014, the number of foreign-born individuals in Sweden was approximately 1.3 million, more than 13% of the national population (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2015). Foreign-born individuals constituted a somewhat higher proportion of the total population in Sweden compared to other OECD countries (Aldén & Hammarstedt, 2014). In Sweden, the position of foreign-born individuals in the labor market gradually worsened. Unemployment rates are high among immigrants (Aldén & Hammarstedt, 2014).

My purpose in this qualitative phenomenological study was to evaluate the lived experiences of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women as they attempted to integrate into the Swedish labor market with foreign education and professional experience. I wanted to understand why academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women struggled to secure jobs in which they could use their foreign qualifications and professional experience by exploring individual experiences of a sample group. The participants' insights and personal stories revealed their perspectives on individual professional identity in relation to their foreign qualifications. Their interviews reflected what steps they took to integrate into the Swedish society and their experiences attempting to secure employment that aligned with their academic and

professional credentials. Lemaitre's (2013) report on the perception of foreign qualifications in Sweden revealed relevant social patterns that the sample group's experiences of applying for jobs supported. I also evaluated the receptions that foreign-born applicants received from perspective employers.

This study was the first step in filling a gap in the literature to better understand why academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women find it difficult to use their professional and foreign competencies in the Swedish job market. In this study, I interviewed nine women who provided comprehensive information regarding their individual experiences. In this chapter, I detail the characteristics of participants were chosen, the data I collected and analyzed, the steps of authentication I used to ensure the accuracy and quality of the data was gathered, and the themes and results.

Population

The population of this study was academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women who lived in Sweden for at least 7 years. These women migrated to Sweden with at least one degree and professional work experience from their home country. They decided to relocate to Sweden and believed that their foreign education and professional competence would ensure career opportunities because Sweden is well known for being a multicultural country. In Sweden, the English language is commonly spoken as much as in any native English-speaking country (Education First, 2016).

In total, 23 participants expressed interest in this project; however, only 40% were eligible after criteria screening. Nine women accepted and replied in time to participate. All participants acknowledged that they read and understood the consent form. Most

participants were excited to see my topic advertised on the Facebook group home page and organization promoting Black women in Europe home page because they identified with the subject matter. One conclusion from all the participants was that in the 7 years they lived in Sweden, employers never accepted nor used their foreign degrees.

I recruited participants from a database on Facebook and from an organization promoting Black Women in Europe. I sent a letter to the group managers to both organizations who requested the letter for participants be sent to them. This letter detailed the purpose of the study and a request to speak via telephone (see Appendix A and B). I sought permission from the group managers of the Facebook group and Black Women in Europe organization before recruiting participants for this study. I also found participants by means of word of mouth and by randomly approaching colleagues who may know persons who fit the participant profile. Some women were too busy to dedicate 30 minutes to discuss their experiences. Some women identified with the subject but either found a job within 7 years in Sweden or started their own business. Some women focused on starting a family or studying a new field because they heard about difficulties obtaining a job that used their education and professional competences. Other women simply declined to participate for no apparent reason. In the end, nine participants met the inclusion criteria and were willing to participate.

I met these nine participants via colleague referral, the Facebook group, and the organization that promotes Black women in Europe. Seven participants reside in Sweden and one participant moved back to South Africa but visits Sweden at least once a year.

Another participant moved back to the United States. I contacted participants by telephone and asked them to participate.

Participant Profiles

A total of nine academically and professional qualified Black women who immigrated to Sweden participated in this study. Participants lived in Sweden for at least 7 years, were between the ages of 30 to 60 years old, and originated from various countries in Africa and the United States. Their academic credentials included bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and a doctor of philosophy. The participants had many years of professional experience but experienced hindrances during job integration in the Swedish labor market. It took a slightly longer than a month after IRB approval to recruit and interview the participants.

All participants read and understood the consent form they received via email. Most participants disclosed that they saw the request regarding participation of my research project on Facebook and in their email. The focus of this study was to investigate the employment obstacles faced by academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women who lived in Sweden for at least 7 years. My goal was to interview up to 25 academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women. In total, 15 were eligible after criteria screening and nine women expressed interest and completed interviews. There were no changes to the interview instrument after IRB approval because this instrument fulfilled the objective of the study.

Data Collection

I considered data collection to be complete when I reached saturation; no new themes developed after the ninth interview. Data collection began with my search for information regarding immigrant job integration experiences in Sweden. I then identifying organizations and associations that academically and professionally qualified Black immigrants in Sweden frequently visited. I contacted group managers were contacted about the project and the call for participation. Most of their clientele were excited to see the research topic advertised. Interested participants contacted me via email and phone. I thanked them and assured them that I would contact them again with further details and a consent form. I sent nine eligible participants an email with the consent form. All participants acknowledged that they read and understood the consent form and completed interviews via telephone. Most interviews took place during the weekend or on weekday evenings. I recorded all interviews.

The first interview was on May 20, 2018 and the last one occurred on May 28, 2018. The longest interview lasted 50 minutes and the shortest lasted 20 minutes. All questions were open-ended and semi-structured, which gave participants the choice to answer how they wished. I often paraphrased their responses and read them back to ensure transparency. There were no unexpected occurrences during the data collection process except for three participants who had not yet signed and returned the consent form. These participants verbally confirmed that they read and understood the consent form and sent the signed forms before the interviews commenced. Participants could

choose their focus and how much information they wanted to share. I recorded, filed, and later transcribed their responses. I also took notes during the interviews.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis Part 1

Data analysis began at the start of data collection (Goulding, 2010). I used data analysis techniques recommended by Creswell (1998) for phenomenology, including: (a) strengthening of data management; (b) a reading and memo system; (c) description, classification, and interpretation; and (d) representation. The goal at this stage was to construct a comprehensive image of participants' reality and expressions of meaning. I used observational notes and a transcribed version of participants' acknowledgement as the foundation for analyzing these frames. I read and re-read data for an integrated reaction. Using axial coding, I created concepts and categories while I re-read the text from interviews and confirmed that my concepts and categories correctly represented the interview responses. These codes provided the foundation for ensuing analyses. I used an inductive approach as I prepared my codes through direct content analysis (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

In the second stage, I read the transcripts from interviews, documents, and field notes until I was well-versed with the information. I made introspective notes at the margins of the records and documented original results in the form of memos. Memos are short sayings, concepts, thoughts, or key notions (Creswell, 2013). In preparing these codes, I used the continuous comparative method. I familiarized myself with all the data to gain new understandings and ensure no further new or hidden meaning could be

gained. I then produced introductory codes that resulted in the iterative development of the qualitative data. I generated meanings, categories, and themes that formed sets of abstract information (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2008; Punch, 2009). In an iterative process, I constantly revisited the data during transcription and coding. I combined introductory codes with similar concepts to form categories. I compared the categories and codes to develop new insights to form additional codes and continued this process until the data was second nature. I applied categories to the research questions and placed data into files according to subject. Using NVivo software, I created methodical codes using terms to exemplify the subjects as locators for easy retrieval and analysis (Creswell, 2013).

The third stage involved data analysis via description, classification, and interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative researchers follow a systematic method to describe the data, foster categories and themes, decode the emerging themes and concepts, and make statements and conclusions from the data based on hunches, perceptions, intuition, and interpretations within a social science construct (Creswell, 2013). Techniques that researchers use to define, classify, and understand data differ in respective qualitative paradigms, but the procedures for data analysis outlined for stages 1 and 2 are common to all qualitative traditions (Creswell, 2013).

Regarding qualitative phenomenological studies, Kleiman (2004) concluded that data analysis should include: (a) concrete, detailed descriptions from the participants; (b) phenomenological reduction throughout the analysis; (c) discovery of essential meanings; (d) an articulated structure; and (e) verification of results via raw data. I used the process

of detailed description, obtained the facts of the case, and explored its contexts according to the data. During the process of categorical aggregation, I acknowledged different ideas and organized them into categories as meanings from the data (i.e., varied forms of evidence). I engaged in direct interpretation to recognize evidence from a single instance as *meaning* and clarified what a participant said through a separate instance reported in documents or as a singular statement by me. I placed categories together to show patterns. Using data as code, I combined instances into sets and grouped these sets together to establish patterns. I explained the data, made statements, and arrived at conclusions regarding integration (Creswell, 2013).

The fourth stage of data analysis included packaging and exhibiting the data in the form of a matrix. I used an iterative code mapping figure (Figure 2) to indicate how initial code sets applied to research questions to form emerging themes. I used Conostas' (1995) "documentation table for the development of categories" to show how I established sets and made the analysis an open course (p. 262). Conostas (1995) maintained that a major shortfall of the qualitative process is researcher bias and suggested making the process of analysis a public event.

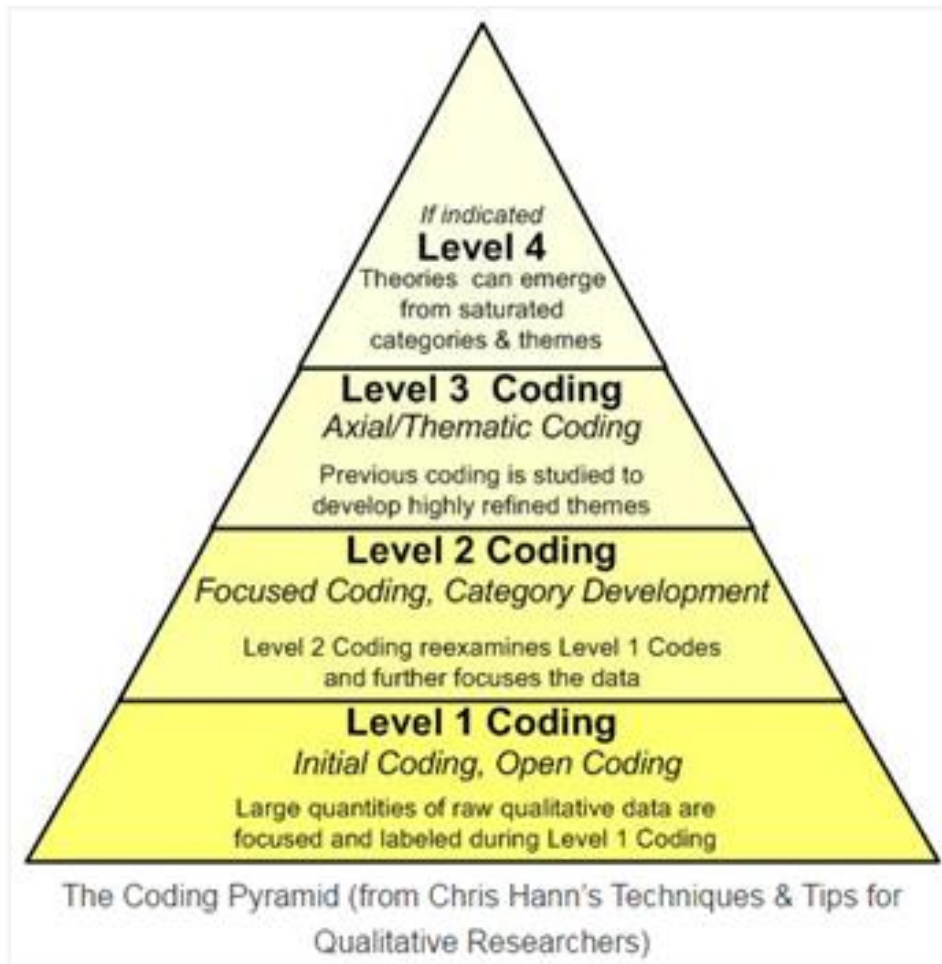


Figure 2. Example of an iterative coding map. Used with permission from Jones and Weas (2009).

I used the model with a component of categorization and temporal designation. Conastas (1995) offered a two-dimensional model to document category development. The first feature in the model reported movements to develop a category (i.e., to define the source of authority for creating a category, the source for justifying a category, and

the documentation of the source). The second feature explained the various stages of the research process when a set was established: (a) Priori; (b) Posteriori; and (c) Iterative. Displaying a matrix of category growth brought the development into public domain and improved the credibility of findings. The developments offered a detailed account of how I formed my findings regarding frameworks and the dynamics of job integration processes in Sweden.

Data Analysis Part 2

I did not find any discrepancy between the data collected and the themes and interpretations that I created. This section includes statements made by the participants that related to: (a) reason for immigrating to Sweden; (b) type of job; (c) experience with public job employment agency; and (d) career opportunities in relation to personal experiences in their home country. Their statements are descriptive, informative and introspective.

Reason for immigrating to Sweden. The group described their experience as being exciting. Two-thirds of the group met their significant other outside Sweden before deciding to move to Sweden. One third moved to Sweden for the sake of their family. Every woman in this study left their native country where they had a great job and the support of a solid social system. P1 left Kenya and moved to Sweden after her husband was brutally killed by bandits. She decided to move to Sweden for the sake of their child to get familial support from his family. P2, P3, and P5 moved to Sweden for the sake of love. They met their significant others while in their home country and mutually decided to move to Sweden. P4, P7, P8, and P9 already had family living in Sweden and decided

to join them. P6 moved to Sweden from the United States because her father-in-law was not well.

In response to the question regarding immigrating to Sweden, P5 replied, “I followed the love of my heart.” I then followed up and asked P5 and other participants whether they thought they would have difficulty finding a job in their new country. Almost all of them responded very similarly to P3 who stated, “No, I thought it would be easy for me to find work in Sweden as I was already a professional in my native country when I moved to Sweden.” Sweden is the best English-speaking country in Europe in which English is a second language (Education First, 2016). So, many participants believed getting a job would be simple.

Type of job. Many degree holders who move to Sweden struggle to get their credentials recognized and find work. Participants assumed that labor integration would be easier in Sweden than in other countries in Europe. P6 explained,

When I moved here with my Swedish husband, I was looking to support my family and work...But I didn't think it would be that difficult to find a job in the airport industry. I had worked in this industry almost all my life – this is an international industry, so I believed it would be easy to get a job.

Prior to arriving in Sweden, P1 and P2 spent many years working for international organizations such as the World Food Program (WFP) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in the operational sector and administrative offices in Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Ghana, and South Africa. They both had a wealth of international experience and an international university education when they

began their Swedish job search. “Having a professional background in human relations, I was very careful in my application process, and applied only for jobs that truly matched my qualifications,” P2 recalls. “I really had the wrong idea” (P2). Swedish employers were unimpressed. Despite many applications, P2 did not receive a single interview. “It’s a frustrating situation for highly-educated people like me, who are mid-career professionals, to have to wait in limbo” (P2).

P5 faced similar frustrations when attempting to find a job in Sweden that met her expectations. P5 stated, “I had this image of Sweden as a multicultural and English-speaking country, so I didn’t think it would be that hard for me to find a job.” Despite her bachelor’s degree in business administration, project management, and economics and her master’s degree in informational technology, P5 only received a few interview invitations after 70 applications, none of which resulted in a job that reflected her qualifications and professional competence.

I really had the wrong idea about the Swedish qualified labor market...I kept wondering if I had made a mistake moving here and at times considered moving to the UK or Canada. However, I thought of my husband and my son who had also followed me to Sweden and was in school here in Sweden. It takes a very long time to get a job in Sweden. (P5)

P7 finally quit the futile job search and became an independent business owner by starting a cleaning company when she failed to find a job in international business and marketing in Sweden. She explained,

It is so discouraging when a job profile describes their need for an international consultant or marketing officer for their offices outside Sweden, so one ideally does not need to know Swedish, however, in the end they choose someone who speaks Swedish. I believe there is a much bigger issue at stake here. (P7)

When P6 finally found work, it was through luck and her husband's contacts. She had no success after dozens of applications and her job did not initially reflect what she studied or worked with previously. "There's no structure," P3, P5 and P8 emphatically stated. "Most foreigners find the information they need by word-of-mouth from other foreigners. There needs to be a central place to find all the information" (P3).

I was missing the right information – information that I needed in order to guide me in the right order as to what I needed to begin with regarding my integration process and/or what the labor market was really like. The first time I went to Public Employment Services, I cried afterward, because no one could help me and after meeting a case worker I was left completely de-motivated. I had to find out everything myself by sticking my nose in and bothering people I knew. (P3)

For both P4 and P8, one of the main complications was getting their qualifications recognized. P7 explained, "Swedish companies proclaim that they're global, but their thinking is very inside-the-box." "Foreign qualifications are never as good as Swedish qualifications. They assume that your education doesn't live up to their standards," said P4. P8 had advanced degrees from universities in Africa, but still felt like the Swedish system looked down on education and certifications that came from Africa.

When P5 discovered she was not the only one struggling and joined forces with others who were part of a group called Professional Women in Gothenburg, a network of foreign professionals. Today highly qualified and academic professionals lead this network that meets socially and supports highly qualified professional women in Gothenburg. The organization's goals are to raise awareness about the talented pool of international professionals and form a network system in Sweden. However, roadblocks remain for many academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women.

Experience with job agency. Immigrants with university-level educations are about 20 to 30% less likely to be employed than similarly trained people born in Sweden (Dahlstedt, 2011; Nielsen & Birch Andreasen, 2015). That gap is likely to increase with the record number of asylum seekers currently entering the country (Statistics in Sweden, 2016). Half of the people who are unemployed in Sweden were born outside of the country; that figure may grow by another 10% over the next 2 years according to the Public Employment Services (Statistics in Sweden, 2016).

Mikael Sjöberg, the general director of the Public Employment Service, said that this figure increased because of refugees who are educated and those who are uneducated. All register into the public system as job seekers. Sjöberg (2016) stated,

...the political landscape is changing all the time, but we expect that the refugees who arrived last 2016 and early 2017 will start arriving at our local employment offices sometime now, so the unemployment figures among those born outside of Sweden will likely continue to increase if nothing gets done. (p. 2)

Overall, Sweden's unemployment figures dropped slightly from 7.5% in 2014 to 6.7% in 2016. However, the immigrant group continues to struggle in the job market. "There is a dichotomy in the labor market. On the one hand, the Swedish economy is gaining strength, but on the other hand this group of people are still having trouble getting into jobs" (Sjöberg, 2016, p. 7). Even qualified immigrants must improve their familiarity with the Swedish language and complete internships in their field.

Sweden needs a more efficient language introduction program and the Public Employment Services may need to start working to combat prejudice and hidden discrimination among employers. Almost all parts of society have a role to play to improve the situation. (Sjöberg, 2016, p. 2)

According to Thomas Liebig (OECD, 2016), there is a paradox within the Swedish model regarding refugees Sweden has one of the most advanced refugee-integration policies: a two-year program that makes refugees *job-ready*. However, this program failed as it was often too long for educated immigrants and too short for those lacking basic literacy and numeracy. P2 stated,

When I was learning Swedish my frustration with this program (Swedish program) was that those who were educated and already knew the working ins and outs of school were placed in the same class with those who had never been to school. So, for me, who wanted to proceed much quicker in learning the language, my progress was put on hold to accommodate everyone else who were not as fast as some of us. What would be ideal is to split this group into two: an

exhilarated program for those who are eager and experienced in the art of learning quickly and another group for those who need extra help and attention.

In the two-year program, only 22% of low-educated foreign-born men and 8% of women found work during the year after completing the program (OECD, 2016). On average, it takes 7 to 8 years for newcomers to find employment (Statistics Sweden, 2016). According to a survey in 2014, European refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection took 20 years to reach employment rates comparable to natives. In America, refugees find work faster than other immigrants and do better than economic migrants over time (Statistics Sweden, 2016).

The SACO is an association that includes 22 affiliated unions throughout Sweden. This association helps foreign professionals in the Swedish labor market. According to Pär Karlsson, trade officer for SACO, “Sweden is missing a collected resource of all the information new professional immigrants need and this information should guide newly arrived academic and professional qualified immigrants on what one needs to do, when one moves to Sweden” (p. 24). When new professionals move to the country, they experience problems at different stages of their job search, such as getting their degrees and qualifications verified with the Swedish Higher Education Authority, learning the language, and finding a job. Information is available on different websites; however, it is not always current or from credible sources (SACO, 2016). So, verification is always in question and qualified immigrant must confirm the information and requirements.

When I asked my group of participants what hindered them from getting a job that reflected their foreign qualifications and experiences, they most commonly blamed lack

of contacts, discrimination regarding their names or addresses, and limited language skills. P4 felt that the problem was not just finding a job, but finding the right information and doing things in the right order. P4 stressed that there was no information that explained where immigrants must register their addresses, sign up for a personal identification number, or visit the public employment service.

SACO addresses these foundational processes of looking for the right information to help immigrants begin job integration. One of SACO's goals is to help restructure degree verification. By assisting academically and professionally qualified immigrants translate their foreign degrees to Swedish equivalent degrees, job integration may become easier. SACO restructured and implemented tools to simplify aspects of finding a job through the website called Omstart, which means *restart* or *new beginnings* in English. Karlsson explained that SACO (2016),

decided to fill this gap and created a website that served as a starting point for a new working life in Sweden, specifically for immigrants with university-level degrees, and links to several other sites such as the Migration Board, the public employment service and the Swedish Higher Education Authority. (p. 10)

SACO's Omstart web portal may foreign-born job seekers find necessary information. P4 noted,

If I had known about Omstart things would have been much easier...But then again, how would I have found this out? I don't believe many Swedish people know these things. Many times, foreigners have to find things out from each other.

Karlsson (SACO, 2016) believed that public agencies should take more responsibility and make information on Omstart available but also recognized the pitfalls of dealing with large bureaucracies. He explained,

...this should be the government's responsibility. But it's also easy for information to fall between the cracks...A "massive machine" like the Public Employment Service is not yet set up to address the particular needs foreign graduates have when looking for work. (SACO, 2016, p. 30)

Therefore, SACO focused on workers with university degrees and is particularly well-suited to help educated foreigners ease into the Swedish job market. "There are a lot of people who don't realize our union is actually for academics...Right now, not enough people take the easy path because they don't know what it is. There's still a lot of room for improvement" (SACO, 2016, p. 32). I asked my sample group if they knew about SACO and most responded in the negative.

Career opportunities related to personal experiences in home country. The labor market for immigrants continues to be a polarizing topic in Sweden that is closely tied to the refugee crisis (SACO, 2016). My sample group had great jobs prior to moving to Sweden. They realized after moving that they would have preferred to remain in their home country. They emphasized that moving to Sweden requires a clear employment plan.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

After I completed, transcribed, and analyzed the interviews, the process of verification followed. Data for any study should be verified by peer review to clarify

researcher bias, member check, and ensure rich, thick descriptions (Creswell, 1998). I employed member checking and transferability to verify my findings. Using direct quotes from the transcribed interviews provided support and authenticity regarding questions asked to all participants.

Member Checking

Member checking was the method by which I verified respondents' data for regularity with the explanations made by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Member checking involved verifying the accuracy of information with each of the participants in the study. I conducted member checks before analyzing the transcripts. I informed participants at the start of each interview that they would receive a transcribed copy of their interview. After reviewing their transcribed copies, no participants requested any significant changes. To ensure optimal member checking, I asked open-ended questions as well as identical interview questions with occasional variations depending on responses. I did not influence or lead any participant to answer a question a certain way; everyone answered in the way they understood the question stated. I completed verbatim transcription of all audio-recorded data. When a participant's response was unclear, I asked them to give examples. Participants could read, write, and understand the English language.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research is the degree to which data and the resultant analysis can apply in other settings or contexts (Trochim, 2006). The data collection instrument was a semi-structured, open-ended interview approved by a Walden

University research reviewer and the IRB. After many revisions, the IRB approved the research questions for exploring the perceptions of factors hindering job integration and overqualification in Sweden. I validated conclusions by triangulation. I achieved transferability because respondents sporadically provided similar responses even though they were of diverse nationalities, professions, and academic backgrounds. There were nine participants from 7 different countries. The oldest participant was 60 years old and the youngest was 39 years old. Their length of stay in Sweden varied from 7 to 15 years.

Results

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to evaluate the lived experiences of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women as they integrated into the Swedish labor market with foreign education and professional experience. By examining Swedish labor integration policies, I wanted to understand why academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women struggled to utilize their foreign qualifications and professional experience. The study was qualitative with a focus on the lived experiences of obstacles perceived by academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women. There were three research questions that contributed to the results of this study.

Research Question 1

RQ1: How do academically qualified Black immigrant women perceive career opportunities in Sweden?

There were five themes that emerged in association to this research question: (a) reasons for moving to Sweden; (b) education and professional credentials; (c) perceived

ideas of Sweden before immigrating here; (d) factors that hindered integration into the Swedish labor market; and (e) definition of overqualification.

Reasons for moving to Sweden. Most participants moved to Sweden because of love (i.e., being in a relationship with a Swedish partner). However, P4, P7, and P9 moved to Sweden to be with family and provide better opportunities for their children.

Education and professional credentials. All participants were highly educated. They all had more than one degree in different academic areas and worked with their degree for many years in their home country. These women were professionally employed before moving to Sweden. P4 noted,

I hold a BL in law and an LLB from Nigeria and I was qualified as a lawyer before I moved to Sweden. I worked in Nigeria and Ghana with my law degree. I also hold a Master's in Education.

Preconceived ideas of Sweden. Most participants did not have preconceived ideas of Sweden. P1 explained,

In my plan to move to Sweden, I actually intended to apply to do my doctorate in social sciences with a focus on policy, so I was coming to Sweden to study so I did not have any pre-conceived ideas about the Swedish labor market, at least to start off with – my goal was to study and later work.

P1, P5, P8, and P9 did not have any preconceived ideas before their move to Sweden. P3 and P4 believed that moving to Sweden would be easy in terms of integration and quickly getting a job in their profession.

Factors that hinder academically and professional qualified Black immigrant women. P1 stated that the hindrance to integration was “the gap of transferring information. The language barrier and not learning Swedish quick enough to get into the labor market becomes a problem.” P1 clarified that though some international companies use English as the working language in Sweden, they continue to expect applicants to speak Swedish. There was a double standard regarding the use of the language. According to P2, other factors that hindered academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women included networking and knowing the right people, color, and place of origin. P2 emphasized that prejudice and biases about Black women’s foreign qualifications, country of origin, and educational institution were hindrances. P3, P4, P6, P7, and P9 noted Swedish language as a hindrance to integration and echoed that even if they studied the language, employment was uncertain. P8 and P6 spoke about discrimination and prejudice regarding names, ethnicity, and postal codes when applying for jobs.

Overqualification. Most participants believed that an employer’s use of the term *overqualification* was an excuse to avoid employing a foreign-born person. P1 stated, ...a recruiter telling me that I am overqualified for the position, is from my point of view a way of telling me the following: you may be qualified but we do not intend to employ you. It’s a way to employ someone else of their choice who is far less qualified and to use this as a reason/excuse. As a racialized woman this has been discriminatory as they would choose a less qualified Swede to the position. Many managers who are insecure do not want competition from someone more

qualified than them and they use this to sieve one out. Who decides what overqualification is? It's used to qualify actions taken. There is no such thing as being overqualified. It's just a way to discriminate in the labor market.

Research Question 2

RQ2: How do professionally qualified Black immigrant women perceive career opportunities in Sweden? I investigated how the Swedish Public Employment Services assisted academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women in their integration into the labor market with foreign degrees and professional qualifications. Three themes emerged regarding this research question: (a) plan to get a job in Sweden; (b) integration into society; and (c) improving job integration policies.

Plan to get a job in Sweden. P1 did independent, online research, called people/companies, and sent her job applications and curriculum vitae to various organizations. Most participants worked with the Swedish Public Employment Services and discovered that the agency did not provide the help they needed. P4 and P5 explained that they believed it would be easy to find work in Sweden as they were already professionals in their home country. However, they were sadly disappointed. All participants believed that they could continue to work in the same field or profession as in their home country.

Integration into society. The participants did not receive any help integrating into the society. P1 stated,

When I went to the Swedish Public Employment Services they informed me that with the education and the work experience I had, was difficult for them to help or

match me with a job in my area. Having heard this, I realized that their knowledge base in this field was lacking. They did not have an enough knowledge base to help me. They simply informed me that I needed to find my own way.

P2 echoed the same sentiment and stated,

I only had my husband. There was no information at all, regarding where to start. And the fact that I did not come as a refugee made it harder to integrate. I do not know, but I think so. I mean, how can people today talk about integrating in the society without giving us a chance to know what steps are needed for integration.

Through her husband's network, they were able to search for jobs that fit her foreign credentials. P2 continued,

I started learning Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), plus I decided to do my own research and wanted to get into a training program, however, when I contacted the school in Borås they told me that I was over-qualified for their training program. It was through the acquaintance of someone - a Swedish woman who was brutally honest with me is how I knew I had to change my strategy. She said: "first of all, you are unknown, you have no references, and you are from Africa. They do not trust the qualifications from Africa so they will never give you a training position." This was the first time I realized that my color and my skin played a role.

P2 reported feeling disappointed and frustrated at the same time; however, this conversation gave her the opportunity to challenged herself and move on. P2 went back

to school and studied human rights in Sweden. She sent her foreign qualifications to the higher education institute in Sweden to get an evaluation of her foreign degree.

Improving job integration policies. Participants believed that the Swedish Public Employment Services needed vast improvements. P1 noted,

I am critical of the Public Employment Services' officers because they are not qualified enough to coach people and give advice to different groups. So, you go there and they tell you that they do not have the competence and capacity. They need to have people who are niched to each field. If you are a doctor or a lawyer there are people there who can help you get something in your field. The government is not putting enough resources to help qualified people to get licenses to be able to practice as a doctor, lawyer, and dentist – so this is one thing that the government needs to focus on. Perhaps decide for example that English-speaking work places should be able to allow people to work there without having the pressure to learn the language first. Also, when a newly landed qualified immigrant comes they should already begin to get the help they need to begin the process of job integration so one can match people with the right job specification. Many Swedish people view a Swedish degree as being higher than a foreign degree, especially from a developing country or continent, like Africa is not considered at all high.

P2 and P3 believed that the government should encourage companies to give immigrants a chance to work and network to show what they are able to do. Immigrants could learn language skills and terminology in the work place. All the women concurred

that it was important for every immigrant to learn Swedish language. It is helpful to learn the language the right way.

P2 noted that those who had never been in school were often in language classes with those who had schooling. The classes moved too slowly for those who wanted to speed up the process of learning. A reevaluation of this practice should include separation of groups of nonacademics and academics. This reevaluation should reorganize Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) classes according to different learning levels. P2 concluded that it was important to have equal opportunities for everyone, especially because academically and professionally qualified immigrants are forgotten by the government in relation to the refugees.

P5 and P6 believed that people could obtain jobs in their profession by communicating with someone who already worked at the same company. It is extremely difficult for new people who have no connections to get jobs. Employment should depend on qualifications and competence. P7 and P8 recommended improving nondiscrimination policies in the work place and encouraging businesses to give foreign education and experience a chance to develop.

Research Question 3

RQ3: What context do they give to career opportunities considering their personal experiences in their home country? I investigated the context of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women in career opportunities in Sweden in relation to their personal experiences in their home country? Two themes emerged

regarding this research question: (a) likelihood of immigration with current knowledge of situation in Sweden; and (b) additional comments.

Likelihood of immigration with current knowledge of situation in Sweden.

Most participants did not regret moving to Sweden. Given the same opportunity, they would make the same decision again. Their experiences in Sweden made them tougher and stronger. However, P1 explained,

...my situation was a little different. My husband had passed away and this is why I moved to Sweden. However, knowing what I know now, would I still want to move to Sweden? Probably not. I had a good life in Kenya. We had a good life in Kenya.

Additional comments. Most participants concurred that job search experiences in Sweden were very frustrating. Their self-confidence diminished and forming friendships and relationships in Sweden was not easy. Many spoke about seeing close friends and colleagues go back to school to study something new or start their own business. P8 stated, "I do not think I have been transformed from my experience in Sweden. I have rather become lonely and frustrated instead."

Summary

Chapter 4 provided phenomenological insights from nine women. The interview responses reflected the lived experiences of Black immigrant women as they integrated into the Swedish labor market with foreign education and professional experience. By examining Swedish labor integration policies, I wanted to understand why academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women struggled to utilize their foreign

qualifications and professional experience. The participants lived in Sweden for at least 7 and most for over 9 years; however, during the first 7 years in Sweden, they were unable to get a job that reflected their foreign qualifications and experiences. Results of the study indicated that Sweden needs to reevaluate the job integration process. Many of the women found it difficult to network with others in their community or field because they did not know how to begin looking for the necessary contacts. They experienced discrimination regarding their names, addresses, and foreign qualifications. Many of the women felt that information was not readily available regarding the steps to begin the integration process. Two of the nine participants moved back to their respective countries because they found the society too harsh and cruel. The other seven either went back to school to study a new field, found an unrelated job, or started a business. Chapter 5 will provide further interpretation of the findings, recommendations for future studies, implications for social change, and conclusions.

Chapter 5: Interpretations, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Introduction

“And if the word integration means anything, this is what it means: that we, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it. For this is your home, my friend, do not be driven from it; great men (and women) have done great things here, and will again...” – James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

An essayist, playwright, and novelist, James Baldwin was an insightful and iconic writer of books such as *The Fire Next Time* and *Another Country* (Bokus, 2018). Baldwin broke new literary ground with the examination and authentication of racial and social issues in his many works. He was particularly well known for his essays on the Black experience in America. By the early 1970s, Baldwin was despondent over the racial situation in America. He witnessed too much violence in the previous decade, notably the assassinations of Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr., because of racial hatred (Bokus, 2018).

The current integration of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women in the labor market in Sweden is a result of several factors. Baldwin's despair over America during his time is similar to what many academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women experience in Sweden: despair for the breakdown in the labor integration structure, despair that their voices continue to go on unheard, and despair for misunderstanding and ignorance regarding foreign qualifications, experience, and competence.

My purpose in this qualitative phenomenological study was to evaluate the lived experiences of Black immigrant women as they integrated the Swedish labor market with foreign education and professional experience. By examining Swedish labor integration policies, I wanted to understand why academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women struggled to use their foreign qualifications and professional experience. The following questions guided the research:

1. How do academically qualified Black immigrant women perceive career opportunities in Sweden?
2. How do professionally qualified Black immigrant women perceive career opportunities in Sweden?
3. What context do they give to career opportunities considering their personal experiences in their home country?

Interview data regarding these questions produced statements that resulted in the creation of four conceptual frames of analysis with fundamental themes. The population was academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women who lived in Sweden for at least 7 years. I selected participants via a snowball sampling technique with collaboration from two immigrant-serving forums in Sweden. These forums gave me permission to contact participants who were their clientele. I interviewed a total of nine participants.

I analyzed data using techniques recommended by Creswell (2003). Interviews resulted in a thick description of reasons for immigrating to Sweden, types of job, experiences with job agencies, and career opportunities in relation to personal

experiences in home countries. Statements from participants' interview responses supported my analysis. I present a full description and interpretation of the results in this chapter. I also provide recommendations for immigrant-serving organizations, the regional governments, and foreign-competent immigrants. Finally, I present recommendations for further studies and implications for social change.

The recordings and transcripts as shown in Chapter 4 influenced my frames of analysis. The conclusions were the result of analysis of five topics related to the first research question, three topics related to the second research question, and two topics related to the third research question. The conclusions reflected the four frames: (a) reason for immigrating to Sweden; (b) type of job; (c) experience with job agency; and (d) career opportunities in relation to personal experiences in the home country.

Labor Market Disassociation

Over the past 20 years, a higher share of humanitarian migration to Sweden occurred. This form of migration slowed the process of integration into the labor market. Different degrees of labor market integration may result more from differences in language proficiency than from cultural differences (Lemaitre, 2010). Refugees tended to be slower in achieving equality with the native-born population because immigration was obligatory, because of the traumatic nature of the refugee experience and its aftermath, and because the economic motivation for migration is less prominent (Lemaitre, 2010). However, the group of highly academically and professionally qualified immigrants who came to Sweden differ from refugees. This group already arrived with knowledge and qualifications to contribute to the economic growth of the country. The role of the labor

market board was once to help, encourage, and improve the welfare and safety of those looking for a job, working in a job, or retired from a job. Organizations strove to improve working conditions, increase opportunities for profitable employment, and ensure work-related benefits and rights. However, this mandate changed. What was once available to the *whole* (i.e., all people living in Sweden) now assists the large influx of refugees coming into the country by dealing with workers who are ready for the labor market (i.e., requiring no services other than those provided by the Labor Board). The responsibility for immigrant-specific skill deficiencies (e.g., language competence, applicability of foreign qualifications) now lies elsewhere (Lemaitre, 2010). Many academically and professionally qualified immigrants who immigrated to Sweden now struggle to integrate into the labor market because there are no visible resources to help them.

I used a phenomenological method of inquiry to understand the lived experiences of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women in Sweden as they attempted to integrate into the Swedish labor market with foreign education and professional experience. I chose this method because the topic was a new and growing phenomenon that researchers needed to address. Individuals' concerns and interests were best understood through the lived experiences of my sample group. My hope is that the results from this research will increase awareness and that the findings may influence policy makers to increase career opportunities for academically and professionally qualified Black women, enabling them to contribute to Swedish society.

I invited nine participants fitting the requirements for this study. The women were academically and professionally qualified Black immigrants who lived in Sweden for at

least 7 years and had at least one foreign degree and work experience from their home country. They relocated to Sweden and believed that their education and professional competence would help them find a job in the Swedish labor market. They had a good understanding of written and spoken English language. Research questions focused largely on identifying how these academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women integrated into the Swedish labor market with their foreign education and professional experience. I gathered rich descriptions of their lived experiences and factors that hindered them from integrating into the Swedish labor market.

The findings from the interviews revealed that these women had negative experiences of labor market integration. All of them went to school to study the Swedish language and still struggled to obtain a job that met their academic requirements and professional expertise. These women did not receive any help, recognize any visible information explaining how to go about obtaining help, or understand the steps necessary to begin the process of labor market integration. All participants experienced some form of discrimination. They believed that hindrances to employment included a lack of contacts and discrimination based on their national origin. Discouraged and disillusioned, a few of these women went back to school to study in a new field to try to integrate once more into the labor market. A few returned to their home country and a few decided to start companies of their own.

Interpretations from Interviews

The intent of this study was to provide insight into the lived experiences of academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women after moving to

Sweden and what factors hindered them from integrating into the Swedish labor market. I identified six key areas in the interview data: Swedish language, validation and recognition, employer demand, discrimination, networks, job search, and coordination among integration actors.

Swedish Language

All participants believed that knowing the language of the host country is a good idea. Language is a key factor in the process of social and economic integration.

Language helps form networks and should facilitate employment. Sweden provides language training services for free (OECD, 2016). It is a mandatory component in the introduction plan for integration and coordinated by the public employment service.

Challenges concerning language training included: assurance varied substantially across the country, SFI was either insufficient or instructors ignored the levels of education of both migrants and refugees, and segregation in schools and housing limited interactions with native Swedes and language development (OECD, 2016).

Validation and Recognition

My sample group reported that employers often disregarded education acquired outside the host country. Over 40% of immigrants in Sweden are highly educated and are overqualified for their jobs, compared to just over 15% of the native-born population (Eurostat, 2016). Overqualified immigrants do not receive as much public support for training or education to find a job that fits their degree and work experience. However, starting 2013, the Higher Education Council is available to assess and translate foreign degrees (Högskolverket, 2016). Nevertheless, challenges are still present (e.g., lack of

validation of competences, lack of proof of a degree, or partial completion) and information regarding resources are not visible or widely recognized (OECD, 2016). Some of the participants in the research sample group voiced their dissatisfaction regarding the lack of information needed in order to use this resource. They discovered it through communication with other foreigners.

Employer Demand

Employers do not always consider employing immigrants if they believe the skills required to do a certain job are lacking. There is a risk of aversion and uncertainty because there is a strict employment protection legislation in Sweden for permanent employment, which means the risk of hiring an immigrant with uncertainty skills may be a bad long-term business decision (SACO, 2016). The public employment service provided programs that make it slightly easier for employers to take a chance with professionally and academically qualified persons (e.g., step-in-jobs, new start jobs, apprenticeships for new arrivals, and applied basic year programs) (SACO, 2016). However, there are challenges to this also. These include limited use of initiatives because employers have little interest in giving professionally and academically qualified immigrants a chance to work, employment protection legislation for permanent jobs results in risk for employers that limit qualified immigrants' employment opportunities, and poor information limits employers from fully understanding qualified immigrants and their relative work experience (OECD, 2016).

Discrimination

Discrimination exists in two forms. Statistical discrimination is a lack of information about a person's work experience or academic qualifications that prevents them from being hired by employers. This type of discrimination also reflects prejudices, which is similar to taste-based discrimination. This type of discrimination occurs when an employer hires a person of a foreign origin (name, race, address). Sweden introduced a penalty for discrimination in 2008, but many immigrants are not aware of this penalty and the process of invoking their rights may be foreign for them. Key challenges regarding this issue include the fact that anti-discrimination laws are difficult to implement and discrimination is difficult to prove. Implicit discrimination comes in many forms that are also difficult to identify. Some employers prefer to hire only via specific channels that are unfamiliar to immigrants, which makes discrimination difficult to challenge (OECD, 2016). The participants mentioned experiences of discrimination regarding their qualifications, name, race, and speaking the Swedish language.

Networks and Job Search

One of the first agencies immigrants visit when searching for a job in Sweden is the public employment service; however, there are relatively few employers that post vacancies with this office. Many employers fill vacancies through informal networks (i.e., contacts, friends, relations, and existing employees). This leaves newly arrived qualified immigrants at a disadvantage because they do not have networks to help them integrate into the labor market. A 2010 reform introduced an *introduction guide* for newly arrived immigrants. This guide was a tool to help immigrants during their first

years in Sweden. However, the guide did not work and many challenges emerged: (a) the job search included very few vacancies from public employment services; (b) network contact for immigrants regarding employment opportunities was minimal; (c) the guide offered assorted services that seemed confusing to new arrivals; and (d) the guide did not fit the needs of professionally and academically qualified individuals (OECD, 2016).

Coordination Among Integration Actors

In conclusion, the integration of qualified immigrants into the labor market involves many stakeholders, such as the public employment service, municipalities that help with language classes and civic orientation, the migration board, the county administrative boards, and the social insurance agency. The involvement of multiple stakeholders can create several challenges regarding coordination and support. Other challenges include delays and duplication of efforts between the varying municipalities.

Theoretical Considerations

Articulating the theoretical assumptions of a study forces the researcher to address questions of *why* and *how*; the researcher transitions from merely describing a phenomenon to generalizing about various aspects of that phenomenon (Swanson, 2014). According to Swanson (2014), theories describe, forecast, and comprehend facts and experiences; they confront and encompass present knowledge within the parameters of analytical norms. A theoretical framework is the structure that supports and acts as a foundation for a research study. The theoretical foundation that formed the base of this research was social integration theory. The key element of this theory is that social

integration depends on solidarity bonds (i.e., the bonds of mechanical and organic solidarity that strengthen the cords of attraction and unite citizens within a society).

The granting of permanent residential status to academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women by the Swedish government was a function of social integration. Academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women struggled to find jobs that corresponded with their foreign qualifications and professional work experiences in Sweden. Durkheim (1984) described society as the cumulative consciousness of people and argued that social integration was based on solidarity bonds. Blau (1960) argued that social integration succeeds if strong cords of attraction unite the members of a group. The Swedish Migration Board is the authority responsible for regulating immigration to Sweden. The Swedish Migration Board vision is based on global migration emphasizing social integration.

More and more people in developing and developed countries consider immigrating or emigrating to Sweden. Per Keely (2009), immigration has always been part of human history for different reasons. All immigrants encounter barriers and must face the challenge of integration in a new country. Integration has many layers and definitions. In Sweden, the government is responsible for creating guidelines for Swedish integration policy. The Swedish government wants everyone to be a part of the community, but academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women experience many obstacles when integrating into the labor market with foreign qualifications and professional experience (Carlsson & Rooth, 2014).

My research participants were academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women who migrated to Sweden and were unable to integrate into the labor market using their foreign qualifications and professional experience. I used the theoretical premise of social integration theory to examine why academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant women struggled to integrate into the Swedish labor market. Social integration theory was helpful as I searched for a better understanding of Swedish labor market experiences of these immigrant women.

I could not fully understand the personal stories of these women by employing a theoretical framework alone. Theoretical frameworks provide a stepping stone to identifying the theory in the research. I analyzed discussions and my findings suggested ideas for policy improvements that may facilitate positive social change for qualified immigrants seeking work in Sweden.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Future Policy: Swedish Language

Quality of SFI. The credentials required to lecture in SFI classes are less rigorous than those for other lecturers in the educational system. The government should invest in the advancement for competences of language lecturers. P2 mentioned having a personal experience in which she was in the same SFI class as others immigrants who had never been in a classroom setting.

Flexibility of SFI. Learning the Swedish language is more useful when combined with vocational training or work. P8 and P7 believed learning the language while

working would help fast-track professional and academically qualified immigrants into the labor market.

Labor market focus. The labor market reforms of 2010 positioned commencement of new arrivals under the protection of the public employment service to improve labor market integration (OECD, 2016). SFI classes received the most funding for new arrivals but remained the responsibility of the municipalities. In some cases, the importance of providing a language supplement was inadequate to meet the goal of labor market entry. The government needs to reconsider and reevaluate this approach.

Recommendations for Future Policy: Validation and Recognition

Coordination between validation and the Public Employment Service. Public Employment Service case workers are responsible for recommending new arrivals to the Council of Higher Education. This is one of the most important components of integration as it confirms qualified immigrants' skills and gives them opportunities to learn information necessary to succeed in Sweden. Immigrants' validation must be accepted early by the Council of Higher Education, so they can follow an appropriate introduction plan and find the right job.

Assistance to qualified migrants who take low-skilled jobs. In Sweden, once academically and professionally qualified immigrants gain work that does not utilize their qualifications, they are no longer technically unemployed. This disqualifies them from receiving help from the public employment service. Without support highly qualified immigrants must attempt to identify appropriate bridging courses to gain employment in the area in which they are competent.

Collaboration with employers. Employer distrust of the value of qualifications immigrants hold is a substantial difficulty for immigrants trying to enter the labor market without former experience in Sweden. Reliable authentication of competences should occur to help those arriving into the labor market. This should involve forming relationships and building trust with the varying stakeholders involved in this process.

Bridging courses (complementary education). The government allocates additional resources to support professionally and academically qualified immigrants, especially teachers, lawyers, doctors, nurses, and dentists. This helps them work in their given profession without having to study something completely different. However, the government needs to expand this service beyond these professions to include all professions.

Recommendations for Future Policy: Employer Demand

Awareness of existing initiatives. Employers should be aware of the information available to them regarding ways that both employers and professionally and academically qualified immigrants can benefit from working together to solve problems.

Collaboration with employers. The government needs to cooperate more with employers by building relationships, consulting to exchange information between stakeholders involved in helping qualified candidates succeed in the labor market, and through different subsidies.

Encouragement of employer recruitment. Employer demand for migrant skills is not popular. Employers lack or misinterpret knowledge of the skills of qualified

immigrants. The government should provide better identification and selection tools for qualified migrant candidates.

Hiring of migrants in the public sector. Sweden should increase employment of professionally and academically qualified immigrants in the public sector to increase their daily contact with native-born Swedes. This could increase the visibility of qualified immigrants in public life and lead to the exchange of ideas, positive traditions and culture. Communication may result in the creation of foreign-born role models for natives and foreign-born youth. Working in the public sector may give qualified immigrants the opportunity to develop their skills.

Recommendations for Future Policy: Discrimination

Intensifying the rewards to employers for nondiscrimination. Anti-discrimination tools in other countries include policy mechanisms such as diversity agreements and diversity labels. Diversity agreements are voluntary pledges whereby private companies promise to encourage diversity and equal opportunities at their office. Diversity labels are documents through which employers assess diversity measures.

Increase consciousness of discrimination. Anti-discrimination laws are not easy to impose. Discrimination may not be obvious or the person may be unaware they are discriminating against others. Therefore, it is important to raise awareness of the many faces of discrimination by increasing public understanding of the phenomenon.

Signs and signals. Statistical discrimination results from insufficient information about a person's motivation and skills. Tools that can allow academically and professionally qualified immigrants to signal the worth of their foreign degree and work

experience include enrollment in prominent and selective programs, clubs, networks or groups. This may help overcome discrimination that stems from information asymmetries.

Tackling stereotypes. Bridging race and culture differences through networking and social clubs can bring academically and professionally qualified immigrants in contact with employers through activities such as mentoring and internships. This may help avoid stereotyping that often supports discrimination.

Vanquishing doubt amid employers. I recommend improving the flow of information regarding wage subsidies and employer tax relief related to new jobs for immigrants. This may help employers understand policy and participate more in such programs. *Step-in-jobs* and *new start jobs* help compensate qualified immigrant for a limited time. These programs give immigrants their first work experience in Sweden to make integration in the labor market slightly easier. These programs also ease employers' doubt in the knowledge and skills of the immigrant by allowing them to hire employees on a trial basis. These programs give employers a chance to know the qualified immigrant better, which effectively combats discrimination.

Recommendations for Future Policy: Networking

The role of introduction guides. Introduction guides need improvement. The information should be readily available for newly arrived academically and professionally qualified immigrants so they are aware of social support services and job search support to help them with labor market integration.

Establishment of individualized career guidance and development. Career guidance and development for educated immigrants who work at jobs that are lower than their education level can improve labor market productivity. Guidance may help immigrants understand their abilities and qualifications so they can seek jobs that fit their degree or work experience. Information should be available regarding the Swedish labor market, educational system, and the qualifications recognition system.

Recommendations for Future Policy: Integration Stakeholders

Policy coordination. The migration board originally provided integration guidelines to different municipalities; however, this is now the role of the public employment service. The public employment service is still not confident in this role. A provision to support and strengthen the public employment service is necessary.

Conventional versus project-based interventions. I recommend an increase in project-based intervention rather than conventional intervention to increase knowledge for labor market integration. Projects must be well-designed to be consistently effective in the integration process.

Implications to Social Change

The vision, mission, and goals of Walden University support the pursuit of positive social change (i.e., a conscious development, incorporation, and implementation of ideas, incentives, and actions to promote the self-respect, self-worth, and advancement of everyone regardless of origin) (Walden University, 2017). My mission and goals in this research were to increase awareness of qualified immigrants' employment struggles and to identify recommendations that may increase career opportunities for academically

and professionally qualified Black women, enabling them to make valuable contributions to Swedish society.

I identified many positive social change implications in this study. Firstly, nine participants contributed information-rich data and thick descriptions regarding lived experiences of integration into the Swedish labor market. Their statements cultivated understanding of the hindrances they experienced during Swedish job integration. Nine participants from seven different countries provided insights regarding their reasons for immigrating to Sweden, types of job, and experiences with the public job agency. From a phenomenological perspective, I must share their first-hand lived experiences of job integration and career opportunities related to personal experiences in their home country with other academics and professionally qualified immigrants in other locations. Results from this research may provide a framework to the Swedish government and public and private organizations to direct future research, enhance labor market integration opportunities for academically and professionally qualified Black women and other immigrants, and inform the public about the current debate regarding modifications to labor integration policies.

In the beginning, I focused this research on academically and professionally qualified Black women; however, labor market integration is a problem for people beyond this group. Integration and employment are challenges for every qualified immigrant who moved to Sweden. Openly discussing this challenge could begin positive change that helps immigrants who have education acquire jobs that match their qualifications and training. This is the beginning of social change.

My plan is to disseminate the findings of this study in academic and nonacademic forums. Target groups include government immigration officials and policymakers who need to reexamine job integration policies to make them more inclusive. My participants realized that they were not fully prepared for the realities of the labor market in Sweden. They suggested that there is room for improvement and a need for intervention in integration policy. By actively including academically and professionally qualified immigrants in labor market integration, the implications for social change include increased cultural diversity and the inclusion of skilled workers.

Cultural Diversity

Immigrants increase diversity, which is beneficial to restaurants, cultural centers, and international merchandisers, because it fosters new ideas and visions. Hiring immigrants helps diversify a workforce. Especially when employers closely examine hiring practices, hiring immigrants can help keep businesses comply with anti-discrimination laws. By diversifying the workforce, employers may gain broader perspectives and new knowledge from people of different cultures.

Skilled Workers

Immigrants can offer skills and knowledge that may be scarce in the host country. They offer new ideas that may work more efficiently than those in place in the host country. For example, immigrants may bring new ideas to the health industry, food industry, or service industry by working with organizations on development. This research problem was important to immigrant-serving organization for three reasons: (a) organizations need to reinvent services and programs to allow academically and

professionally qualified immigrants chances to meet clients and work to bolster their job integration process; (b) immigrant-serving organizations need to improve services that inform academically and professionally qualified immigrants about steps to integrate into society (e.g., an effective step-by-step guide); and (c) there is a need to confirm and counter assumptions about academically and professionally qualified immigrants. My hope is that this research will contribute to scholarship and practical discourse regarding social development, valuable network research, and the implementation to feasible labor market integration recommendations.

Conclusions

The labor market integration of academically and professionally qualified immigrants is a complex problem. I conducted this study to evaluate the lived experiences of Black immigrant women with foreign education and professional experience as they integrated into the Swedish labor market. These women lived in Sweden for at least 7 years. There were three research questions and ten interview questions that guided this process. Perceptions of obstacles to job integration reflected four themes: (a) reasons for immigrating to Sweden; (b) type of job; (c) experience with the public job agency; and (d) career opportunities related to personal experiences in participants' home country. There was consensus among research participants that more consideration, services, and programs were necessary to effectively assist academically and professionally qualified immigrants with job integration.

During the research, I focused on Black immigrant women in Sweden; however, through the course of the research I used the term *qualified immigrants* because it was

clear that my sample group's experiences were like those of immigrants in general. Labor market integration is important for academically and professionally qualified immigrants. My hope is that the recommendations that resulted from my research findings may positively influence future labor market integration. Results from this research may provide a framework for the Swedish government and public and private organizations to direct future research, enhance labor market integration opportunities for academically and professionally qualified Black women and other immigrants, and inform the public about current propositions for the modification of labor integration policies.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date: _____

Location: _____

Name of Interviewer:

Name of Interviewee:

1. Let me begin by asking the reasons for moving to Sweden and how long you have lived in Sweden?
2. What are your educational and professional credentials? For how long did you work in your country of origin and in what capacity?
3. What were your preconceived ideas of what Sweden was like or what your life in Sweden would be like?
4. In your opinion what factors hindered you, an academically and professionally qualified Black immigrant woman from integrating into the labor market in Sweden.
5. What does overqualification mean to you?
6. What kind of plan did you have regarding how you hoped you would get a job once you moved to Sweden?
7. What sort of help did you receive regarding your integration into the society?

8. In your opinion how can job integration policies be improved on, to aid and assist immigrants who have foreign qualifications and professional experience integrate into the labor market?
9. If you knew then what you know now about Sweden would your decision to relocate to Sweden be different?
10. Is there anything you would like to share or do you have any questions?