



**An Exploratory Study of Lived Experiences of Black
African Highly Qualified, Highly Skilled Migrant
Women's Career Mobility in England's Public Sector
Organisations**

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(PhD)**

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i. Declaration

I certify that the material contained in this dissertation is my original work completed for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at the Faculty of Business and Law of De Montfort University. I confirm that this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification at any other university.

ii. Acknowledgements

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iii. Abstract

This qualitative research explores how Black African Highly Qualified Highly Skilled Migrant (HQHSM) women's lived experiences have influenced their identities and likelihood of attaining leadership roles in England's public sector organisations. Social identity, self-categorisation, and personal identity theories, fused with intersectionality, were employed as lenses for examination. Applying these lenses holistically expanded the contextual views of multiple identities interplaying as the participants experienced juxtaposition of supposed privilege (having a job unlike other migrant groups) and disadvantage (career progression challenges), paying attention to social group re-socialisation, identity meaning-making and reconstruction as drivers for career trajectories. It focused on illuminating the participants' journeys, from restricted stay visa holders to British citizens (acquiring similar rights and freedoms as natives).

Through an interpretivist epistemology and constructivist ontology, semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirty-one first-generation Black African HQHSM women in public sector organisations in England. Thereafter, a reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) was conducted, which revealed three career trajectories that resulted from how the women responded to their challenges. The three trajectories revealed were: (1) Self-inclusion into leadership advancement to more senior roles, (2) Entrepreneurial orientation, and (3) Tactical disengagement. The research found that though the precarious conditions in the early days became the source of camaraderie and strength, the women's sense of self and personal identity reconstruction eventually influenced their trajectory.

This research contributes to the extension of the social identity approach; i.e., Social Identity Theory (SIT), Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT) and personal identity theory, to foreground how Black African women have navigated the challenges and intersecting identities they were assigned upon their arrival in the UK, and their experiences in organisations in which prior research indicated they were more likely to be deskilled, despite their high qualifications and skills. Additionally, it contributes to scholarship on the impact of international recruitment on the careers of Global South employees. Furthermore, it acts as a catalyst for more leadership and organisational studies researchers to examine this group's career progression and self-inclusion into leadership positions.

iv. Keywords

Identity, Highly Qualified Highly Skilled Migrant Women, Self-Inclusion, Intersectionality, Interpretivism, Social Constructionism, Leadership, Organisational Studies, Migration.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Chapter overview

Migration is a multidimensional reality of significant relevance for the sustainable development of countries of origin, transit, and destination (UN Global Compact for Migration, 2018; McAdam, 2019). People migrate for several reasons, including fleeing war, poverty, political unrest, and economic reasons, such as filling the human capital needs of the migrants' destination countries. The latter is the focus of this research project, specifically Black African Highly Qualified Highly Skilled Migrant (HQHSM) women, as detailed further in this thesis. In the context of this research, 'Black' refers to the generic ethnic identity of people with dark-coloured skin, typically of African origin. It indicates a common sense of identity, community, and history; self-identification as Black expresses feelings of origin, connection, colonialism, and cultural dispossession, and noting that Black people vary in various hues and are predominantly brown (Laws, 2020). This choice is taken in full awareness that there are no universally agreed parameters for who is included in the terms 'Black people' or even 'White people' (Agyemang, Bhopal and Bruijnzeels, 2005; Maghbouleh, Schachter and Flores, 2022).

The research into people within non-white communities, and critical research in general, is frequently hampered by the necessity to qualify its subjects in terms of their racial, cultural, socioeconomic, religious, and ethnic origin. There have been many debates on the subject with differing research positions, the details of which are outside the scope of this study. When defining Black for some researchers, skin colour is not the sole point of focus; for example, Rigg and Trehan (1999) shifted their focus from Black as a descriptor of skin colour to a shared experience of marginalisation and being the 'other' in Britain. 'Black' was expanded to include African, African-Caribbean, South Asian, and Latino origin. Drawing on Mirza (1997), they referred to women living in the United Kingdom as members of the postcolonial migrant body. This study focuses on Black people of African descent who were born and initially educated in Africa before migrating to the United Kingdom as adults. It is also conducted with consciousness of the criticism, limitations, and potential counter

arguments to 'Black' as a depiction of Black women, as opposed to more favourable terms such as 'ethnic minority' and 'people of colour'. The term 'Black' is used with the understanding that not all black and brown people self-identify as Black or any other label. Similarly, not all Africans are identifiably Black; for example, White and Asian Africans and some Arabic people from the African part of the Middle Eastern and North Africa (MENA) region (Agyemang, Bhopal and Bruijnzeels, 2005; McIntosh, 2018; Maghbouleh, Schachter and Flores, 2022). It is acknowledged that the concept of Black may exclude people who do not self-identify with the parameters outlined above (Rigg and Trehan, 1999; Liao, Wei and Yin, 2020).

Many highly skilled professionals travel from their country of birth to fill the labour shortages in a different country, especially the Global North, developed countries or the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries as they are commonly described (Iredale, 2001; Zwysen and Demireva, 2018a) . However, the upward mobility and careers trajectory of many of these HQHSMs in destination countries vary significantly (IOM, 2019; European Commission, 2021). The understanding of these variations is hampered by a lack of coordinated systems to track migrants' career journey and impact in their destination countries (Nathan, 2014). The rationale for the research is outlined in the next section.

1.2. Research rationale

This study is relevant and topical as it addresses an under-researched area of the crucial role of HQHSMs in filling the shortage of critical staff in some of the public sector organisations in the UK, as well as addressing how the internationally recruited workforce is treated upon arrival and in the organisations they join. This chapter introduces the research, begins with the context of the study, then covers the drivers for this PhD, ultimately leading to the research question and objectives. Thereafter, some key terms that might be unfamiliar to some readers are defined. The chapter culminates in the thesis' overall structure.

The study explores the movement of Black African HQHSM women who have settled in England and work in public sector organisations, regardless of whether they are employed substantively or contracted through external agencies. It examines how their settlement impacted their career progression into leadership positions; specifically, the drivers and barriers to seeking promotion into senior decision-making leadership positions (HSMP Forum, 2008; Van Den Bergh and Du Plessis, 2012; Home Office Research and Analysis, 2014; UK Migration Advisory Committee, 2015; Debebe *et al.*, 2016; Neil and Domingo, 2016; O'neil, Fleury and Foresti, 2016; OECD, 2017; Vinnicombe, Doldor and Sealy, 2018; Kossek and Buzzanell, 2018; Home Office, 2019b). The rationale for selecting Black African HQHSM women is detailed below.

The United Kingdom's reliance on international recruitment

The use of international staff in filling the critical human capital shortage has been at the forefront of the UK's economic policy and politics for many years. However, there remains no concerted effort to understand this population, a challenge which the UK Migration Advisory Committee (2019a) and Manning (2020) have conceded in recent high-profile reviews and research. Other research has argued for the importance of international recruitment and highlighted the challenges; for example, Buchan and colleagues contend that:

International recruitment is a key source of new employees. As acknowledged in the NHS Long Term Plan, this will continue to be critical to delivering the workforce required, although it is severely hampered by broader migration policy. There is currently no unified government approach to international recruitment in England. A more strategic and "joined-up" strategy, encompassing government health agencies, the Home Office, regulators, and businesses, is essential, and it must be included in broader national health workforce planning (Buchan *et al.*, 2019, p. 3).

Some UK public sector organisations are heavily dependent on international staff recruitment. For example, the health and social care industry recruits highly skilled professionals from countries outside the UK (Buchan *et al.*, 2019; NHS Employers, 2022). In their 'Long Term Plan', the NHS leaders admit that the crisis in staff shortages and that international recruitment is crucial to boosting total workforce levels to meet demand. Nonetheless, it is often hampered by hostile migration policies and Brexit concerns

(Alderwick and Dixon, 2019). At the time of this research, neither the UK government nor the NHS have a consistent international recruitment policy.

The career mobility of internationally recruited, highly skilled staff, and their trajectories once in the UK, remains an enigma with little evidence of career or leadership development tailored to this population (Trehan, 2007; Klingler and Marckmann, 2016; Miller, 2018), and seemingly less importance to policymakers and researchers alike. Buchan *et al.* (2019) revealed that staff retention has worsened since 2011, and vacancies and turnover rates have increased post-Brexit. This research is both timely and necessary, particularly as this scenario continued to change throughout the duration of the study, with the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating the problem and pushing international recruitment even higher up on the agenda in key positions in public sector organisations. Furthermore, despite being a critical human resource, there appears to be a shortage of organisational behavioural research into career progression and the impact of these HQHSMs in organisations in the country of arrival or Host Countries (HCs).

The existence of ethnic hierarchies in public sector organisations

One of the primary drivers for selecting this group is to help further explore the purported issues of ethnic hierarchies within organisations, and how they prevail in multicultural societies like the UK. Ethnic hierarchies refers to the social distance between dominant and ethnic minority groups based on criteria such as race and skin colour (Hagendoorn, 1993a; Hagendoorn *et al.*, 1998; Theorin, 2019). These hierarchies place white people at the top, Black people at the bottom and other skin tones in between, signifying the order in which opportunities for progression to leadership positions would be made available (Hagendoorn, 1993a, 1993b; Gold, 2004; Zwysen and Demireva, 2018a). In many societies, the dominant society's values (not always the majority) are used to differentiate and evaluate intergroup and social anchors for a hierarchical group structure. A racial hierarchy has historically been a system of stratification based on the belief that some racial groupings are superior to others. Throughout history, these racial hierarchies have existed, and have even been institutionalised in legislation, such as the Nuremberg Laws in Nazi Germany, the American Jim Crow laws, the British empire's domination of colonies and

other protectorates, and apartheid in South Africa (Hagendoorn, 1993b; Kleinpenning, 1993; Mandalaywala, Amodio and Rhodes, 2018). As reminders of these historical undertakings remain, race theorists have frequently conceded that marginalised groups possess a degree of agency (Nkomo, 2021). However, they understand that even if minority group members improve their quality of life, education, and income, and even if they reside in affluent regions and have gainful employment, they are not free from segregation and discrimination (Gold, 2004; Kaye, 2012; Virdee and McGeever, 2018).

Research has demonstrated that multi-ethnic cultures tend to form ethnic hierarchies based on ethnic and racial prejudice, and ingroup preference and stereotyping play an important role in establishing hierarchies (Hagendoorn *et al.*, 1998; Snellman and Ekehammar, 2005; Zwysen and Demireva, 2018a). Ingroup favouritism, based on stereotypes and intergroup prejudices, motivates people's demand for emotional security and self-enhancement (Turner, Brown and Tajfel, 1979). A stereotype can be understood in heavily biased persons as an automatically activated cognitive shortcut for understanding information about other social groups with great resistance to change and conflict (Vinkenburg *et al.*, 2011). However, it is worth noting that stereotypes are not triggered to the same level, and do not always lead to negative outcomes.

In the UK, researchers such as Zwysen and Demireva (2018a, 2018b) found evidence of ethnic hierarchies and ethnic penalties, with Black women most likely to be found at the bottom of these implicit structures. These ethnic hierarchy scholars claim that there appeared to be a systematic tendency to assign the primary group (ingroup) the first rank, which may represent the adoption of its lifestyle and ideas and is a technique for obtaining status and social acceptance. Northern Europeans appear to be ranked first, followed by Eastern and Southern Europeans, Asians, Middle Eastern, then African populations ranked bottom (Hagendoorn, 1993a). Outgroups tend to be typically ranked further away from the ingroup, depending on what is socially and culturally acceptable in the ingroup. In their study of 150 non-psychology students in Sweden, Snellman and Ekehammar's (2005) examination of ethnic group rankings revealed the extent to which outgroups were seen as culturally atypical. They argued that these results were based partly on the participants'

multiple ethnicities and their various cultural beliefs when they migrated to the area; the community was an obvious choice for creating ethnic hierarchies. According to the study, the target groups (Italians and Latin Americans) came in second after the Swedes; the three lowest ranked in the ethnic hierarchies were African and Middle Eastern countries. Cultural similarities and time spent in the country appear to be two of the most important factors in determining a group's place in the local ethnic hierarchy. When a group is thought to be closely knit and to lead a patriarchal lifestyle, it is ranked lower in ethnic hierarchies, which indicates that the factor is a likely contributor.

The emphasis of the study is the identity and how the women navigate the new environment and positions they hold as highly qualified professionals. It is not focussed on the organisations in which they work. Public sector organisations in England were preferred for this study for the reason that the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on 5th April 2011, place a duty on all public bodies to play their part in tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all (EHRC, 2010, 2013). Chapter three of this thesis details an appraisal of the public sector as the context of, and justification for, the choice.

England was selected as the local context because of the understanding that there are some differences in the public policy subtleties of the nations of the UK. Therefore, using all of the UK would make the study too broad and dilute the findings. The research question and objectives are outlined in the following section.

Research question and objectives

This study investigates the factors influencing HQHSM women's career advancement and self-inclusion into leadership positions in English public sector organisations. While these women may appear affluent in terms of their education and employment, research has revealed that their intersecting identities (race, gender, migration status, and high-level qualifications or being in fairly stable employment) put them at risk of being overlooked for promotion opportunities, and of career stagnation (Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010; Nkomo and Rodriguez, 2019). Acker (1990, 2006) observed that circumstances in the

workplace discriminate against minorities and women, which may have an impact on their career progression, on gendered norms, and on the ethnicised labour market. In addition, first-generation migrant women who came to the UK as adults may also struggle to grasp the social, professional, and cultural institutions in which they live and work (Ince *et al.*, 2015). The focus is on understanding the complex dynamics of Black African HQHSM women's evolving identities, from restricted stay visa holders (immigration limitations and uncertainty of long-term status) to British citizenship (acquiring similar rights and freedoms as natives), thereby underscoring their lived experiences and voices. The research question for this study is:

How do Black African Highly Skilled Highly Qualified Migrant women's lived experiences shape their identities and the likelihood of seeking leadership positions in public sector organisations in England?

Once the research question was established, the following objectives were set to further guide the research:

1. To explore the lived experiences and career progression of HQHSM women in professional non-managerial, lower, and middle management roles in public sector organisations.
2. To examine how the beginnings and journeys of Black African HQHSM women through the immigration system, and their workplace experience while on the 'limited leave to remain' visa, influence their career trajectories.
3. To investigate their experience and intersecting identities; race, gender, and first-generation migrant status, and to establish how these affect their access to professional or social support networks.
4. To identify common attributes amongst HQHSM women who already hold leadership positions in public sector organisations based on self-identification.

After identifying the research aim, question, and objectives, it was necessary to outline and define some key terms that recur within the study. Many terms are used to describe people

who are not white, and researchers and practitioners have struggled with the correct terminology to represent the diversity of categories in non-white populations. The next section provides definitions of key terms used in this research.

1.3. Definitions of operating key terms

This section offers definitions of some key terms used in this research. Over time, different terms have contentiously been used; for example, the use of collective terms in the UK such as Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic Communities (BAME), Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), or ethnic minorities, and the assumption of Asians being essentialised as Black or brown people (Modood, 1994; Aspinall, 2002; Anderson *et al.*, 2011; Jones, 2012), or the categorisation and segregation of those who potentially qualify as being in the pan-ethnic category in the USA (Kim and White, 2010). However, some terms seem to be used at the liberty of the researcher or practitioner. More recently, ‘people’ or ‘women’ of colour, which appears to originate from the Americas, seems to be gaining usage in the UK, though it has continued to cause polarisation amongst feminist and critical scholars, and the communities themselves. For example, Fisher, Wauthier and Gajjala (2013) argued that:

Black, Indigenous, and Racial minorities (BIPOC) formations are connected to and affected by the multiple histories of migration from the South Asian region throughout history and the diaspora. These histories bolster the identity notion of ‘People of colour’ (POC) and, at times, contribute to the term's potential depoliticization due to the persistence of invisible South Asian caste structures. Thus, the ahistorical adoption and commodification of this latter label (POC) by various migrant populations, without regard to its caste and labour migration histories, can result in the implicit erasure of historical oppressions encountered by not only Black and Indigenous populations., and people also who experience historical oppression. These can also issue continuing caste-based marginalisation in migrant and diasporic South Asian communities (Fisher, Wauthier and Gajjala, 2013, p. 61).

Furthermore, in the UK, terms such as ‘pan-ethnic’ and ‘inter-ethnic’ are used to relate to multi-ethnic communities that share some linkages beyond being considered white people (Park, 2008; Muttarak, 2014). That said, the broader debate on categorising non-white populations is outside the scope of this study. The key definition in this research was the choice to use the term ‘migrant,’ not ‘immigrant.’ One of the main difficulties encountered at the start of the study in reviewing the literature was the vastness of, and lack of clarity

in the terms and contexts used by researchers concerning migrants and ethnic minorities, as discussed above.

Migrant: Someone who has moved into a nation other than their nationality or country of usual residence, so that the destination country effectively becomes their new country of origin. (IOM, 2011, 2019, 2020).

International migrant: Any person who has changed their country of habitual residency, distinguishing between 'short-term migrants' and 'long-term migrants' - those who have done so for at least three months but less than one year..." (IOM, 2011, 2019, 2020).

The adoption of the term 'migrant woman' in this case is emphasised. Thus, 'Black African migrant woman' refers to a woman who came to the United Kingdom from Africa as an adult and is presumed to be in the nation legally, subject to immigration control, or who enjoys indefinite leave to remain or citizenship. The United Nations and other major organisations most frequently employ migrants. It is acknowledged that 'immigrant' would be the most appropriate term based on the above definitions; however, 'immigrant' is not commonly used within the context of the United Kingdom. As such, it may cause further confusion by increasing the number of terms used to describe 'ethnic minority women' who were not born in Britain (Chitembo *et al.*, 2021).

Race: "A social group whose comparable physical or social qualities are regarded as a distinct group by society. It is socially created because humans generate meaning from their environment using symbols. In addition, it is characterised by establishing separate racial groupings that self-identify as such in society" (Schaefer, 2008, p. 1115).

Nationalism: The view that countries have or must have a governmental political structure. Thus, nationalism extends the ethnic community's social, economic, and political spheres. In other words Nationalism is an ideology based on the premise that loyalty and devotion to the nation-state prevail over other individual or group interests. (Kecmanovic, 1996; Condor and Fenton, 2012).

Ethnicity and ethnic minorities: These terms refer to the descentance and sociocultural populations with three specific additions: the group is a particular demographic within a country; the differentiating factor is typically cultural difference and cultural markers of social boundaries; and the group is frequently referred to as 'other' (foreign, exotic, minority) to a majority who are presumed not to be ethnic. The context of this study, non-indigenous people in the UK hold some values from their home countries (Aspinall, 2002). In the UK, the boundaries of race and ethnicity remain contested, although their usage is preferred and appears in numerous official documents. Ethnic minorities in England and Wales have distinct ancestry, culture, or tradition. Self-defined and situational ethnicity emphasises social, not biological, traits. Cypriots, Italians, Poles, and Irish are not minorities. Whiteness separates minorities from majorities. The study identified ethnic minorities using census ethnicity classifications (Office for National Statistics, 2021). Blacks (Caribbean, African, Other Black, All Black), Mixed Heritage (White, Black Caribbean, White, and African), and Chinese were ethnic minorities.

A high-skilled job: Work that requires the 'possession of a tertiary level of education or its equivalent in experience'(UK Migration Advisory Committee, 2020).

Highly skilled migrants: Highly skilled specialists, independent executives and senior managers, investors, businesspersons, keyworkers and sub-contract workers who are highly qualified migrants, by The Home Office's definition for visa points purposes (UK Migration Advisory Committee, 2020). Ascertaining what 'equivalent in experience' means as an operationalised concept is problematic, at least if there is an attempt to apply such a measurement universally to all sectors (Consterdine, Remenko and Olinero, 2016; UK Migration Advisory Committee, 2019a; UK Visa and Immigration, 2019).

Indefinite leave to remain: The settlement given to migrants who have met the set rules, which then grants rights that are equal to those of natives and citizens. It serves as the first stage at which migrants are free of immigration restrictions (Home Office, 2019a).

British citizenship: Status obtained through naturalisation, which means migrants are free to live and work in the UK, free of any immigration controls, and to obtain a UK passport.

In addition, citizenship enables a migrant to participate more fully in UK life, including voting rights (UK Home Office, 2020).

Naturalisation: “Acquiring a nationality after birth requires an application and a public authority act. This definition does not include automatic acquisition not initiated by the individual or their legal agent (even if the individual has an opportunity to deny this attribution of nationality) or acquisition based on a unilateral act by the target person, e.g. acquisition by declaration or option.” (Home Office, 2019a).

Points-Based System (PBS): In the context of UK and OECD work visas, the PBS offers additional features deemed to predict success; this is stated as employment market success but could be interpreted in other ways; e.g., encouraging migration to specific locations over others. Predicting success is tricky, and certain traits are hard to verify (UK Migration Advisory Committee, 2020).

Having defined the key terms in this research, an important operationalisation of the usage of self-inclusion into leadership follows.

1.4. Self-inclusion into leadership

This research introduces and conceptualises the expression ‘**self-inclusion into leadership**’. A lexicon definition of the expression ‘self-inclusion’ concerning leadership could not be found at the time of this research. However, self-inclusion is an expression that has been used by scholars discussing governmentalisation of the power to transfer responsibility in neoliberal governance. Barnett (2003) used the term ‘self-inclusion’ several times to refer to the complexities and fragmentation of local governance, forcing individuals and organisations through ‘the new localism’. He writes:

Self-inclusion offers a way to obtain the benefits of complexity and diversity in a 'hands-off' manner, consistent with Third Way views on the state's role. Using the Foucauldian idea of governmentality, this governance style can be described as advanced liberal ...involving self-discipline, self-responsibility, and self-inclusion. ...Self-inclusion is encouraged through exhortation and subtle persuasion (Barnett, 2003, pp. 27, 29, 31, 33).

While the above usage seems to align with the exertion of control, it can also be argued that it can encourage people to make themselves available for opportunities by infiltrating the groups that hold power. In this case, the expression “**self-inclusion into leadership**” is used to encourage migrant women to be more proactive about seeking opportunities. Much of the usage of the term ‘inclusion’ seems to focus on minorities being included by the majority, making the minority a passive recipient of the ‘privilege’ of being called to the party and waiting to be seated at the table, in this case, leadership or positions of influence. It can be argued that many of the inclusion initiatives such as affirmative action, diversity and inclusion policies and training do not work despite tending to be highly appraised (Adamson *et al.*, 2021). Rather, they are measured in the short term mostly by tick box exercises without any follow up (Brewis, 2019; Gündemir, Martin and Homan, 2019; Adamson *et al.*, 2020; Nkomo, 2020). Gündemir, Martin and Homan (2019) argued that:

Diversity and inclusion programmes often bombard those in leadership positions (managers, for example, via affirmative action and policy) or the majority groups. Contributing to disfranchisement are members of the target's perspective (White men). The psychological response of underrepresented groups to these policies has received very little consideration” Gündemir, Martin and Homan (2019, pp. 282–3).

The term has also been used in chemistry, referring to a character that attaches itself to a stimulus in a guest-host relationship to unlock or develop into a positive complex state (Ogoshi *et al.*, 2018; Zhang *et al.*, 2019). It has also been referred to in studies on social media self-presentation, indicating the active role one has to play in a given situation (Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2014; Kaiser *et al.*, 2020).

Some scholars continuously argue that the UK’s system needs to be fairer and less discriminatory to its migrant population (e.g., Platow and Van Knippenberg, 2001; Sessler Bernstein and Bilimoria, 2013; EHRC, 2017). Still, there is a role for those seeking ‘inclusion’ to play in speeding up or forcing the process to notice and recognise their effort while waiting for this to change, which may take many years. Therefore, in this thesis, ‘**self-inclusion into leadership**’ is defined as the process of infiltrating professional hierarchies, making oneself visibly hard-working and ambitious through volunteering for complex projects, influencing policy, and calculatedly engaging in activities with a view to learning

the ropes of the host country and organisation in order to leverage opportunities that may seem unreachable to outgroup members.

1.5. Thesis structure

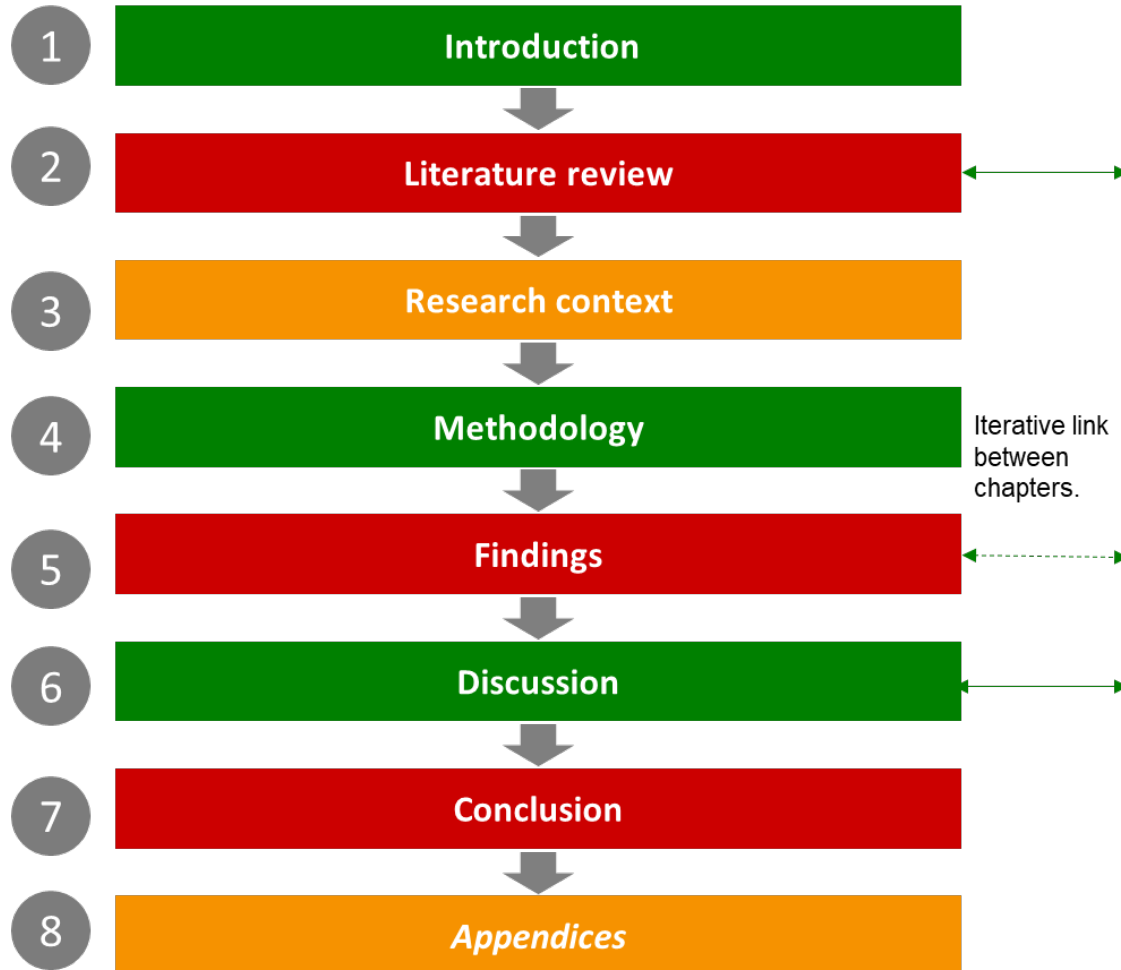


Figure 1: Thesis outlines

This thesis is divided into seven chapters, as outlined in figure 1, the first of which provides the context, criteria, and objective for this research. It also details the aims and research question that will be addressed. The second chapter reviews the literature to better comprehend current studies on Black African HQHSM women's self-inclusion into leadership roles in public sector organisations. Chapter three briefly evaluates the public sector as the context for this research, presenting a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding the public sector as an employer, and the context of choice for this research.

Chapter four discusses the research paradigm and philosophical perspectives, research design, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations. The findings are presented in chapter five and classified into three overarching themes based on the theories addressed in chapter two. These are:

Social-identity and self-categorisation theories: Theme one: Social Identity, and Theme two: Self-categorisation.

Personal identity: Theme three: Identity meaning-making and reconstruction, Theme four: Intersecting identities, and Theme five: Identity reconstruction.

Co-construction of a future model: Theme six: Changes at organisational and policy levels, and Theme seven: Migrant women's role in self-inclusion into leadership positions

Chapter six presents the discussion which interprets the findings. It evaluates and compares them to other research findings, elaborating on their significance and implications. Furthermore, it locates the study results within the context of the research question and establishes a connection to the relevant literature. Chapter seven offers the thesis conclusion, encompassing the study's theoretical and empirical contributions to knowledge, limitations, suggestions for further research, and concluding reflections. The following chapter (Chapter two) offers a review of the literature.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Chapter introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature on Black African HQHSM women's self-inclusion into leadership positions in public sector organisations. Following the identification of keywords and the literature search, it became apparent that the primary challenge with this study was the shortage of research directly studying the trajectories of Black African HQHSMs and leadership in Human Resources Management (HRM) and Leadership and Organisational Studies (LOS), particularly in a UK context. Therefore, a broader review has been taken into some major themes related to race, ethnicity, gender, migration policies and HQHSM pathways within an organisational context. It is crucial to emphasise the strong link between HRM, LOS, and migration in this study, particularly the migrants' journeys that have shaped the participants' identities. The chapter culminates in a theoretical framework drawing on the social identity approach; i.e., social identity theory and self-categorisation theory, and personal identity theory combined with intersectionality. Next, the literature on Race, ethnicity, and gender research and discourse in organisations is discussed.

2.2. A critical review of race, ethnicity, and gender research and discourse in organisations

This section provides a review of research pertaining to how race, ethnicity, and gender have been examined within human resources management leadership, and organisational studies focussing on the representation of race and ethnicity centrality in the studies. This review will focus on studies that address race and ethnicity, and how they are studied within organisational studies. Race and ethnicity are often used interchangeably; however, they are distinct concepts (Jablonski, 2021). Race and ethnicity are both terms used to describe human identity, but they do so in distinct yet interconnected ways (Aspinall, 2020). Identity can evoke thoughts of skin tone, nationality, language, religion, and cultural traditions, as well as ancestry. Numerous traits are encompassed by race and ethnicity (Cooper *et al.*, 2014).

Race and ethnicity have been and continue to be used as ways to describe human diversity. The majority of people consider race to be a combination of physical, behavioural, and cultural characteristics (Jablonski, 2021). Language and shared culture are the primary determinants of an individual's ethnicity. There is generally a higher focus on ethnicity on studies in the UK, and as such, it was a challenge to differentiate the two. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this research, an attempt is made to address the two separately as much as possible. The review begins with an understanding of race, as it is more central to this research than ethnicity and thus most relevant to the research question:

How do Black African Highly Skilled, Highly Qualified Migrant women's lived experiences shape their identities and the likelihood of seeking leadership positions in public sector organisations in England?

Thereafter, I examined studies on ethnicity, followed by the conclusion.

How race is studied and the focus of those studies

Race remains a broadly used social construct from the eighteenth-century enlightenment period (Fuentes *et al.*, 2019). Enlightenment was a philosophical movement emphasising the world's order and humanity, thus applying categories to human temperaments and physical attributes (Dant, 2003; Demrovic, 2009; Collins, 2019c). Many race scholars have argued that the rise of capitalism and empire saw race linked to European colonialism, oppression, stereotypes, power dynamics, and discrimination, propagating whiteness as superior to other humans, with Black people often placed at the bottom of that hierarchy (Lee, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991; Nkomo, 1992; Schaefer, 2008; Fuentes *et al.*, 2019; Ross, 2020; Saha, 2021). Indeed, race impacts people's personal and professional lives in ways that potentially shape career progression in the workplace.

Fuentes *et al.* (2019) postulated that scientific research perpetuates the oppression and worldview that assigns some groups to low status, permitting white privilege and power. They asserted that racism, prejudice, and the adverse treatment of people resulting from their skin colour and differences remains an inherent challenge in many spheres of life, including organisations. Many scholars daring to challenge racial discrimination and white

dominance and privilege, acknowledge the challenges that come with researching race within HRM and LOS, many of which are fraught with fear of alienation, stereotyping and dismissal based on relevance by many who wish to see racial discourse archived (Atewologun and Sealy, 2011; Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013; Nkomo *et al.*, 2019). In 2019, the American Association of Biological Anthropologists issued an updated statement on race and racism, acknowledging how scientific research co-constructs and perpetuates racist ideologies. They assert that:

While science is often represented as objective, apolitical, and unbiased, many ostensibly biological concepts of race have cultural stereotypes, biases, and ethnocentric views embedded within them. We acknowledge that outdated and inaccurate ideas about race and racism still inform scientific research today and are sometimes embedded in what otherwise appears to be modern, technologically advanced science. We stand against such practices (Fuentes *et al.*, 2019, p. 401).

This literature review found that conversations about race are combative and often cause discomfort. In turn, this has led to general avoidance in scholarly research, with more collective terms such as ethnicity and diversity being favoured instead (Agyemang, Bhopal and Bruijnzeels, 2005; Ross *et al.*, 2018). However, the communal nature of ethnicity and diversity has been contested as a generalisation that often ends up being a tick-box exercise. Prominent researchers explicitly assert that their research on race and racism is placed in an American context, acknowledging the globally heterogenous experiences and discourse around the subject (e.g., Crenshaw, 1991; Nkomo, 1992, 2021; Caldwell and Crenshaw, 1996; Smith and Nkomo, 2003; Acker, 2015; Eagly, 2016). However, as the American context influences most of the research on race, it poses challenges within scholarly research, with some countries excluding themselves from engaging with race-related study or dialogue, minimising the conversation about it, and quickly seeking to 'move' concepts such as ethnicity and diversity (Adamson *et al.*, 2020; Nkomo, 2020).

While similarities between the American context and European or UK contexts may exist, there appear to be many differences in how race, ethnicity, and diversity are more likely to be conceptualised within the organisations in different countries (Atewologun, 2011; Atewologun and Sealy, 2011). For example, race and ethnic minority are not considered legal categories in France, which has maintained colour-blind policies, segregating people,

for example, using expressions such as 'Frenchmen', 'foreigners', 'natives', and 'immigrants', including those born within the country to migrants (Frader, 2000; Perkins and Arvinen-Muondo, 2013; Simon, 2015). It has been argued that French legislators claim that all people in France are the same under the law, despite widespread racial discrimination prompting terms such as 'racism' and 'bigotry' in the broader media and other fora. This example of France's context can be seen in other countries, even where white people are the minority but hold higher power; e.g., South Africa and some Arabic countries (Sachdev and Bourhis, 1991; Hook, 2012). These differ significantly from other countries such as the UK and the USA, where least there is at least proactive recognition of the differences that race fosters.

Race scholars argue that the perpetuation of race ideology dominance in human resources management and leadership and organisational studies means that whites do not have to think of their own race, while viewing others as racial minorities (Nkomo and Al Ariss, 2014). Examples include the assertion that while white men saturate leadership positions, they seldom have to think about what is wrong with the scenario of white male-dominated leadership boards, nor do they have to be conscious of their privilege (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Hogue and Lord, 2007; Elliott, 2019). However, these researchers argue that the reality of race and racism plays a major role even in academic scholarship pushing for western-centric approaches to research as the acceptable worldview (Smith and Nkomo, 2003; Nkomo, 2021). Nkomo asserts that race researchers have hit a brick wall in proving the need for their identity to be accepted as worthy of exploration. Reflecting on the sustained renunciation of the criticality of race in management and organisation studies, she argues that there still appears to be a shortage of research into professionals from the Black race within the academy and in HRM and LOS, with even the most prominent Black scholars facing challenges of subjectivity or lack of objectivity.

Nkomo (1992) also asserts that the root error in producing race-related knowledge and women's studies sits firmly within the generalisation or non-inclusive universalisation of academic scholarship, coupled with race as a core analytic category not being seen as worthy by the emperor-like gatekeeping custodians of western-centric scholarship. The

focus on colour-blind organisations, as challenged by critical race theorists arguing that it is whites versus 'all other minorities' bundled together under the umbrella of diversity in research and practice, has furthered the under-representation of Black women in positions of power and leadership studies (Hooks, 1981; Caldwell and Crenshaw, 1996; Rigg and Trehan, 1999; Smith and Nkomo, 2003; Trehan, 2007; Nkomo and Ngambi, 2009; Mohanty, 2013; Trehan and Rigg, 2015; Nash, 2017). These critical scholars contend that studies with minorities as the primary sample continue to be marginalised within HRM and LOS research. Proponents of race inclusion in scholarship have continued to reflect on the progress of race as a core analytical concept, which has not gained traction in the field (Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013; Narayan, 2018; Virdee and McGeever, 2018; McCluney and Rabelo, 2019). These scholars and others have argued that little progress had been made since that denial of race, specifically the Black race, as a topic of interest in scholarship, and the concerted, implicit erasure of recognising the issues Black bodies face in the organisation of the broader society.

Research into racial disparity has often been viewed with suspicion and, in some cases, contempt, as many of the gatekeepers in academic scholarship remain white and primarily male, with a few 'tokenistic minorities' (Smith and Nkomo, 2003; Nkomo, 2017). The above issues substantiate the attempts to address race in the UK face challenges with competing terminologies that risk diluting the messages and results of any race, ethnicity, and diversity discourse (Nkomo and Al Ariss, 2014; Nkomo *et al.*, 2019).

How ethnicity is studied and the focus of those studies

The review of how ethnicity is researched in the UK poses challenges, including the many varying terms used by researchers, as already highlighted in chapter one and the above section. These challenges pose theoretical, methodological, and conceptual issues with regards to developing a clear picture of the populations being examined. Both empirical research and government-mandated reviews have demonstrated the underrepresentation of ethnic minority people in senior management and leadership positions in the UK (e.g., McDonagh *et al.*, 2014; McGregor-Smith, 2017a; Parker *et al.*, 2017, 2020; Gifford *et al.*,

2019). These reviews demonstrate that the percentage of ethnic minorities in leadership positions remains extremely low compared to white men and women.

Parker *et al.* (2017) found that people from ethnic minority communities made up only 2% of board-level leadership in the UK's FTSE 250 in 2017. UK boards were challenged to achieve at least one non-white person on their board by 2021, calling it "one by 21". FTSE 100 company boards were to meet the "one by 21" target by 2021, and FTSE 250 members to target having at least one non-white board member by 2024 (Parker *et al.*, 2020, pp. 11–12). The follow-up progress report noted that the outlook to meet the target was bleak three years on. They added that "as of 31 December 2019, out of 37% (31 of 83) companies surveyed in the FTSE 100 and 69% (119 of 173) of FTSE 250 had not met the target of at least one ethnic minority director on their Board" (Parker *et al.*, 2020, pp. 11–12). These figures only represented the companies that responded to the research.

Parker *et al.* (2020) further documented working on the assumption that those that did not respond may not have a non-white board member or may not collect that data, both being undesirable scenarios for the furtherment of research on the subject (Parker *et al.*, 2017). It is worth conveying that the terminology of the research subjects was changed from BME / BAME / ethnic minority usage in the 2017 research to using 'people of colour' in the 2020 research of ethnic minority representation (Parker *et al.*, 2017, 2020); a move which potentially changes the units of comparison. In addition, these research studies did not clarify who was included in the 2017 categories of ethnic minorities and who was included in the People of Colour (POC) category in the 2020 study. It can easily be argued that though they refer to and mention the 2020 study as a follow-on from the 2017 study, the two are not synonymous.

Interestingly, Parker *et al.* (2020) also allude to the negative mood in corporate Britain, resisting the invitation for transparency and increasing their board diversity. They acknowledge that if race and ethnicity were considered necessary, individuals on these boards would have little chance of impacting trajectories. The research also documented the excuses from corporate Britain's responses, such as "yet another thing", "too hard", "the population [non-white] being too small", or "not being board ready", and that "they may not be the right fit" alluding to non-white board aspirants (p. 11). The Parker review is

not alone in finding challenges in furthering leadership and organisational research and changing organisational mindsets. McGregor (2017) also acknowledges what other researchers have found, asserting that ethnic minority people are more likely to be overqualified than white people, but that white employees are more likely to hold higher positions in organisations. Another study by Zwysen and Demireva (2018b) reports that non-white ethnic minorities and migrants are more likely to work in lower-paid jobs than their UK-born counterparts despite having higher qualifications. They are also more likely to work in lower-ranking jobs with lower prospects of career upward mobility, fewer benefits, and precarious job security. Another observation is that the broad-brush approach to diversity research tends to view all groups of minorities as one, failing to get to the detail of the fundamental issues experienced by different groups, especially the non-salient groups. Eagly (2016) argues that:

Despite the striking lack of research support for the optimistic generalisations about the gender and ethnic minorities' performance outcomes that have been widely shared among advocates, policymakers, and the public, many social scientists with relevant expertise have remained silent. It is time for more social scientists to take stock of what diversity research has produced and join those addressing the complexities of diversity's effects on group and organisational performance. It is also time for all stakeholders in diversity initiatives to focus on the violations of social and economic justice issues inherent in the unequal access of women and ethnic minorities to decision-making in political and corporate contexts (Eagly, 2016, p. 215).

Other researchers have argued that ethnic minority women are further disadvantaged as they often reside at the intersection of race and gender. They are disproportionately affected by issues; e.g., the masculinisation of women in leadership, racial discrimination, gender and ethnic pay gaps, the glass ceiling, glass walls, glass cliffs, and other disparity issues, as well as prejudice-related topics such as family, sexism, old boys networks, ethnicity and gender double binds (Ryan and Haslam, 2005; Muskwe, 2011; Rubery and Rafferty, 2013; Cook and Glass, 2014; Trehan and Rigg, 2015; Hozić and True, 2017).

An area of research that appears to be growing is the exploration of the rise of ethnic minority/migrant entrepreneurship (De Vries and Dana, 2012; Jones *et al.*, 2014; Carter *et al.*, 2015, 2015; Riva and Lucchini, 2015; Clark, Drinkwater and Robinson, 2017; Kevill,

Trehan and Easterby-Smith, 2017; Santamaria-Alvarez *et al.*, 2018; Bijedić and Piper, 2019; Chitembo *et al.*, 2021; Lazarczyk-Bilal and Glinka, 2021). Trehan (2022) argues that ethnic minorities and women's strife with intersecting identities pushes them towards entrepreneurship in many cases without leadership development support. While entrepreneurship researchers and policymakers have hailed this as a positive development, many Black migrant women start informal businesses out of frustration and necessity without developing their business and leadership skills (Carter *et al.*, 2015; Trehan, 2022). As a result, they end up staying in informal, unscalable businesses in which they cannot participate effectively in leadership or make an impact that is sufficient to contribute to the economy (Aure, 2013; UN Women, 2020).

Being a first-generation migrant in the workplace further complicates researchers' focus on the broader umbrella categories (race, ethnicity, and gender). Some researchers have argued that the HQHSM women fall within broader categories of women and ethnic minorities; their experiences of assimilation, integration, social capital, and other critical aspects of career progression differ significantly. Still, their voices are missing in the leadership and management discourse and scholarship because they blend in well with Black or brown women from ethnic minority communities (Rigg and Trehan, 1999; Trehan and Rigg, 2015). HQHSM women-related studies are crucial to further understanding Black women in organisations, and they need to be embedded in this field while appreciating the interdisciplinary nature of migration studies, sociology, and psychology. This section has briefly reviewed the studies on the broader issues of ethnic minorities' underrepresentation in leadership positions, and the challenges of meaningfully conceptualising research in Human Resources Management (HRM) and Leadership and Organisational Studies (LOS).

In conclusion, this review has found that the way race and ethnicity is researched in the UK leaves a critical gap in representing the disadvantages of marginalised populations. The dearth of literature directly addressing race through the lens of Black people indicates the need for more studies rebuffing the narrative that Black people may be to blame for their experience of oppression and discrimination (Lee, 1989; Ross *et al.*, 2018; Inwood, 2019;

Ross, 2020). Researchers (e.g., Nkomo, 1992; Cox, Nkomo, and Welch, 2001; Roberson and Block, 2007; Kenny and Briner, 2007) recommend a greater emphasis on organisational processes over outcomes, for those experiences of bias and discrimination, and sensitivity to within-group differences. In addition to these specific recommendations for empirical research, broad considerations for researchers in this field include moving beyond essentialism and paying greater attention to context for a more substantive examination of race and ethnicity in organisations. This will be addressed next.

For Example, Ross *et al.* (2018) examined the underachievement of 'BME' students in UK higher education, which can be attributed to the sheer lack of representational career development of "BME staff in UK universities" (Trehan and Rigg, 2015). Ross *et al.* (2018) compare the UK with South Africa, which already has the undertone of Black versus white due to the shared histories between colonialism and apartheid. The few instances where race was mentioned, explained the reluctance and complex nature of discussions on the subject. The shift to BAME/BME and multicultural application of the race and ethnicity discourse risks the failure to consider the differences in historical, social, and cultural factors pertinent to the identities within the organisations. There is the potential to influence attitudes and behaviour; however, researching diversity in silos risks failing to capture the diverse staff in organisations (Jackson, Joshi and Erhardt, 2003; Bates, Jackson and Johnson, 2007).

Review of literature pertaining to gender

Akin to ethnicity studies in leadership and organisational studies, gender studies have focussed on the disparity between men and women in the higher echelons of organisations. Acker (1990) postulated that organisational structures are not gender-neutral and that the gendered nature of the universal ideal worker embodied in the organisation describes a man. It has been argued that most organisational hierarchies which claim to be gender-neutral are created in the image of a man, with the occasional woman who behaves in a masculine way. There has been a growth of research into the barriers to women getting into the higher echelons of the organisation, which has also given rise to stereotypical leaders who still have to fit in and act like men to survive longer in the position once they

get there (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Guillaume and Pochic, 2009; Stewart, 2016; Humbert, Kelan and Van den Brink, 2018; Eagly *et al.*, 2019). Research suggests that the proportions of women in leadership are faring better than ethnic minorities, and there is increasing visibility of female leaders, albeit white (Longman *et al.*, 2018). However, the problem persists as many female leaders find themselves on the glass cliff, with a negative psychological impact being the result (Robinson *et al.*, 2021). Cook and Glass (2014) contend that the shift is moving towards offering women 'impossible' challenging positions, setting them up to fail to reinforce the view that women are less competent. The fight for women's seats at the board table means extra pressure, or placement in dead-end positions in which their strengths are often suppressed. These women then assume the failure label, although it is difficult to know if the results would differ for a man if the same position and circumstances were offered (Ryan and Haslam, 2005; Hozić and True, 2017). One of the challenges in LOS is the lack of a systematic approach to examining issues such as gender segregation to increase the impact of change. Scholarly research into the pay disparity between men and women has been ongoing for many years. While the discourse on leadership has come a long way from the days of it being a privilege for men, (Zakeer Ahmed, Allah and Irfanullah, 2016), the inequalities and gender differences within organisations are still evident through the research that shows that white men still hold higher positions in spite of the improvement in gender balance parity. The picture does not appear to have improved much from the 'ideal worker' in organisations being one that does not have family responsibility, can avail themselves at short notice for late meetings, and can travel without thinking about childcare (Acker, 2006; Fujimoto, Azmat and Härtel, 2012).

Critical and feminist researchers have been focusing on women's social issues, from fighting for the right to be recognised as human beings, to the right to vote (Acker, 1990, 2006; Carbin and Edenheim, 2013; Ross, 2017). Leadership research does not have much salience as feminists fight to understand women's lived experiences (Rigg and Trehan, 1999; Trehan, 2007; Wood, 2008). On the other hand, the research found that as these social issues were the focus of much research on women, studies on leadership emphasised men as the ideal leader. Rigg and Trehan (1999) argue for better developed to ensure the inclusion of the

voices of black women in critical management research. They also argue that black women, finding themselves in predominantly white and male contexts, have more impact on the complex emotional outcomes than other races.

However, some claim that despite the general acceptance of the place of women in organisations and high office, there remain implicit stereotypes about women's ineffectiveness in leadership which are slowly being disproven, and there is gradually a mindset shift towards promoting people based on their capabilities, not their sex or gender (Armstrong and Ghaboos, 2019; Kozjek and Franca, 2020). Thus, encouraging more women into leadership roles is more significant than simply fulfilling the promise of equal opportunity and ensuring businesses, institutions, and governments are more representative (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Vinkenburg *et al.*, 2011; Herrera *et al.*, 2012).

This review highlights that despite women making up half of the population, there remains a highly disproportionate imbalance in leadership positions. However, there appears to be an implicit stereotype that persists as to why women do not make the best leaders in organisations; more so, Black women. The study of women in leadership has exacerbated the stereotypes by focusing too much on issues around the male-focused nature of leadership styles and theories; history seems to have disregarded the contribution of influential female leaders and ethnic minorities (Fernando, Cohen and Duberley, 2019). Eagly *et al.* (2019) have refuted some of their previous findings asserting that the focus needs to move beyond accentuating the stereotypes that have persisted for over seventy years regarding what men can do and what women cannot do, in order to correct the ills of the sexes and the roles they play in the organisation by focussing on personal competences (Sealy, 2010; Van Dijk *et al.*, 2020). Evidence suggests that fostering full participation for women is essential for promoting a prosperous and civil society.

Research indicates that women tend to adopt leadership styles that are particularly well suited to the complexity of contemporary organisations, and which can translate into enhanced institutional effectiveness (Nkomo and Ngambi, 2013; Rhee and Sigler, 2015). Hoobler, Masterson and Nkomo (2016) conducted a meta-analysis to examine styles that sought to quantify the relationship between women's representation in leadership positions and organisational financial performance. They postulated that the current

measurements used to quantify the business case for women to take up leadership positions were somewhat paternalistic and needed further improvement. Following this examination of particular areas gaining a better understanding of issues by discussing race, ethnicity, and gender in research, there is a need to view these issues as an intertwined web through the intersectionality concept, which is considered later in this chapter (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 2008; Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008; Berry and Bell, 2012; Perry, 2015; Nkomo *et al.*, 2019).

This section has reviewed the challenges with bringing the race, ethnicity, and gender discourse in leadership, management, and organisations scholarship to a level that would mean researchers could confidently theorise the inequalities that abound in organisations. It is essential to consider the UK context, and much research has focussed on more collective category ethnicity. Thus, this section (2.2) has reviewed the challenges of researching the underrepresentation of race and ethnic minorities in organisations and addressed gender balance. The next section discusses the studies on Black African HQHSM women's research in human resources management, leadership, management, and organisational studies.

2.3. Black African Highly Qualified Highly Skilled Migrant women

Although there has been expansive discourse and research into migrants, the specific theorisation of the experiences and career trajectories of Black African HQHSMs, especially women, remains low in leadership, management and organisational studies (Rigg and Trehan, 1999). In the UK context, some challenges have been highlighted as disempowering due to the profoundly interconnected effects of racism and sexism around the experiences of Black women. The combative controversies surrounding migration policies and politics in the UK do not guarantee improvement (Anderson, 2013; OECD, 2014, 2019; Ince *et al.*, 2015), and scholars face dilemmas in managing misconceptions by citizens about migrants stealing their jobs and keeping the voters (natives) happy.

The continued negative press around migrants, many of whom are from Africa and the Middle East, poses huge challenges in terms of addressing the issues of those who have arrived in the country legally through various recruitment drives in order to address

shortages of highly qualified, highly skilled human resources. Despite the admissions of the UK's need for this category of migrants, this review discovered visible dilemmas for research, policy, and practice; for example, the need to keep the country in good standing with the voters while running critical public services (Anderson, 2013; Ince *et al.*, 2015; Oliver, 2022), and bringing in HQHSMs to fill the critical gaps in service provision. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America are among the highest-receiving OECD countries for HQHSMs. Indeed, evidence shows that OECD countries continually change their immigration policies to favour HQHSMs, making it more challenging for low-skilled migrants to keep them out (Cebolla-Boado and Miyar-Busto, 2017; Demireva, 2019).

However, research appears to focus less on these highly skilled migrants, their positive impact and their contribution to their receiving countries. The OECD (2014, 2019) reports that the uncertainty, controversy, and outright confusion surrounding immigration policies potentially exposes HQHSMs to exploitation. Countries like Canada and Australia have government-backed settlement programmes that benefit the receiving country and the HQHSMs (Australian Government, 2020; Canadian Government, 2020). On the contrary, the UK does not appear to have consistent systems, if any, following the journeys of the migrants that enter the UK as described in chapter one of this thesis. The UK Migration Advisory Committee (2020) reported that the UK Government has no way of properly monitoring the migrants' performance through taxes or employers once they are in the country. The burden to help implicitly falls on the migrant as receiving employers are often more concerned with filling the gaps in their vacant positions, insisting on competence at the expense of integration, and the migrants who are unable to meet certain requirements risk de-skilling despite being HQHSMs (Demireva, 2019). The lack of research or policy systems that monitors the impact of migrant human capital on the UK was apparent through the literature search.

Currently available studies have highlighted that much of the academic research on migrant women in the UK tends to address women and children issues in terms of academic and policy interests, and leans towards language skills, displacement, maternity, social and health inequalities (Tariq *et al.*, 2012; O'neil, Fleury and Foresti, 2016; Balaam *et al.*, 2017;

Bassel *et al.*, 2018; Vacchelli and Peyrefitte, 2018). Where the studies are employment-related, the focus tends to be on lack of access, and low-level entry into employment or the types of jobs migrants hold; for example, deskilling due to foreign qualifications or those for whom the host country's language is not their language; e.g. English speakers in Germany (Iredale, 2005; Riaño, 2021).

Another area of research emphasises asylum seekers, refugees, family dependant migrants (family visa holders) and students (Elliott and Segal, 2012; Leung, 2017; MB Erdal, 2017; E Satinsky, 2019). The general picture of research on migrants does not seem to differentiate the many categories of migrants; for example, those who have been in the country for less than a year will not have the same access to opportunities as those who have been in the country for more than five years and have obtained permanent residency, citizenship, or indefinite leave to remain in the UK. Therefore, their experiences and challenges are bound to differ (e.g. Jones *et al.*, 2014; Ressler, Strachan and Bailey, 2017). While these studies and others focus on health and social care issues, it could be reasoned that the leading research in organisations needs to address the lack of studies relating to HQHSM women who have been in the country long enough to have gained work experience and, at times, local qualifications in addition to the ones they had upon entry into the country.

A study in Switzerland by Riaño (2011) argues that the economic rights of skilled migrant women are not given enough attention; they face discrimination by the nature of being female. However, these barriers lead to them facing social inequalities that potentially affect their long-term immigration status. The study found that migrant women from Africa and Asia face deskilling and the unfavourable transfer of their qualifications in addition to the gender roles they have to navigate. Nonetheless, research into these issues is still scarce, and it was extremely challenging to find comparable studies. For example, over the last twenty years, the term 'Highly Skilled Migrant' (HSM) has been increasingly gaining a place in academia, in addition to 'skilled migrant' and 'migrant' (Duncan and Waldorf, 2010; Özden and Phillips, 2015; Grigoleit-Richter, 2017). This categorisation could signal researchers to acknowledge that highly qualified HSMS' characteristics differentiate them from other minority/migrant categories.

Researchers such as Grigoleit-Richter (2017) argue that although HQHSM women are privileged regarding education and competencies, their integration into an ostensibly meritocratic segment of the labour market is shaped by gendered norms and unhabituated labour market conditions. Apart from the women who migrate primarily for their careers, other groups also enter the labour market through other means such as student visas, asylum, ancestral and free movement. Over the ten years between 2001 and 2011, migrants represented 47% of the increase in the workforce in the United States and 70% in Europe, with the UK being the highest-receiving country in Europe (OECD, 2014). Across OECD countries, only a relatively small part of these workforce entrants migrated through managed labour, representing only a tiny percentage of migration.

Moreover, a discussion on HQHSM women would not be complete without touching on the gendered nature of the complex life of women as spouses, mothers, daughters, aunts or orphans and, in the case of Black African HQHSM responsibilities, overextended families. The research aims to contribute to closing the gap in scholarly understanding of the lived experiences of Black African migrant women; in particular, those who are HQHSMs, already working in public sector organisations, and whose voices are seldom heard. Few studies, if any, have focussed on career trajectories and identity struggles through this journey.

2.4. Policy research and the research gap

Considering that this research focuses on a group of first-generation migrants who predominantly arrived in the country as professionals, it is important to consider research related to this population of migrants from the European and UK governments' standpoint. Research on migrants in the OECD countries, of which the UK is a member, and from the European Union's point of view even though the UK is no longer a member, tends to concentrate on the impact on the countries receiving or hosting the migrants. A major EU-funded research project considered central to the HSM research were the Growth, Equal Opportunities, Migration and Markets (GEMM) Project, a major multi-disciplinary research project coordinated by the University of Essex involving ten partner research institutes around Europe (GEMM, 2020). The primary objective of the GEMM project was to shed light on the seldom-discussed issue of how ethnic minorities are disadvantaged in the

labour market, highlighting the fact that migrant and minority individuals are embedded in a social and institutional context that affects ethnic inequality and, consequently, growth opportunities.

A study by Zwysen and Demireva (2018a) found the prevalence of ethnic hierarchies in UK-based organisations. They reported that Black African and Caribbean ethnic minorities were the most disadvantaged despite having higher qualifications than their white counterparts (Zwysen and Demireva, 2018a). They compared native populations to first-generation migrants and 'settled' ethnic minority groups, and there appeared to be no solution offered or explanation for these ethnic hierarchies. This research focused on understanding migrants' impact on receiving countries and their native populations. There is, however, a shortage of research focusing on the outcomes and trajectories of the migrants who find themselves at the bottom of the hierarchies.

In their studies, Zwysen and Demireva (2018a, 2018b) attempt to differentiate between the outcomes of migrants and the 'settled' ethnic minority groups to aid consideration of the long-term consequences of migrant adaptation. Few other studies in LOS offer this helpful differentiation. Even studies of public sector organisations fail to go far enough to separate migrants and 'settled' ethnic minority groups, which could play an essential role in understanding the trajectories of its migrant employees as they are associated with the higher economic placement of migrants. Furthermore, it could be argued that the weakness is that studies of migrants in general and, worse still, HQHSM women in organisations do not differentiate between migrants under immigration control, and those who have obtained indefinite leave to remain. This grouping and distinction between migrants and those who have grown up in the UK could help reach the often-missed communities through broad-brush research.

Migrants already in employment who wish to seek out leadership positions, do not appear to be given much attention in research aside from a few studies which look at the barriers from an organisational point of view. As such, there is a dearth of research focussing on the voices of HQHSMs. A few studies were found to have examined the barriers for HQHSMs in specific countries and, often, national (country of origin) contexts, determining that they

are often employed in roles that have limited or no prospects for progression, or that they blame language skills and lack of transferable skills (e.g., Nowicka, 2014; Madziva, McGrath and Thondhlana, 2016; Fernando and Kenny, 2018; Miller, 2018). These studies, however, do not appear to consider that many HQHSMs arrive with a high level of experience and a good command of English, both of which tend to be disregarded. Furthermore, after five years in the UK, many would have assumed the required organisational identity in the workplace. Further research is needed into those migrants already employed in lower and middle management positions, thus highlighting a gap that this study seeks to address.

Regarding integration and assimilation help for the HQHSMs, countries such as Canada and Australia have government-backed settlement programmes which benefit both the receiving country and the HQHSMs. The extent to which it helps depends on the country's policies regarding the treatment of their migrants, but at least it is evident on the government websites in both countries (Canadian Immigration, 2019; Australian Government, 2020). The UK does not appear to offer any such support to its migrants. In fact, in the most recent post-Brexit UK amendment to the UK immigration system, the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) was mandated to explore a system similar to the Australian points-based system (UK Migration Advisory Committee, 2019b; Manning, 2020). There appeared to be no policy directly addressing the need to help with assimilation in the UK in that mandate, or in any previous amendments. The UK Migration Advisory Committee (2020) reported that this responsibility was left to the employers to assist HQHSMs in their assimilation and integration into the UK. The burden of adaptation usually falls on the migrant as receiving society employers insist on language competence, and the migrant who cannot perform a task to the optimal level risks de-skilling (Demireva, 2019, p. 19).

Furthermore, in 2016, the UK Government commissioned the MAC to advise changes to Tier 2 to address concerns regarding the rising number of migrants on that pathway, and the reliance on them to fill shortages in the labour market (UK Migration Advisory Committee, 2016). The committee recommended that in a bid to:

Balance migrant selectivity, investment in skills and impacts on UK productivity and competitiveness, the Committee found that using price would be the most effective way

to prioritise and target the specialist and scarce skills that non-EU migrants bring to the UK as well as to address the potential disincentives to up-skill the domestic labour market (UK Migration Advisory Committee, 2016, p. 1).

Other research commissioned by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the OECD found that labour migration does not negatively impact native-born workers' labour market outcomes, economic growth, and public finance. The perceptions of possible adverse effects of migrants are often unjustified; primarily, the problem rests in the receiving countries not sufficiently leveraging the human capital and expertise migrants bring. Better public policies and research can play a crucial role in enhancing migrants' contribution skills and increasing public confidence in migration (ILO and OECD, 2018).

Following the review of current available research, it is pertinent to now turn to the Black African HQHSM women who are the subjects of this research. This research is conducted through the lens of identity in conjunction with intersectionality, which is introduced in the subsequent section.

2.5. Identity theory and intersectionality

Identity theory was employed as the lens by which this research examined the intersectionality of Black African HQHSM women's lived experiences and the impact on their seeking leadership positions. Identity theories have been applied in various disciplines, including sociology, psychology, and organisational and political studies. According to Stets and Serpe (2016), most research on identity theory has been known to focus on role identities or identities associated with people's social positions and the many identity underpinnings. These include the meanings connected with social category identification, such as being a student (the student identity), a spouse (the spouse identity), or a parent (the parent identity), as well as category and group membership (Stets and Burke, 2000, 2003; Haslam and Ellemers, 2005). These social groupings are used to categorise the roles of individuals. People are born into these social groupings, such as gender, race, or ethnicity.

There are two theories that some scholars have advocated combining, despite others going to lengths to separate them; i.e., "**Social Identity Theory (SIT)**", where the proponents

consider group membership as the driving mechanism for identity formation; and **Identity Theory (IT)**, where proponents assert that the roles that individuals are assigned are the major source of power for identity construction” (Ashforth, Harrison and Corley, 2008, p. 327). Other scholars have used the term **Personal Identity Theory (PIT)**, arguing that personal values are significant in explaining identity and identity formation (e.g., Stryker, 1968, 2007; Stryker and Serpe, 1982; Stets and Burke, 2000; Stryker and Burke, 2000). The first two theories have many similarities, and their boundaries are blurred. Arguments about which is the stronger theory, or a detailed analysis of the differences between the two, were beyond the scope of this research; therefore, a broad approach of viewing them as social identity theory was employed. Furthermore, after reviewing several aspects of identity and identity formation and considering the interpretative nature of the research and philosophical leaning, it was concluded that social identity theory without self-categorisation and personal identity would only offer part of the story.

While identity studies have appeared in many domains of research concerning Black women, much of this work has been in psychology or feminist and critical race studies in a North American context (e.g., Crenshaw, 1989; Atewologun, Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2016; Showunmi, Atewologun and Bebbington, 2016; Atewologun *et al.*, 2017; Nash, 2020). Extremely few studies have been applied to understanding the career mobility or aspirations of Black African migrant women recruited internationally. Few, if any, focus on this population in England’s public sector organisations, which highly depend on international recruitment from developing countries (Beech *et al.*, 2019; The King’s Fund, 2019, 2022; NHS Employers, 2022). While this research does focus broadly on public sector organisations, it is fair to see from the literature reviewed that many Black African migrants are recruited into the health and social care sectors, followed by education. Any estimates of documentation of these international staff tend to be in the NHS, the largest employer in the UK. Available research shows that the NHS accounts for 13% of the country’s workforce; even with international staff, there are still 100,000 live vacancies (Beech *et al.*, 2019, p. 84). Therefore, research examining these women’s lived experiences and trajectories from their point of view is highly relevant. This research focuses on the social

identity approach (SIT and SCT together) and personal identity theory to provide a holistic picture. The model below depicts the way I have approached the theories.

Social identity theory and self-categorisation theory (Social identity approach)

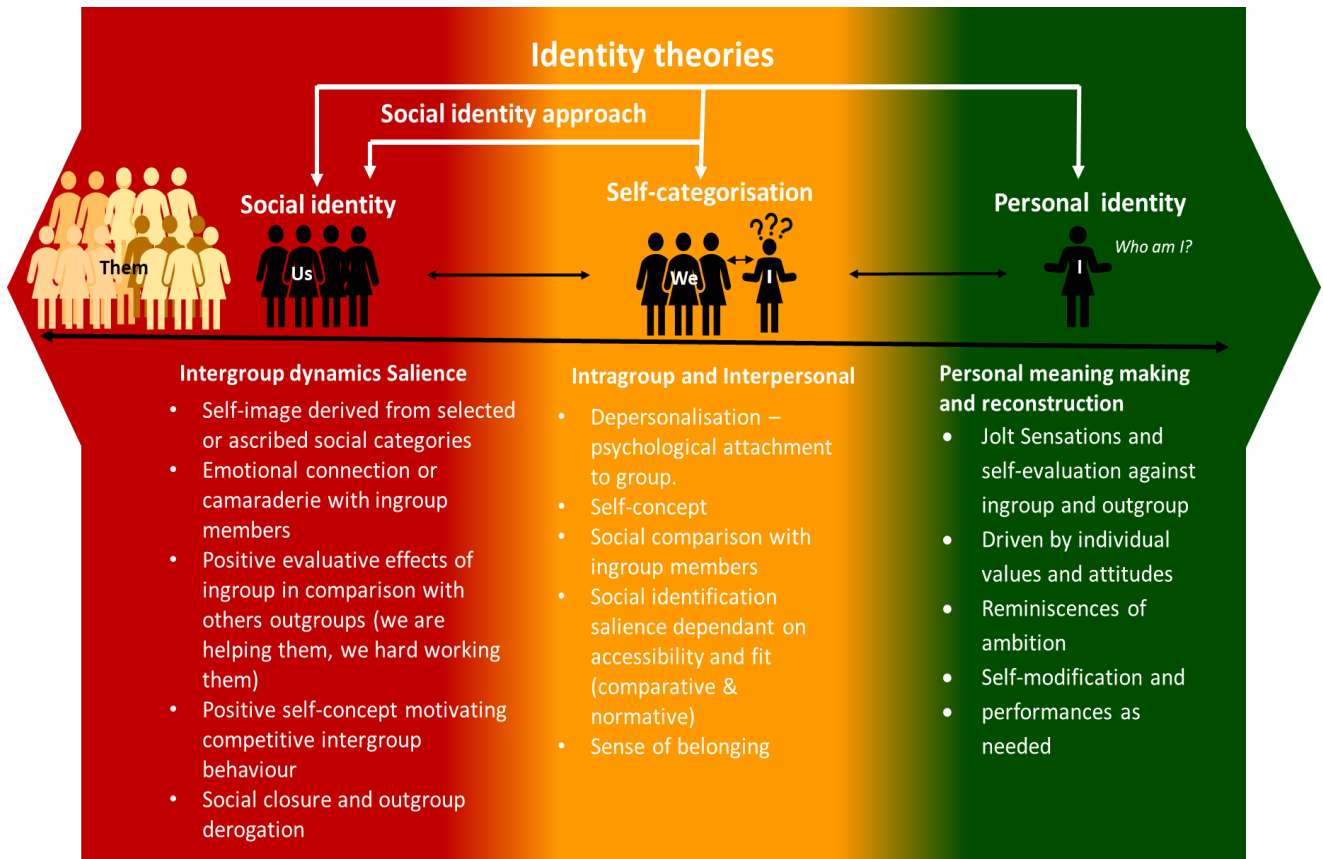


Figure 2: A continuum of the HQHSM women's shifting identities

The Social Identity Approach (SIA) is a group processes and intergroup dynamics globally, revolutionising how people think about several group-mediated phenomena; e.g., cohesion, competition, bias, differentiation, and other behaviours (Hornsey, 2008; Sindic and Condor, 2014; Steffens *et al.*, 2021). As highlighted in figure 2 above, SIA consists of two distinct, albeit intertwined theories: Social Identity Theory (SIT), which was first brought to prominence by Tajfel, Turner, and colleagues, who carried out several experiments with a view to understanding the psychology behind group formation and behaviours (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Turner, Brown and Tajfel, 1979); and Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT), which clarified some of the criticisms of SIT and went further into explaining the intragroup phenomena and categorisations including depersonalisation, normative and comparative fit, and social comparison (Turner *et al.*, 1987).

SIT and SCT are commonly referred to as the SIA due to their many similarities in theoretical and methodological application, having emerged from the same principles and scholars (Hornsey, 2008; Steffens *et al.*, 2017). In several studies, these theories tend to be applied together, interchangeably, or simply as social identity theories. On further examination, their interdependence has made it challenging to keep them completely separate; in this study, I have opted to label them as the social identity approach. That said, it was still crucial to review them individually in the first instance, then together, adding intersectionality as a fusing concept in the following sections.

Social Identity Theory

SIT is a perspective from which identity as a concept is explained through group membership and the role one plays, regardless of whether this group is assumed or socially prescribed. The key aspect is that people come together or are grouped by others because they hold common attributes ('us', 'we', 'ingroup') and exist psychologically compared with other relatable groups ('them', 'they', 'outgroup'). Furthermore, people within their groups are more likely to put the group's interests higher than those of their own; e.g., 'we are in this together' (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Tajfel and colleagues argued that SIT identified groups' status and power levels and found that intergroup behaviour is regulated by people's abilities to criticise and recognise alternatives to the status quo. Tajfel, Turner, and colleagues conducted studies in the seventies explaining the relationship between ingroup (similar, prestigious, and salient) and outgroup (dissimilar, implicitly inferior, and less favoured) by comparing analogous and divergent groups.

The results showed ingroup favouritism and hierarchies, leading to ingroup members preserving limited resources at the expense of outgroup members, devising the Social Identity Theory to understand and explain the psychological basis for intergroup dynamics and dichotomies (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). This was meant to provide an understanding of why people think their group (ingroup) is better than another group (outgroup). Social identity was originally defined as the part of a person's self-concept that derives from knowledge of their membership in a social group, depending on their value and emotional significance (Sindic and Condor, 2014). SIT posits that people's interactions

are on a continuum from interpersonal to intergroup; they shift position according to how they perceive their identity about people in outgroups (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). These classifications can be through similarities such as race, gender, religious affiliation, and other categorisations relevant to each environment. However, Ashforth and Mael (1989) argue that while the classifications, i.e., cognitive segmentation, and social environment, may claim to offer a systematic means of defining other people's classifications based on prototypical characteristics, these assignments have no reliable basis. They reason that the movement on the continuum leads to the classification of themselves and others according to their social identity; thus, people may use these schemas when needed.

Several scholars working in the SIT domain see their work as a way to refine and extend the initial interpretations of SIT instead of presenting it as a basis for novel or alternative perspectives and addressing its complexity. Haslam and Ellemers (2005) contend that it is important to view SIT as a grand theory which, in contrast to theoretical approaches that focus on specific processes, tries to capture the interplay of situational and personal features in order to understand how these might affect a broad range of relevant progressions in organisational contexts. Hornsey (2008) expands on Tajfel's position, adding that the salience of ingroup (us) and outgroup (them) differentiation alters how people see others. People accentuate the positives and similarities in their perception of salient groups and notice and enhance the differences with the outgroups. Therefore, ingroup favouritism is likely to be enhanced where resources are low.

The criticisms of the social identity approach's relevance and applicability has suffered methodological weakness; e.g., a failure to consider other factors such as history, culture, and gender (Rubin and Hewstone, 2004; Martiny and Rubin, 2016). Haslam and Ellemers (2005) argue that Tajfel and colleagues emphasise that outgroup bias is not guaranteed, occurring only where identification with the ingroup is strong; comparison and competition with the outgroup exists; and the outgroup is salient to the in-status. Group critics of SIT argue that it pays little attention to the sources of intergroup differences and ingroup behaviours in accepting the experimental, prescribed groups and perceived discrimination

of outgroup members (Bourhis *et al.*, 1997; Perreault and Bourhis, 1998). Another argument is that there is an over-reliance on small group samples to make grand assertions while ignoring the pivotal role of individuals in the identity acquisition process, and the development of outgroup or otherness hostility (Huddy, 2004; Rubin and Hewstone, 2004).

The growing condemnation by some scholars about the focus on groups at the expense of individualism, and the emphasis on only the 'positive' affinity for the ingroup without any significant movement between groups, led Turner and colleagues to investigate further intragroup relations, leading to the birth of SCT. They found that there is a failure to explain the tendency of the more salient group to adopt authorisation and social closure behaviours; e.g., in the case of white people in organisations occupying the most senior roles, and the microaggressions towards non-white colleagues who strive to fit in if they manage to break the glass ceiling, both in large organisations and smaller ones, a challenge underscored by other scholars (e.g., Trehan, 2007; Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010; Trehan and Rigg, 2015; Shore, Cleveland and Sanchez, 2018). SIT has provided many explanations of ingroup bias in organisations and objections, including the subjectivity of the group development processes. There is need for further research to clarify the measurements in SIT, including how differing meanings in new identities they developed in England in the face of nationalism and globalisation.

SIT is also often criticised for lacking detail on how groups are formed, how people find themselves in these groups, and how groups are mutually inclusive; for example, how groups depend on individuals and vice-versa, and what happens in times of uncertainty. Turner and colleagues' work in the eighties considered the underpinning of the self-process and mutual social influence capability in SCT, seemingly responding to much of the criticism of SIT to date (Turner *et al.*, 1987; Abrams *et al.*, 1990). The scholars began to include some aspects of the messiness of the meaning-making process of people in the groups, an area covered in the sections on personal identity theory below (Turner *et al.*, 1994; Meister, Sinclair and Jehn, 2017). SCT is reviewed in the next section.

Self-Categorisation Theory

The second part of SIA is SCT, a perspective argued to embody the ingroup prototypicality and cohesiveness, increasing influence and leading to power and control over resources (Turner *et al.*, 1987). Turner and colleagues sought to determine social identity's structure, function, and objective, what made it salient, how collective behaviour was structured, and how individuals differentiate themselves in social identity strength and embodiment. SCT's cognitive and explanatory reach was wider than SIT's, and Turner and colleagues studied how individuals form groups and behave collectively. SCT presented an alternative to models that regard groups as aggregations of interpersonally attracted individuals and honoured the interactionist agenda. According to SCT, people form a group when they internalise a shared social identity, which impacts their psychology and behaviour. SCT introduces a novel theory of the self that shows how variation in the self-process underlies human social behaviour (Reicher *et al.*, 2012). One's "self-concept can be described in terms of personal identification or social identity (a distinction inherent in SIT), and its functioning impacts whether people engage in interpersonal or intergroup behaviour" (Reicher *et al.*, 2012, p. 355). Another pertinent description for this research is, "An individual's self-concept is constantly evolving and growing, as one takes on new identities and possibilities or leaves 'old' identity behind. A macro identity transition is when one undergoes a significant change concerning their self-identities" (Meister, Sinclair and Jehn, 2017).

SCT emphasises **intragroup dynamics** above SIT's **intergroup relations**. One of the foundations of SCT is the concept of depersonalisation, which is the loss of one's personality in favour of the survival of a group (Hogg and Terry, 2000). In other words, the founders argue that individuals begin to regard their accomplishments as rewards for their group membership, and begin to see them as the group's accomplishments rather than their own. Depersonalisation underpins group cohesion, influence, conformity, and leadership. Thus, belonging to the group becomes the primary aim, and the roles that individuals play inside that group are secondary.

SCT was Turner and colleagues' elaboration on some of the criticism of SIT for seemingly ignoring the individual aspects of group formation by focusing on the group aspects. They wanted to refine the cognitive elements of intragroup processes and SCT was formally born in 1987, with the argument that it is a different novel theory that posits that categorisation happens with accessibility and fit. Fit refers to the extent to which social categories are perceived to reflect reality concerning the salience of the comparative fit or normative fit, based on the situation at hand (Turner *et al.*, 1987; Ellemers, De Gilder and Haslam, 2004). According to Lai and Smith (2021, p. 495), "the basic three levels of self-categorisation that are of value to individuals are human identity (in contrast to other species), social identity (as distinct from other social groups), and personal identity (as a unique individual)". These self-identity levels are not constant; they change as needed on the SIT continuum.

Another foundation of SCT is the depersonalisation of individual perception, which was thought to underpin group processes; e.g., leadership, influence, and conformity (Turner and Oakes, 1986a). SCT was credited for going beyond SIT to examine intrapersonal processes more deeply, and to clarify what was missing in SIT. However, it has struggled to sit independently from SIT due to the many similarities in ideologies (Turner and Oakes, 1986a; Huddy, 2004), as discussed below. A significant claim is that SCT also extends the viewpoint on stereotypes which was not fully tackled in SIT, making it explicit that stereotypes are vivid and vary based on context relative to the person's perception of their place in their membership of the group, or against outside groups at a given time (Hogg, 2001). These and other SCT proponents contend that group members cognitively represent their social groups at times based on stereotypes. Therefore, they are more likely to gravitate towards the more salient group and change when the situation changes (role representation); the group identity is not static or bare a fixed mental model. For example, where a migrant woman would see herself as similar to other migrants regardless of origin in one situation, the difference will become more pronounced when they view groups as African, Asian, or other European migrants because of both visible and invisible experiences in the organisation. Alternatively, they will see themselves as a nurse against a group of doctors, but they will know the difference in the subtle cues in treatment and how they differ from white nurses. This psychological bargaining happens both consciously and

unconsciously, therefore an important part of self-categorisation is a social function of stereotypes.

SCT acknowledges that a person's identity is multifaceted, with varying inclusiveness levels. It illuminates how people can operate by perceived identities; for example, personal, subgroups or groups (Turner *et al.*, 1987). In contrast, SIT argues that intergroup relations develop and strengthen by interaction within the group, and through comparison with other groups; SCT posits that members move from one group to another in a given situation that they face and have to circumnavigate (Platow, McClintock and Liebrand, 1990; Hains, Hogg and Duck, 1997; Korte, 2007; Steffens *et al.*, 2017, 2021). Alvesson, Ashcraft and Thomas (2008, p. 13) postulate that "One of the key distinctions [between SIT and SCT] is that SIT examines how people understand and position themselves and others in terms of social groups, e.g., ingroup or outgroup whereas SCT investigates what leads to people viewing themselves as a unique individual in some circumstances and in others to define the self through group membership thereby depersonalising aspects of identity."

Additionally, SCT proponents argue that humans represent social groups as prototypes. Turner and colleagues claim that when a category becomes salient, people view themselves and other group members as interchangeable group prototypes, a subjective view of a social category's distinguishing traits that vary by environment (Abrams *et al.*, 1990; Stets and Burke, 2003). The emphasis in SCT is that group identity describes what it means to be a member and what attitudes, feelings, and behaviours are appropriate. Abrams *et al.* (1990) and, subsequently, Turner *et al.* (1994) state that fit relates to how well the social categories mirror social reality; that is, how well they are perceived to indicate disparities. The two types of fit are:

- Comparative fit, where a person may sense an elevated level of fit if the category distinction maximises perceived intergroup differences while minimising perceived intragroup differences.

- Normative fit occurs if social behaviour and group membership are understood to be consistent with stereotypical expectations, implying that a category distinction is more likely to have a high fit.

Despite the similarities and challenges in distinguishing the differences between SIT and SCT, SCT offers a more in-depth examination of the intragroup and subgroup dynamics. Turner and colleagues contend that control over key resources defines power, while power allows for influence, and mutual influence leads to affective communities. The literature reviewed in this section reveals that these two theories have been examined together in recent years as SIA. Therefore, in concluding the review of these theories, a summary examination of SIT and SCT is provided in the next section.

SIT and SCT Together

This review found that while the beginnings of SIT and SCT were centred around group struggle, prejudice, and the way marginalised people were treated and in fighting for social change (Turner and Oakes, 1986b; Reicher, 2004), in recent research and writing, SIA has been applied as seeing the dominant group as the ingroup and the other groups as the outgroups. Therefore, studies that have applied SIA have tended to focus on the actions of the white majority (Uhl-Bien and Pillai, 2007; Steffens *et al.*, 2017, 2021; Turner *et al.*, 2019). For example, Turner *et al.* (1987) sought to clarify the intragroup or personal angle to SIT in developing SCT, arguing that SCT focuses on relationships within one group, and on how people within derive characteristics from fellow members through social comparison. The members then collectively compare themselves to members of another group. This comparison was perceived to accentuate positive attributes while simultaneously heightening the differences with other groups that they saw as having a lower status. Thereby, it heightened the competitiveness of the more salient ingroup members, leading to social closure (e.g., Weeden, 2002; Schulz, 2019; Naylor, 2021). Social closure refers to the 'politics' of drawing boundaries, often implicit in modern organisations as people construct and maintain monopolies of scarce resources and positions in the higher echelons of the organisation (ingroup), consequently hampering the potential benefits of participation in leadership, and remuneration for the outgroups (Naylor, 2021).

Turning these assertions upside down, researchers exploring experiences of ethnic minorities in less 'victim'-based settings must see them as the ingroup to understand better their place in organisations. For example, aligning to Turner *et al.* (1994), as the psychological activation of social categories initiated the depersonalisation process, people came to view themselves as interchangeable community representatives with something to offer the host country (Qureshi, Varghese and Osella, 2013). Scholars in SCT contend that individuals' cognitive self-stereotypes align with the ingroup archetype; for instance, first with other migrants, then comparing themselves based on their future selves. They shift from personal to group-based perceptions and behaviours and absorb the group into their self-concept (Sealy, 2010; Buchanan and Settles, 2019). As time passes, based on many varying factors, their perceptions alter, and they begin to see themselves as part of many other groups, including as highly qualified, highly skilled professionals, which may have been a viewpoint that became less salient in the early stages of their life in England due to their treatment and experiences.

SIA's other criticisms and conflation include the generalisations of the samples in theory experiments without due focus on how emergent phenomena arising from personal cognition, affect, behaviour or other traits are enhanced by the participants' interactions in the groups and manifested as higher-level collective phenomena (Korte, 2007; Schulz, 2019). It is further argued that theorists and scholars tend to inflate the concept's relevance and explanatory power. According to (Pratt, 2003), overusing these terms and concepts confuses the quest for identity and risks, marginalising a key concept with contradictory meanings. Socially moulded identity is widely accepted, but understanding social identity requires additional investigation.

This research focuses on the complexities of group formation rooted in historical and racial-cultural contexts and discrimination in the Black African HQHSM women under study. Studies involving intergroup relations consisting of disadvantaged and dominant groups open up to emergent experiences originating from individuals' cognition, feelings, behaviours, or other attributes. Individuals interact, share viewpoints, and produce cognitive, motivational, and behavioural (e.g., coordination) phenomena at team level

when exposed to contextual circumstances (Kozlowski and Chao, 2012; Eckardt *et al.*, 2019). Research on SIA has grown in size and clarity, correcting some of the misconceptions and criticisms that the emergence of individuals in the ever-developing identity formation failed to do. They argue that combining top-down and bottom-up mechanisms that facilitate group formation is critical to closing the research gap, to which this study will contribute theoretically and methodologically. Next, the review will focus on Personal Identity Theory.

Personal Identity Theory

In addition to SIA, which focuses on group membership and a person's role in the group, Personal Identity Theory (PIT), as defined in Hitlin (2003, pp. 118–9), is the “critical sense of self-developed over time and place when the person embarks on and pursues individual goals or ambitions that are not seen of as belonging to a group”. Thus, personal identity underscores individual autonomy rather than collective commitment. Individuals see it as fundamental or unique to themselves and their values as opposed to the ways that group membership and the role one plays in the group do not; it is frequently discussed as a set of idiosyncratic characteristics that distinguish the person from others. (Stets and Burke, 2000) contended that social identity theorists (including identity theorists) have cited the person's identity. However, the discourse has not moved past the analysis of how these fit within the broader identity discourse (Stets and Burke, 2000; Hitlin, 2003). This aspect of identity theory can be traced back to Stryker's (1968) identity theory, which states that those identities require that people be placed as social objects by having others assign them a positional designation. In addition, the person accepts or internalises the designation sought to analytically examine the mind's internal processes representing concepts of the “I” and the “Me” (Burke, 1991).

Stryker and Burke were inspired by the 1930s American philosopher, George Herbert Mead. Mead (1934), as cited in Stryker (1968, 2007), asserted that gestures were the key to understanding social interaction and communication, defining them as actions that elicited responses. He believed that all living creatures communicated with gestures and meaningful responses, and that people utilised gestures and symbols (Stryker, 1968, 1980,

2007; Stryker and Serpe, 1982; Stryker and Burke, 2000; Cook, 2007; Merolla *et al.*, 2012). According to Mead, meaningful symbols were essential for provoking sensations in people as in their intended receivers. He also argued that people absorbed the attitudes of others toward huge symbols as their own, similar to how patriotism was activated through admiring causes. Once internalised, these meaningful symbols stimulate contemplation, a silent monologue in which one considers alternative ways to a problem or issue. Mead claimed that a person's sense of self derived from self-awareness, and from viewing themselves as experience objects. He stated that a person's concept of 'self' did not emerge until they internalised the opinions of others as their perspective when asking the question, "who am I?" Thus, the personality evolves through social experience, contemplating others' opinions, and evaluating one's internal thought processes outside of their personality.

Therefore, it made sense to view the social structural variant of identity theory developed by Stryker, and the perceptual control variant developed by Burke, as complementary research theories within an overarching, unitary terrain of this identity theory (Merolla *et al.*, 2012; Stets and Serpe, 2016). One more concept and its relevance to identity theory's core formula concerns the relationship with social structures as boundaries, which originated early in the development of identity theory, helping or hindering access to interactional units subject to commitments (Stryker, 1980). The self was perceived as a collection of separate identities, with individuals having as many identities as their role relationships. It was also suggested that the self was organised by hierarchies, mirroring society. The self was viewed, therefore, as a structure of identities, and identities' prominence and significance depended on their cognitive schema. Identity salience was the likelihood that an individual identity would be elicited in a different context, or that a given identity would be invoked across people. Psychological centrality, therefore, was a person's perceived identity importance. Identity theory posited that the decision between or among role behaviours reflected the identities' relative location in the identity hierarchies. PIT delves into the process a person goes through in meaning-making and reconstruction based on their values and what they are willing to consider. Some of the key proponents of this form of identity theory include Ashforth and Mael (1989), Ibarra (1999), Alvesson, Hardy and Harley (2008), Ashforth, Harrison and Corley (2008), Atewologun and

Sealy (2011), Atewologun (2014), and Carrim and Nkomo (2016). Ashforth and colleagues defined personal identity as “a person’s distinct characteristics and interests or a person’s unique self” (Ashforth, Harrison and Corley, 2008, pp. 327–8).

Identity has been nicknamed a “master signifier”, and similar to SIA, it has been studied in different disciplines, including psychology, sociology, politics, health and social sciences, business studies, and LOS (Alvesson, Hardy and Harley, 2008; Atewologun, 2011). According to Schneider (2021), “Identity theory is a family of views on the relationship between body and mind”. He also cited U.T. Place, Herbert Feigl, and JJC Smart, who produced the earliest versions of identity theory around the 1950s. Since then, various scholars have devised their own versions of theories related to mind, body, type, role, and social conduct, some of which have been contested.

In the UK context and within organisational studies, Atewologun, Sealy and colleagues were found to have studied the theory extensively, focussing hugely on identity meaning-making and its relationship with intersectionality (e.g., Atewologun, Singh and Vinnicombe, 2007; Atewologun and Sealy, 2011; Atewologun *et al.*, 2013, 2017; Atewologun, 2014; Atewologun, Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2016b). These scholars argued for the studies of identity in the organisation to include the juxtaposition of the intersecting identity heightening episodes, and the messiness of the meaning-making process that ethnic minorities, especially those holding leadership positions, experience in their careers. Proponents of this type of identity research focused on ‘self’ and ‘identification’ and how these were reconstructed as a result of self-questioning, such as how one presented themselves in a setting to fit in; e.g., through physical appearance, clothing, life changes or any other aspect of self-concept that can be adjusted to fit in organisations. Researchers contend that identity construction can be aided by the forthrightness to adjust to external influences (both positive and negative) while remaining grounded. However, this process could be marred by the mismatch of a complex mix of psychological processes, which could result in self-doubt and dissonance. In this space, the person goes through various levels of provisional selves, which shift depending on awareness and the environment to help the person adapt and act in ways that are perceived as acceptable (Ibarra, 1999). Ibarra

conducted research with six bankers and six consultants who had moved to vice president and team leader positions, and nine bankers and thirteen consultants who had moved to director and client account manager positions. The individuals were asked about their responsibilities, experiences, talents, restrictions, and resources.

The research found that people adjusted to new responsibilities by experimenting with their transient provisional selves before constructing fully established professional identities. Ibarra purported that transitioning to new roles includes three tasks:

- Studying role models to form future identities;
- Experimenting with provisional selves; and
- Assessing experiments in light of internal norms, values, and responses to external input.

This review's findings demonstrate that environmental factors impact the adaption of behaviours by influencing self-reconstruction. The strength of this personal identity theory was its focus on values and meaning-making, and its regarding of personal values as having a functional role in situations that may produce changes in the self and self-concept. It can be argued that a persona from a collectivist culture moving to an individualistic culture that promotes professionalism, is leaving one's problems outside the workplace, as concurrently purporting to be inclusive would be confusing and challenging to adapt to, thus affecting the identity meaning-making and reconstruction process (Volpe and Murphy, 2011; Schein and Schein, 2016).

Distinctions and parallels between SIA and PIT exist, but the goals are interlinked; therefore, some academics argue that merging the theories would be more effective in offering a comprehensive picture (Hitlin, 2003; Cinoğlu and Arikan, 2012; Stets and Burke, 2014). After conducting this review, understanding one's place in society regarding duties and group membership is just as crucial as drawing on what happens during this process. Examining socially ascribed identities and personal identity meaning-making and construction as a result of occupying intersectionality; e.g., woman, professional, Black, and migrant, helped the holistic interpretation of the responses. When studying populations

such as migrants, it is important to remember that people carry many interesting identities, which present themselves on many occasions. With that in mind, I decided to fuse identity theories with intersectionality to build an even stronger lens through which to view my research. This review follows next.

Fusing identity and intersectionality

Identity theory or theories and intersectionality have long been used to research disparate groups. It is pertinent to fuse the studies of identity in ethnic minorities with intersectionality because it has been observed that Black women's positions in an organisation cannot be thoroughly examined without taking a step back from the single or dual-axis frameworks used by several researchers in LOS (Atewologun, Singh and Vinnicombe, 2007; Carrim and Nkomo, 2016; Atewologun *et al.*, 2018).

Intersectionality rose to prominence as a way of understanding the context of multiple systems of oppression that interlock and leave marginalised women struggling to be seen or heard, starting with a focus on Black African American women's intersecting identities of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991, 2017). Later, intersectionality was also used in a much broader sense. Crenshaw (1989) explained how multiple complex experiences could be challenging to remedy through single or even double praxis models in her canonical article. She called us to imagine "traffic on an intersection coming and going from all directions. An accident that happens at an intersection can be caused by traffic driving in any number of the directions and at times from all the directions" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149). She argued that "sometimes, they experience discrimination as Black women-not the sum of race and sex discrimination, but as Black women. She lamented that "Black women's experiences were much deeper than the broad categories that discrimination discourse provided. However, the continued insistence that Black women's challenges needed to be filtered through categorical analyses that obscured their experiences guaranteed that their needs would seldom be addressed" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 151).

The studies of Black women's challenges began some time before Crenshaw (1989), though, with feminist movements in which Black women felt that white women did not

include them or other ethnic minority women in the first and second waves of feminism (Shields, 2008; Carbin and Edenheim, 2013; Nash, 2019). At its core, intersectionality relates to the experience of coexisting oppressions and discrimination, and has continued to be applied to various disciplines. It has been hailed as a positive and also criticised for its lack of theoretical grounding by scholars both in North America and other parts of the world (Nash, 2017, 2019; McCluney and Rabelo, 2019).

Although intersectionality has been accused of essentialism and there has been criticism in its application as a theory and adoption as a method, coupled with ongoing discussions over its best uses, scholars agree on its strength. Many have seen the potential of intersectionality and its ability to develop into a unifying force that makes it easier to discuss complicated matters in a less superior manner for an optimistic future. Davis (2008), as cited by Fisher, Wauthier and Gajjala (2013), contended that its paradoxicality is why others found it too vague for practical use. However, they acknowledged that “more defined lines for use would be helpful to many and reason that one of the biggest benefits is that ‘intersectionality initiates a process of discovery, alerting us to the fact that the world around us is always more complicated and contradictory than we ever could have anticipated’” (Fisher, Wauthier and Gajjala, 2013, p. 57).

In combining the social identity approach (SIT and SCT), personal identity theory, and intersectionality, the study draws on Atewologun (2014)’s proposition that scholars seeking to expand the understanding of minorities in the LOS could place intersectionality with identity to gain a richer understanding of their multiple identities and juxtapositions. For example, this study addresses the advantages of having in a job in the U.K., and the disadvantageous deskilling, along with the other disadvantages with which Black women have to contend as they mould their changing identity, Atewologun (2011) argues that researchers must pay attention to ongoing identification and the efforts to reconstruct the ever-changing identification encounters. That said, it is my belief and inclination that social identities and personal identity provide a fuller picture for the participant, hence amalgamating them as the lens for this research.

Another group of U.K.-based scholars, Opara *et al.* (2020), conducted a study to explore the current understanding of the workplace experience of BAME professional women, and how these impacted wellbeing outcomes. They highlighted that the lack of studies on ethnic minority professional women reflected the failure to consider the intersecting organisational identities and experiences that these women brought to the workplace. They problematised the singular and static identity categories in intersectional investigations in organisation studies as they addressed minority ethnicity, gender, and nationality interaction, finding two emergent themes:

(i) experiences of misperceived identity imposition, whereby such social treatment had implications for participants' wellbeing and (ii) the use of strategic essentialism by participants based on nationality, ethnicity and gender, an innovative finding in intersectional research. We conclude that a focus on identity categories such as ethnicity or race and gender alone may lead to the further constraining and classifying specific individuals (Opara, Sealy and Ryan, 2020, p. 1192).

2.6. Theoretical framework

The preceding section details the social identity approach, identity theory, and intersectionality. This section provides the theoretical framework underpinning this research. A theoretical framework is the bedrock of all research and can include terms, concepts, models, thoughts, ideas, and references to specific theories. Moreover, the underlying structure consists of concepts or theories that provide the scaffolding or frame that informs the study (Maxwell, 2013). It is derived from the researcher's orientation to the study; in other words, the theoretical framework is the lens through which the researcher studies the phenomena (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). Some researchers use the theoretical and conceptual frameworks interchangeably, and the confusion in explaining the two still lingers in academic writing. There remains much debate as to the difference between them and their usage; however, the discussion on the frameworks is outside the scope of this research.

Collins and Stockton, (2018) assert that a theoretical framework uses a theory or integrated theories to convey the researchers' values, and offers an articulated lens or prism

demonstrating how the study will process and produce new knowledge. It sits at the junction of:

- (1) existing knowledge and formed ideas about complex phenomena,
- (2) the researcher's epistemological disposition,
- (3) a lens and methodically analytic approach (Collins and Stockton, 2018, p. 2)

This research covers a complex topic that needs a combination of theories fused with intersectionality that potentially impact the trajectory of Black African HQHSM women, as illustrated in figure 3 below. The framework begins at the entry point for the Black African HQHSM women who have an identity as professionals the UK government has invited explicitly through visas such as the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP), or implicitly through the seemingly welcoming points-based visa system, or through employers and educational institutions who are given the go-ahead to recruit foreign workers to help reduce the shortage in critical skills in the UK (HSMP Forum, 2008; Patel, 2020; UK Migration Advisory Committee, 2020). The antecedents are that migrants respond by selling their belongings and raising money to pay for the voyage with the promise of a great job with excellent benefits. What is not comprehended is that they are going into a system that sees them as 'simply labour' with little regard for where they will live on arrival; and they are not cognisant of the labels that will be ascribed to them by the society they are joining. They see themselves as highly sought-after professionals whose personal expertise is needed, having met the visa requirements to enter the UK.

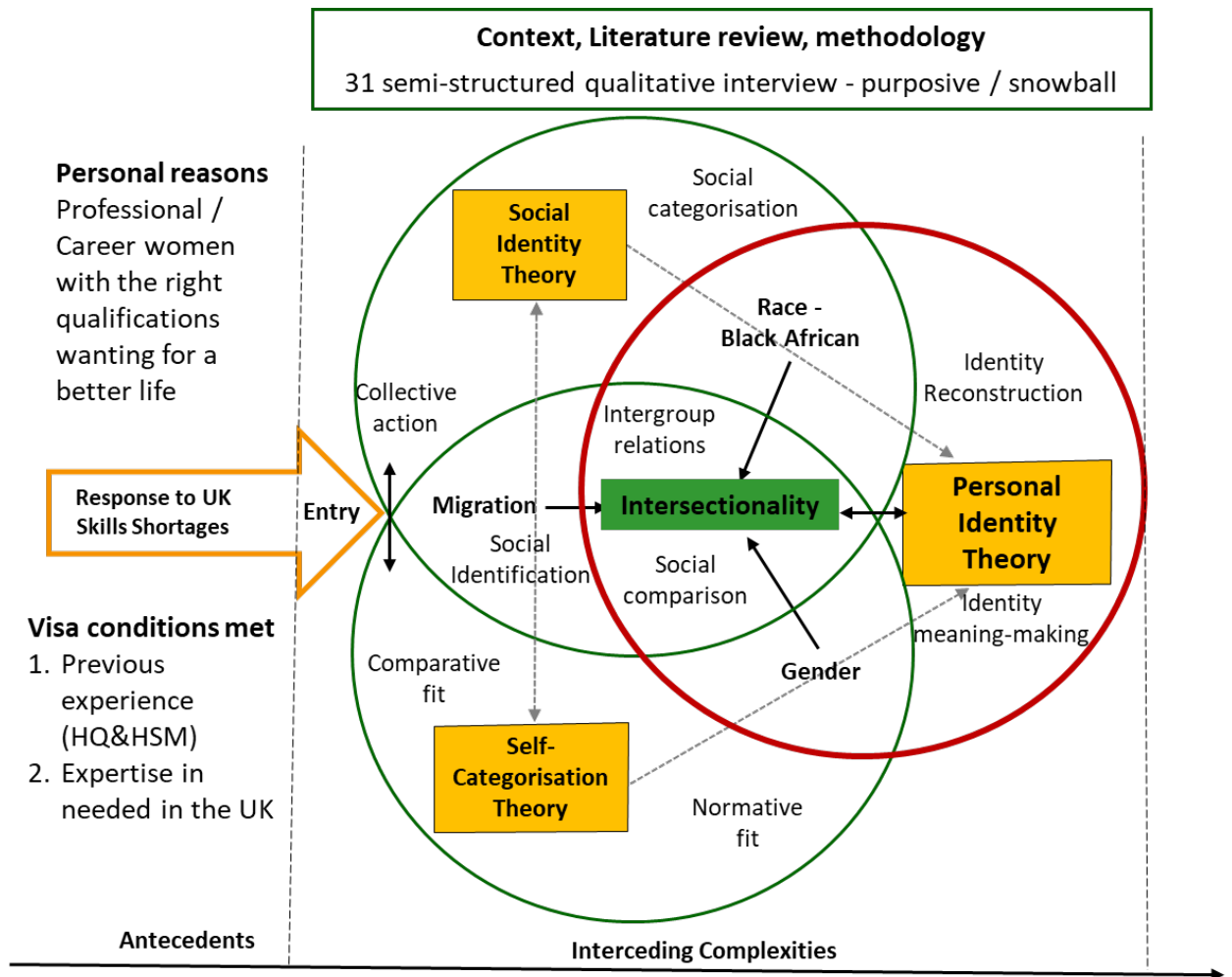


Figure 3: Theoretical framework

Upon entry and processing through the port of entry (airport), the first step in social identity theory kicks in as social categorisation becomes a reality. They begin experiencing categorisation and comparison as they complete their entry forms and are questioned about the legitimacy of their entry to the UK by immigration staff. The social groups are assigned to the arrival terminal based on their passport and visa. From this point on, the SIA process begins, signified by the three interconnected circles meeting in the centre, where intersectionality sits. The circles merge with the three significant factors, demonstrating the identity reconciliation movement, and the intersecting factors face inwards. The movement between SIT and SCT has double pointers depicting the travel back and forth as they build a strong identity, feeding into the roles they take on. Throughout their stay, they must navigate their social identity as members of multiple outgroups due

to their intersecting identities. With time, they go through re-forming, re-constructing and sometimes assuming provisional identities to pull them through situations depicted by the mediating and dependant variable. All the aspects in this literature review highlight the research gap, which is discussed in the next section.

2.7. The gap in research

This review found that the diversity categorisations differed immensely among the studies conducted concerning the UK, focusing on collective categories such as BAME, BME, and the pan-ethnic identities of the minority (Aspinall, 2002, 2010). Inadvertently, the collective groups are placed in the 'done for you' pile by trying to fix the problem using sticking plaster methods that either justify or dismiss the issues faced by racial minorities, without considering the voices of the groups they seek to help. The way race is studied in the UK suffers from oversimplification and essentialism, suggesting that all BAME people have the same issues, which can be fixed by one great initiative (Fernando and Kenny, 2018; Aspinall, 2021). Essentialism is the association of people's common underlying attributes, such as gender or race, which affect group membership (Humbert, Kelan and Van den Brink, 2018). While essentialism is neither positive nor negative, some researchers attribute it to racial and social inequalities leading to certain minority groups fighting to 'save' their identities and organisations using these loopholes as tick-box exercises (Modood, 1994; Chao *et al.*, 2007; Gunnarsson, 2011).

Researchers who have studied race, such as Mandalaywala, Amodio and Rhodes (2018), argue that if racial boundaries and bias define essentialism, this produces negativity within the groups based on other factors such as class and education. It can be argued that the strong belief in essentialism perpetuates the prejudices and hierarchies within minority groups, with only the most salient within the pan-ethnic groups gaining the highest advantages. In some cases, the race is denied by the people who may be entrusted to highlight the challenges (Nkomo, 2021). For example, an investigation into race and ethnic disparities in the UK by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED, 2021) reported that they found no evidence of institutional racism in the UK. The findings were

frustrating and caused despondency to those who were continuing to keep racial inequalities research front and centre (CRED, 2021).

In addition, several scholars' findings (e.g. Davies, 2015; Green, 2017; McGregor-Smith, 2017b, 2017a; Vinnicombe, Doldor and Sealy, 2018; Hampton *et al.*, 2019; Parker *et al.*, 2020) argue that there are reasons to focus on salient dimensions such as researching the lack of gender balance, ethnic diversity in leadership, or racial disparities in organisations with little follow-on action to address them. Moreover, the way race is studied tends to run parallel to other less controversial topics, competing for resources, thereby making it even harder for the elucidation of the more obscure communities; for example, Asian and African women, people with disabilities, and more so, those harbouring all the identities that can easily be used in discrimination who often find themselves at the bottom of ethnic hierarchies and paying ethnic penalties (Fullin, 2011; Zwysen, Di Stasio and Heath, 2021). Despite these challenges, the emphasis of diversity studies has shifted over the past fifty years from an initial anti-discrimination and equality or equal rights perspective of the underrepresentation of racial minorities and women in management, to individualised experiences of belonging to complex, fluid categories largely influenced by the time and space of those being researched (Nkomo *et al.*, 2019).

The implicit preference of diversity studies over race and, at times, even gender, has diluted the importance of viewing race as a category that needs distinct categorisation and must be heard if there is to be a reduction of racial and ethnic disparities in organisations. Nkomo (2020) reiterated the need for more race and diversity scholars showing concern about unequal access to unapologetically push forward as a society (Black, brown, and white) and come together to stand against the virus of systemic racism that has for long plagued marginalised communities. Nkomo and colleagues (e.g. Cooper *et al.*, 2014; Obinna, 2016; Miller, 2018; Virdee and McGeever, 2018) contended that an over-contrite approach calls for more critical researchers to explicitly focus on race, which appears drowned out by the diversity bandwagon.

The United Kingdom's emphasis on broader categorisation in dealing with ethnic minorities and diversity helps the organisation demonstrate inclusiveness. FTSE companies being asked to volunteer to have at least one 'person of colour' on their board (e.g. Parker *et al.*, 2020) does not help in appropriately including those on the margins. Researchers such as Ahmed (2009) examine some problems and paradoxes of embodying diversity in organisations. They explore how diversity becomes a commitment requiring those who represent it to express happiness and gratitude, and how embodying diversity could put the same people it is meant to help under pressure to live with the perception of a problem solved, thus making them feel unable to adequately call out racism or other negative experiences hampering their career development and progression (Rigg and Trehan, 1999; Trehan, 2007). In addition, another challenge that other researchers face in Black women's experiences in the U.K. is the overreference to North American experiences, which assume marked differences in how Black women experience racism and discrimination. Much of the available North American research inferences have strong, painful roots in critical race theory, Black feminist theory, social justice, and post-colonial experiences and the significant differences in overt racism, as well as visible discrimination. The experience in the UK, one may argue, is significantly different.

Atewologun *et al.* (2017) argue that while intersectionality illuminates organisational diversity, there is always room for further research. They suggest exploring individuals' race-and-identity experiences to understand better the interplay of multiple identities individuals may carry, especially those from less salient backgrounds whose identity as minorities in the organisations becomes more salient as they are always on the lookout for their environment and actions. Identity theory has been applied to intersectionality and ethnicity in organisations; for example, considering that a Black woman in a leadership position not only has to be aware of her privileged position as a leader and woman, but also her disadvantage as a minority carrying certain stereotypical aspects that have to be kept in check in order to be 'accepted' in the high echelon they occupy.

Black African HQHSM women's experiences in the U.K. differ considerably from those of the USA. Therefore, relying on USA-centric narratives of the experiences of Black women

in the U.K. risks marginalising them and missing the opportunity to hear their voices (Opara, Sealy and Ryan, 2020). Nonetheless, American scholarship sets the scene for Black women's studies in the U.K. and other parts of the world. Washington and Harris (2001) assert that despite many years of asking to be seen and heard by scholars and many others, silence, erasure, and censure are still issues for Black women (Lorde, 1984; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Nkomo, 1992; Collins, 1996; Bell *et al.*, 2003; Nash, 2020). Those coming to the U.K. as migrants are not exempt from it, though it can be argued that unlike those born in the West who have been confronted with the remnants of colonialism, African-born Black women did not grow up having to question their identity, thus being faced with these issues on arrival into the U.K. posed a considerable shock. Staying within the essence of LOS, researching identity with intersectionality emphasises questioning the role and meaning-making process that ethnic minorities undergo; i.e., "who am I?" and "How should I act?". This represents the process of meaning-making as one makes sense of the world around them and develops relationships in their organisation with superiors, and with colleagues.

This literature review concludes that a significant gap remains in understanding how each person (in this case, Black African HQHSM woman) arrives in an organisation as a person with their unique identity comprising of country attitudes, memories, behaviours, values, and work ethic. They then have to start building a self-image that fits in with being in the U.K. and the organisation in which they are employed. Therefore, this is better viewed through SIA, PIT, and intersectionality. Viewed together, these perspectives of exploring and examining identity and reconstruction offer a more holistic examination of the lived experiences, which do not appear to have received much attention in leadership and organisational studies. I argue that the intergroup dynamic inevitably functions as a signifier of a power play in the organisation, potentially threatening the likelihood of Black African HQHSM women joining organisations in their new country (England). The elevated level of diversity means increased groupings with the dominant population of natives, and those who have been in the organisation (e.g., British, born ethnic minorities) feel the need to protect their territory as ingroups leading to the salience of differences such as race, skin colour, gender, and migrant status. Future research could compare the experiences of

other types of migrants (e.g., Asians, Arabs, and Black men) to explore their experiences and triangulate findings on a broader scale.

2.8. Chapter summary

This chapter has covered some key literature relevant to this research. It started with a critical review of the main areas; (2.2) Race, ethnicity, and gender diversity in HRM and LOS; (2.3) Research into skilled migrants and HQHSMs; (2.4) Governments' inward focus on research into HQHSMs, after which a detailed review of the theoretical underpinning relating to identity reconstruction and resocialisation in organisations was conducted in (2.5). It culminated in a theoretical framework in (2.6), and the study as the contribution (2.7). The next chapter provides the research context.

3. Context

3.1. Chapter overview

Developing a context for research is a vital feature of any project, and it helps the readers to appreciate the concepts used by the researcher (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). This study concerns Black African HQHSM women working in public sector organisations in England. Therefore, in this research context, it is essential to operationalise the two localities of interest: Africa and the public sector in England.

As argued in the previous chapters, Black African HQHSM women face multiple disadvantages due to their intersecting identities of being African, Black, migrants, women, highly skilled, and highly qualified, and finding themselves at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchies even when compared to white women, other ethnic minority women, and Black men. Furthermore, research has shown that Black women are more prone to negative attributions of the 'angry Black woman' stereotype in appraisal for leadership positions, negatively affecting their career mobility (Motro *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, this research will contribute to understanding the Black African migrant woman who is also highly qualified and highly skilled, and unearth valuable insights that will aid further research in HRM and OB management and leadership scholarship. This section discusses why migrants' contributions are critical to host and home countries.

Over half of African countries are considered economically poor; nine of the ten poorest countries in the world are in Africa (World population review, 2021). Africa lags behind the other continents, ravaged by calamities, war, illnesses, and the remnants of colonialism. Many historians have blamed the vestiges of colonialism for continuous political unrest. In addition, outbreaks of diseases such as HIV and Ebola have seen many African families lose loved ones, leaving many orphans behind. On the positive side, Africans are rich in culture, and many live on the Ubuntu philosophy, meaning families and communities look out for one another (Nzimakwe, 2014). A succinct explanation of Ubuntu follows:

“Traditionally, the African concept of caring involved all the members of the village or community, family, relatives, tribe, and ancestors. Many sub-Saharan languages have

versions of the word “Ubuntu”, which roughly means “humanness” or “a person is a person through other persons.” The principle of Ubuntu introduces the concept of belonging and caring, and it is seen as a tradition of caring for other regales of bloodlines passed down through the generations and inherited tribal practices” (Nolte and Downing, 2019, pp. 1–2).

Africans also know that the primary way out of poverty is through education, which receives such strong emphasis. This drive for education means those who are lucky enough to be highly educated are seen as attractive by developed countries, who are constantly looking for HQHSMs to fill their skill gaps. Some have dubbed this the ‘brain drain’ of Africa, raising a debate about whether the Global North countries are depleting the human capital of the Global South. (e.g. Iredale, 2001; Biavaschi *et al.*, 2016; Bartram, Poros and Monforte, 2017; Chand, 2019). Chand (2019) addresses the push-pull factors of African migrants to the USA for better salaries and life, arguing that more research is needed to understand the brain drain and brain gain, including the benefits to the country of origin, the US, and the migrants themselves. Within the spirit of ubuntu, Africans still carry moral responsibility to the people they leave behind when they migrate. Furthermore, despite this brain drain, Africa continues to see good economic growth, part of which is attributed to those migrants who continue to send money back to their families in their countries of origin, and who establish businesses that generate income in their countries.

Regrettably, migrants’ contributions are rarely acknowledged or documented, and governments and the media opt only to report the negative aspects of these migrants (Cummings *et al.*, 2015; Barnard *et al.*, 2019; Mcauliffe, Kitimbo and Khadria, 2020). In the United Kingdom (UK), the location of this research, Home Office records do not appear to track the career trajectories of HQHSMs once they have entered the country. This responsibility tends to be left to employers (UK Migration Advisory Committee, 2019a). While the employing organisations are keen on filling their vacancies, I argue that they have no interest in tracking the movement of their migrant professionals once they have filled the position for which they were employed. Career upward mobility is left to the individual migrants who may not even understand the laws of the land, *let alone* the organisational politics. The next section discusses the challenges migrant employees face that can potentially impact their career trajectory before starting their career mobility journey.

UK immigration: Precariousness and hostility

Migrants from all around the world respond to the invitation to help to solve the UK labour shortage problems, whether implicitly or explicitly, through programmes such as the Windrush generation between 1948 and 1970, the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP) between 2002 and 2008, or the current points-based system, which has undergone multiple amendments. African migrants often have to raise money for the voyage by selling possessions and family support, hoping the move will benefit the 'village' through reinvestment in those they leave behind (Cummings *et al.*, 2015). The alluring invitation means those with the required qualifications see a potentially better life in the UK, packing up their bags and selling off their possessions to afford the cost of the voyage. Many uproot their spouses and children to move to the UK to take up jobs they had already been offered, or start searching for jobs depending on the type of visa they have (Duncan and Waldorf, 2010; Aure, 2013; Cebolla-Boado and Miyar-Busto, 2017). According to various Home Office policy papers and reports, the UK government encourages HQHSMs to take up jobs in the UK (UK Migration Advisory Committee, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2019c, 2020). Employers and agencies support a massive recruitment drive for essential staff from overseas to work in the public sector; e.g. health, education, social care and technology and engineering fields, as in other OECD countries (Iredale, 2001, 2005; Nathan, 2014; Biavaschi *et al.*, 2016; Chand, 2019). Another group of migrants entering the labour market may have arrived on student visas and as asylum seekers after receiving their refugee status. However, the conditions in the UK have been known to be hostile upon arrival.

Throughout history, the UK has been seen through an imperialistic lens. The issue of migration has brought much political discourse from the age of slavery and colonialism, and the remnants of that status have made it one of the most favoured countries for migrant settlement. However, the juxtaposition of its quality of ruling other countries and nationalistic policies has been a long-standing issue, leading to hostile and antagonistic media coverage of migrants, and xenophobia within the country (Anderson, 2013; Ince *et al.*, 2015). In more recent times, this has been exemplified by the introduction of the Home Office's hostile environment policies, which are aimed at making it extremely difficult for

the migrants who were invited to work in the UK to seek indefinite leave to remain in the UK after the expiry of their limited leave to remain status (York, 2019; Griffiths and Yeo, 2021).

The conditions of migrants in the UK have varied significantly. The immigration acts have, over time, been tightened, removing the rights of those who wish to stay in the UK indefinitely. While some argue that these policies are aimed at illegal immigrants, they also affect those with a limited legal right to stay (Wilcock, 2019). In addition to the hostile environment legislation and changes to the UK Immigration Acts 2014 and 2016, this hostility can in fact be traced back to before the 1970s. Human rights advocates have widely criticised the policy changes, which have also been ruled inhumane by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The UK government has also been through high-profile court battles; e.g. the HSMP Forum court case, which saw the High Court rule that the government acted unlawfully against thousands of migrants on the HSMP visa or, more recently, the Equality and Human rights commission taking the government to court concerning the 2018 Windrush scandal, which saw children of the Windrush generation being treated in a hostile manner, with many losing their livelihood and facing deportation (HSMP Forum, 2008; Perry, 2015; Griffiths and Yeo, 2021).

Clearly, for many, the road is rough, exacerbated by the HQHSMs possibly not knowing how hostile the environment would be when they left their countries of origin (OC). Potentially, there is a further, significant negative impact on women, who traditionally take up lower-paid positions on the Home Office's Shortage Occupation List (SOL), which provides manpower to critical public services such as health, education, social care, and other services. The SOL lists occupations on Tier 2 general visas, which only apply to non-EEA citizens in 2019. The fields on the SOL are prioritised in the UK immigration system and benefit employers by not requiring them to meet the salary threshold (£35,800 in 2019). In addition, they are not required to show that they have tried to employ domestically, saving them money, time and recruitment costs (UK Migration Advisory Committee, 2019a). It simply means employers can bypass the labour market test and recruit cheap migrant

labour, mainly from third-world countries, then pay them at a lower rate when they arrive in the country. This also applies to asylum seekers who are generally not allowed to work.

Nonetheless, they can apply for a job on the SOL after living in the UK for at least 12 months. While this may seem attractive to the HQHSMs, it can be problematic because the migrants can find themselves at a disadvantage. A salary of £20,800 (in 2019) can seem high and attractive if converted to the local currency (in the country of origin); however, they do not normally understand or consider the high cost of living in the UK.

Secondly, the SOC is under regular review, which can be a source of anxiety to the HQHSMs who are on limited leave to remain in the UK. The changes are often abrupt and do not consider the effect on the HQHSMs and their families. The UK Migration Advisory Committee (2019a) reported that the SOC list had undergone ten reviews before the 2019 full review. This study focuses on Black women who self-identify as coming from a country in Sub-Saharan Africa. On a generic note, research has shown that when it comes to overqualification and paying penalties, they find themselves at the bottom of the employee ethnic hierarchies (Amazan, 2013; Zwysen and Demireva, 2018a, 2018b). The next section discusses the public sector and why it was chosen as the setting for this study.

3.2. The public sector

The public sector comprises many organisations that offer services to the entire population and are managed and controlled by the government. They fall under the leadership of the political leaders in office and are bound to be volatile in how they are governed (Ferlie, 2017). Unlike voluntary sector organisations, which draw most of their funding through grants and donations and private sector organisations and primarily derive their funds from sales of goods and services and investments from shareholders, financing for public sector organisations comes mainly from taxation, fees, and other government resources (Matthews, 2010a; OBR, 2014). Public sector organisations include police, council housing, military, public roads, education, emergency services, public healthcare, and social care (ONS, 2019b). According to the Office for National Statistics (2020), the UK population by mid-2020 was estimated at circa 67.1 million. The UK government website indicates 23

ministerial departments, 20 non-ministerial departments, 414 agencies and public bodies, 104 high-profile groups and 13 public corporations that make up the UK public sector (Gov.UK, 2021).

The UK government's complex matrices and the selection of England as the local context

The UK comprises four nations: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. There are differences in the autonomous powers and how the three devolved governments are governed. The administrative decisions vary in the degree to which they follow the rules of UK governance (Torrance, 2019; UK Parliament, 2020). The intricacies of how devolution works are beyond the scope of this research. However, it is worth noting that some of the provisions, even in organisations such as the NHS, vary in the UK's four nations; thus, this study's remit is limited to public sector organisations within England. The following section provides the employee diversity breakdown.

Challenges in operationalising where the participants work

The UK operates in three main sectors; in addition to the public sector, which is the focus of this study, there are the voluntary and private sectors. These three sectors are distinguishable by their structures and governance and, in some cases, employment practices. While there may be significant differences in the setup of organisations, there are many similarities and blurred lines in terms of service delivery and social values, as portrayed in the civil society strategy, which describes civil society as organisations working to provide social value. It includes charities, social enterprises, public service mutuals, socially responsible private businesses, investors and other institutions (HM Government, 2018). These issues provide the backdrop to an argument about the subjectivity of which organisations fall in which sector. Several scholars and practitioners acknowledge the difficulty in drawing boundaries between the sectors, as depicted in the diagram below, which illustrates the continuum of the three sectors:

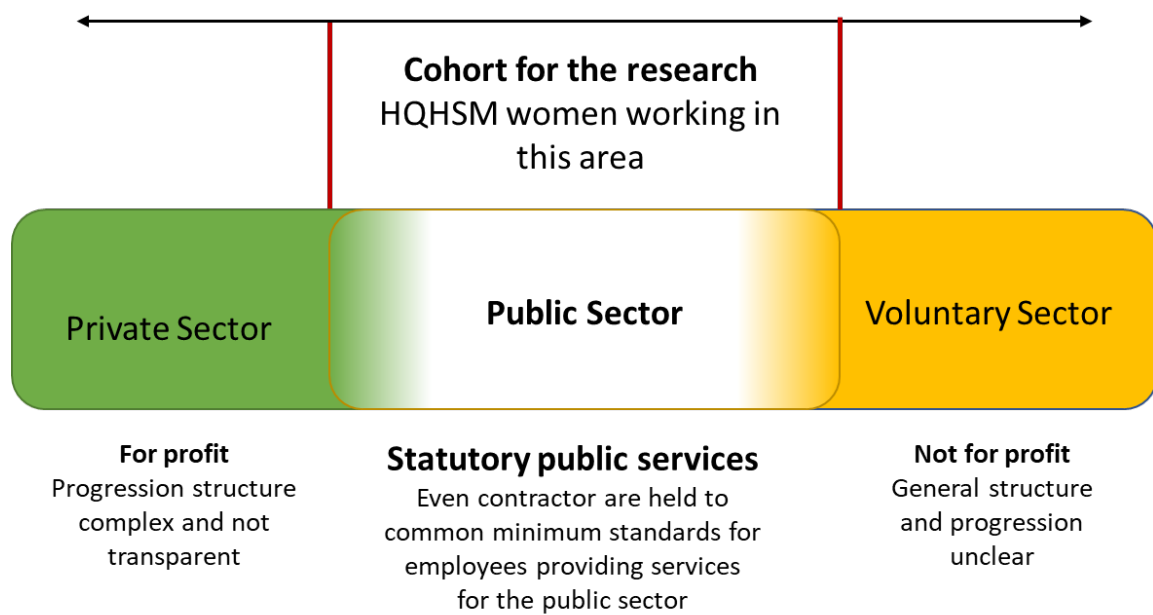


Figure 4: The three-sector continuum

The all-encompassing description and overlap create complexities in justifying the sector selection in full. For example, in this research, some HQHSM women work in public sector organisations through personal service companies and private companies. They are also known as self-employed or off-payroll workers and therefore would be classed as private sector workers, while some services are contracted to voluntary sector organisations (Burkinshaw, 2017; ONS, 2019a). As observed in how HQHSM women self-identify as public sector workers, I argue that it can be difficult for the HQHSMs to identify as working for either the voluntary or private sector, because the public sector organisation may contract their organisations. In this case, they may work within a public sector organisation daily. This issue has been corroborated by the Office for National Statistics who, in describing their data sources regarding who works for the public sector, maintain that:

The APS tends to overcount public sector employees as people believe they work in the public sector while the private sector contractually employs them. This over-reporting is likely to be concentrated more in some occupations than others. E.g., IT contractors and agency employees providing IT support to a hospital could self-report working in the public sector even if a private organisation primarily contracts them. There are likely instances where people misreport as working in the private sector when they work in the public sector, more so if a private organisation is nationalised and becomes a public sector organisation (ONS, 2019b, p. 10).

This study depends on HQHSMs' self-reporting as working in the public sector, even though, in the interview, it may become apparent that they could be classed as private sector or voluntary sector workers by the system. They have been included in the study because this will provide a more open and richer picture of how some HQHSM women circumnavigate their positionality within the public sector system, as is apparent in the later chapters. Still, it is hoped that the subtle differences in employment practices and regulations among the sectors will help build a better picture to narrow the scope of this research.

Employee diversity breakdown

According to the ONS (2021), there were approximately 5.67 million employees in the public sector in mid-2020. The largest public sector employer was the National Health Service (NHS), which had an estimated 1.9 million employees as a single body [this figure is reported as 1.3 million in other sources (e.g., NHS WRES Report, 2020)]. The various civil service organisations recorded 3.47 million, and the local government organisations reported 2.1 million. The public sector employs a higher number of highly skilled workers and in 2020, the split was 46% compared with 24% employed in the private sector. The ONS (2021) reports that the "high skilled positions require at least a first degree", aligning with the UK home office highly-skilled test placed on HQHSMs' visa thresholds, as discussed in chapter one. The ethnic diversity within the public sector varies greatly, with the highest numbers in health and social care-related services, which is where the highest proportion of HQHSM migrants are found. The actual employee ratio is complex because the statistics do not appear to hold that information. Many public sector workers are employed in critical occupations, including health, education, social work, government, police, and domestic services, with the highest being teaching and health and social care. The figure below demonstrates the breakdown of employees from the 2018 ONS population survey.

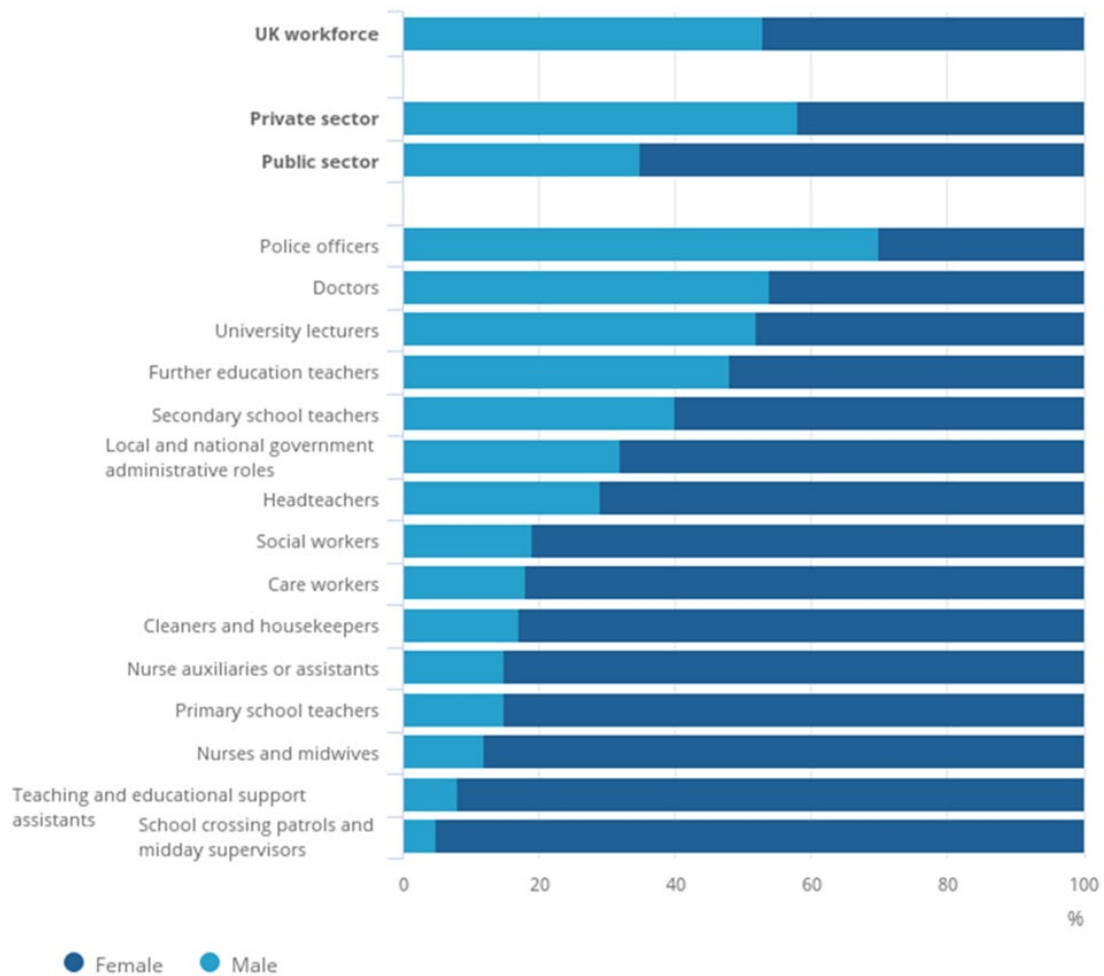


Figure 5: Workforce gender balance - Source: ONS population survey 2018

The preceding graph shows that men and women are equally represented in the UK labour force. However, more women than men work in the public sector, with 35 per cent of men and 65 per cent of women employed, compared with 58 per cent of men and 42 per cent of women in the private sector. According to research, women are more likely than males to work in caring professions and are more likely to work in the public sector (Matthews, 2010b; McDonagh *et al.*, 2014; Mendelberg and Karpowitz, 2016; Antonakis *et al.*, 2019; Fuller, Hollingworth and An, 2019; Siemiatycki, 2019). The worrying statistic is that despite there being more women in public sector organisations, most senior leadership positions are occupied by men.

As discussed in the sections above, there remain blurred lines between the public sector and the other two sectors regarding the services provided, and who is classified as a public sector employee. For HQHSMs, this complexity can be burdensome in terms of navigating their career mobility, due to the challenges of understanding the system and carving out an identity to categorise themselves as they build their social capital, which is crucial in career progression (Mckenna and Richardson, 2007; Light, 2014; Ogbonna, 2019). The following section explores public sector leadership to enhance the understanding of public sector organisations in the context of this research. The key theme in this thesis is HQHSM women's settlement, upward mobility, and self-inclusion into leadership positions within public sector organisations in England; therefore, understanding public sector leadership is pertinent within this context.

Career progression interventions and HQHSMs

Ideally, HQHSMs working in the public sector must have the same rights to progression and equal pay in line with their skills as any other colleagues (Brown, Rickard and Broughton, 2017; Ferlie, 2017; Jones, Makepeace and Wass, 2018; Siemiatycki, 2019). The public sector has a legal and moral responsibility to treat all its employees equally (EHRC, 2013, 2017). Thus, they have organisational policies and programmes in place to ensure that staff are offered career progression and professional development plans. It has been argued, however, that some of these policies and programmes are tick-box exercises with no coherent way of monitoring their effectiveness. This thesis argues that the best interventions would involve the communities being sought for inclusion, which is challenging as the fear of stereotyping is high. All is not lost, though; some organisations have been going beyond the tick box, working hard to circumvent the lack of diversity in their pipeline at the top. They are taking a proactive approach and developing programmes to achieve the intended outcomes. For example, public sector organisations run leadership development programmes that are open to staff at various levels. In recent years, some employers have been monitoring their team's pay gaps, among other measures. This gives a clear picture of how much work there still is to be done to increase the numbers of ethnic minority staff. It is a good start, but there is a need to go beyond pan-ethnic categorisation

to develop an even better picture and devise better interventions for HQHSMs. In the following section, I will share my thoughts on a case study using the NHS race equality agenda. This case study was built using publicly available information.

NHS transparency and leadership 2019 snapshot

The NHS monitors the ethnic and gender diversity in leadership, albeit separately, against their overall staff numbers (e.g. NHS Employers - Ethnicity, 2019; NHS Employers - Gender, 2019). The organisation transparently promotes diversity and inclusion for all. As a large employer that recruits many ethnic minorities, they aim to lead by example. The Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) Data Analysis Report for NHS Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups report shows that the NHS employs 1.4 million people. In 2019, of the 1.4 million staff employed in England, 19.7% were from ethnic minority communities (NHS WRES Report, 2020). A different report and infographic shows that in 2018, 77% of all NHS England staff were women (NHS Employers, 2019). This data gives a snapshot of the team over the two years. However, there is a more significant intersecting limitation. It would be interesting to cross-tabulate the percentage of 77% of the women from ethnic minority communities and how many of the 19.7% ethnic minorities were women and migrant women, given the drive to recruit migrants. This knowledge gap is a potential focus for future research.

This study does not directly research the NHS as an organisation. Nonetheless, it anticipates that many participants will be linked to health and social care-related services, a fact which is inevitable due to the high proportion of public sector HQHSMs being recruited by the NHS and local authority care homes (NHS England, 2019; NHS Equality & Diversity Council, 2019). Therefore, reviewing some of the NHS's work for the ethnic minority staff is appropriate. The NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard: 2019 Data Analysis Report For NHS Trusts, which was released in February 2020, and the same report for 2021, both show slight increases in the numbers of ethnic minorities progressing into leadership positions (NHS WRES Report, 2020; NHS WRES team, 2020). The reports produced since 2015 have demonstrated slight improvements in the outcomes for ethnic minority staff. Nonetheless, they highlight that ethnic minority staff are still significantly underrepresented in senior

leadership positions, even though the statistics increase yearly. Below is the highlight from the reports:

We introduced the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) in 2015 to hold a mirror up to the NHS and spur action to close gaps in workplace inequalities between our Black and minority ethnic (BME) and white staff. In 2014, two-fifths of all NHS trusts in London had zero BME board members. As of 1 December 2019, all London trusts have at least one BME board member, a significant achievement. 14.7% of Very Senior Managers in London are now from a BME background (NHS WRES Report, 2020, pp. 5–6).

Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic staff increased by 1.3% from 2019 to 2020 and only 3.3% since 2016. The figure below shows this growth from 2016 to 2020, as reported in the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) 2020 Data Analysis Report for NHS Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups. The increase in the staff number is a critical feature in these reports in that they show commitment to the NHS’s responsibility as an inclusive employer. That said, this research focuses on the participants' views, which is another angle of importance in the drive to increase these numbers.

In 2020, the combined BME workforce in NHS trusts and CCGs was 21.0% (273,359). Across all NHS trusts and CCGs, there were 63,844 more BME staff in 2020 compared to 2016. Over the same period, the number of white staff increased by 43,656.

Year	Headcount			Percentage		
	White	BME	Unknown	White	BME	Unknown
2016	922436	209515	54105	77.8%	17.7%	4.6%
2017	928490	216644	52455	77.5%	18.1%	4.4%
2018	931704	230189	53780	76.6%	18.9%	4.4%
2019	943385	246301	58873	75.6%	19.7%	4.7%
2020	966092	273359	61119	74.3%	21.0%	4.7%

Data source: NHS workforce statistics website.

Figure 6: Staff in NHS trusts and CCGs by ethnicity: 2016 – 2020 NHS WRES (2021, p. 12)

Regrettably, it was impossible to access data showing how migrant women are represented in the statistics of any employing public sector organisations, including the NHS. Nonetheless, anecdotal, qualitative information from some of the staff who are mainly in bands 5 and 6 (or equivalent in other organisations), and whom I have observed in my

professional and personal capacity, can be used to explore some of the issues outlined in this research study.

3.3. Chapter summary

This chapter has provided deeper insight into this study's main location contexts. It has explored the public sector as an employer and the placement challenges of the participants who do not fall into neat employment categories as public sector workers. It culminates in an overview of NHS transparency and insight between the 2018 and 2020 snapshot, which offers some hope of how organisations are positively self-analysing and encouraging the closure of the gap in the numbers of ethnic minorities in general leadership positions. It has also highlighted a significant gap in this research around migrants in general. This demonstration further highlights the contribution this study aims to make by elucidating the experiences of Black African HQSM women.

4. Methodology

4.1. Chapter introduction

This chapter comprises the essential elements guiding this research study; research paradigm and philosophical perspective, inductive approach, reflexivity, and research design, which will help me answer the research question and objectives. It also covers the data collection, the data analysis process, ethical considerations and limitations (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016; Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). It starts with the research paradigm and philosophical perspectives, which are discussed next.

4.2. Research paradigm and philosophical perspectives

A research paradigm is an array of assumptions about a researcher's philosophical perspective. It defines the world's nature, the individual's place, and possible relationships (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018, p.5) refer to a paradigm as a worldview, proposing that "researchers think of the philosophical worldview by making explicit the larger philosophical ideology they adopt". A challenge to overcome has been determining the best manner to convey this chapter. Scholars appear to be contradictory in their approaches. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) argue that:

Some [scholars] talk about traditions and theoretical underpinnings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011), theoretical traditions and orientations (Patton, 2015); others about paradigms and perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), philosophical assumptions and interpretive frameworks (Creswell, 2013), or epistemology and theoretical perspectives (Crotty, 1998). In a true qualitative fashion, each writer makes sense of the underlying philosophical influences in their way (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015, p. 8)

This lack of consensus follows in several PhD theses examined through this research journey; for example, Atewologun (2011) uses philosophical assumptions – ontology, epistemology and reflexivity, while Mumbi (2014) discusses theoretical perspectives – inductive and deductive approaches, ontological and epistemological approaches before moving to the 'philosophy' of pragmatism. Many other theses were considered before deciding what to include in this chapter (e.g. Muskwe, 2011; Mwila, 2014; Amaugo, 2016; Hu, 2016; Okpokiri, 2017; Hurso, 2018). The philosophical standpoint is guided by the

research methodology employed, which is complemented by the author's values, beliefs, and the interpretation of the participants' construction of the topic under the lens.

Bryman and Bell (2015, p.56) assert that "the researcher is obliged to justify, or explain and defend, their choices, especially their methodological choices, concerning their research". In justifying my choices, I maintain that this study explores an area that is under-researched: Black African HQHSM women in a leadership and organisational studies context, as demonstrated by the literature review. Furthermore, the research explores the factors that shape the participants' identities and how these impact their career mobility. Therefore, it was deemed prudent to focus on the participants' lived experiences and voices qualitatively instead of focussing on the numbers (quantitative). The research objectives, questions, theoretical lenses, and intersectionality set a good basis for the research paradigm and philosophical perspective.

A researcher must always be aware of their philosophical presuppositions. When they enter an investigation, they must convey these explicitly to ensure that no one is confused concerning the epistemological, ontological and political baggage the researcher brings to the research (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005; Rehman and Alharthi, 2016). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) outline five major philosophies in business and management research: positivism, critical realism, interpretative, postmodernism and pragmatism. Other scholars (Zikmund, 2015; Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019) focus on three: positivism, critical realism, and interpretative. In the research methodology, positivism and interpretivism, are the two primary branches discussed.

Additionally, critical realism (Bhaskar, 2013) is appearing in more recent texts and is said to have originated in response to the limitations of positivism and interpretivism. It is key here "not to confuse critical realism with more extreme realism (direct realism or naïve empirical scientific realism) underpinning positivist philosophy and explicitly denotes that what is experienced portrays the world accurately" (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, p. 138). Before proceeding to the detailed discussion, expanding, and comparing the most prevalent philosophies used in leadership and management research, the following section

discusses three branches (positivism, critical realism and interpretivism) and why interpretivism was chosen for this research. The section commences with an overview of the three philosophies under discussion.

Ontology (Nature of reality or being)	Epistemology (What constitutes acceptable knowledge)	Axiology (Role of values)	Typical methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positivism 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real, external, independent • One true reality (universalism) • Granular (things) • Ordered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific method • Observable and measurable facts • Law-like generalisations • Numbers • Causal explanation and prediction as a contribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value-free research • The researcher is detached, neutral and independent of what is researched. • Researcher maintains objective stance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically deductive, highly structured, large samples, measurement, typically quantitative methods of analysis, but a range of data can be analysed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical realism 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stratified/layered (the empirical, the actual and the real) • External, independent • Intransient • Objective structures • Causal mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epistemological relativism • Knowledge historically situated and transient • Facts are social constructions. • Historical causal explanation as contribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value-laden research • Researcher acknowledges bias by world views, • cultural experience and upbringing • The researcher tries to minimise bias and errors. • The researcher is as objective as possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retroductive, in-depth, historically situated analysis of pre-existing structures and merging agencies. Range of methods and data types to fit the subject matter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretivism 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex, rich • Socially constructed through culture and language • Multiple meanings, interpretations, and realities • The flux of processes, experiences, practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories and concepts too simplistic • Focus on narratives, stories, perceptions, and interpretations • New understandings and worldviews as a contribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value-bound research • Researchers are part of what is researched, subjective • Researcher interpretations are key to the contribution • Researcher reflexive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically inductive. Small samples, in-depth investigations, and qualitative methods of analysis, but a range of data can be interpreted

Figure 7: Five research philosophies in comparison (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, pp. 136–7).

4.3. Epistemological standpoint

Epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge, or how we come to know (Khatri, 2020). It comes from the Greek word 'episteme', meaning knowledge (Krauss, 2005; Krauss and Putra, 2005; Rehman and Alharthi, 2016; Silverman, 2017; Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Epistemology deals with questions such as how we know the truth and what counts as knowledge. "Epistemology is important because it helps the researcher establish the faith they put in their data. It affects how they uncover knowledge in the social context they investigate" (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Brown (2019) proposes "an approach, shared belief amongst individual subjects based on a new approach to theorising individual subjects in a social context, thereby incorporating the phenomenological standpoint of an individual subject's inclusion of herself within the plurality, 'us' (a class in the distributive sense)" (Brown, 2019, p. 137). In light of the preceding statement, it is reasonable to assert that self-inclusion plays a significant role in this research, as the participants must identify themselves and thus self-select to participate. My initial role as the researcher is to be clear about the type of participants I seek. That way, once they see the advertisement, or someone informs them about the research, they will decide if they want to be interviewed, provided they meet the set criteria.

Positivism

Positivism asserts that the world can be explained by identifying anomalies and causal relationships among its predicated elements (Held, 1990). In other words, "positivism is a scientific philosophy that eschews metaphysical speculation in favour of systematic observation through the human senses" (Blaikie and Priest, 2017, p.58). Numerous advocates argue that it is about a single concrete reality. According to radical positivists, science is superior to other forms of knowledge, such as theology; they assert that knowledge can be obtained only through scientific experiments. Originating with Auguste Comte and others, positivism implies that research must be value-neutral and objective, and that theory can only be verified through laboratory experiments (quantitative), which has been argued to diminish the importance of observation (qualitative). Positivism has

evolved through various stages, including logical and neo-positivism, which stems from the Vienna school and advocates for physical and experiential explanations of social events through statistical models and the application of sociological laws; however, they oppose metaphysics for epidemiological purposes, arguing that metaphysical schemas are meaningless (Kalelioglu, 2020). Both positivism and neo-positivism tend (though not always) to take a deductive position in research, making them more at home in quantitative research.

One criticism levelled at positivism is that it asserts that all processes can be reduced to calculations and experiments, ignoring subjective experiences and failing to establish the origin of the abstraction, thereby risking an oversimplification of the world (Held, 1990; Given, 2008; Kalelioglu, 2020). Additionally, social scientists argue that the world is more complex and that the researcher's ignorance of their position is problematic. For instance, neo-positivism has come under fire for its heavy reliance on measurements and quantities (Harvey, 2013; Blaikie and Priest, 2017). Another significant difficulty in defining this paradigm is that it can be difficult due to the variety of ways in which different scholars describe it, and their understanding of it (Bryman, 2015).

Positivism is also criticised for overemphasising readily available mathematical formulas at the expense of diverse theoretical significance, and offering little or no consideration of cultural, historical, or other factors that aid an understanding the world. Thus, I argue that the nature of the participants' multiple identities and their position in society leaves them with socially constructed multiple realities that intersect across gender, race, migration status, ethnicity, education, and other social and family dynamics, resulting in more complex and massively intertwined exchanges that cannot be examined through this epistemological paradigm. According to Moradi and Grzanka (2017), who view researchers, supervisors, reviewers, editors, and activists as stakeholders in fostering responsible stewardship of the intersectional analytical domain, I argue that positivism will not adequately examine the multifaceted, complex realities and identity meaning-making and re-construction that are anticipated (Creswell, 2009; Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Critical realism is discussed next.

Critical realism

Critical realism, also referred to in some texts as realism, is defined as one that is believed to extend beyond the self or awareness, yet is not entirely discoverable or knowable (Bhaskar, 2013, 2016; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018; Whelan, 2019). Rather than being ostensibly value-neutral, as positive research is, or value-laden, as interpretive research is, critical realism is value-aware of human systems and researchers.

Critical realism is a subset of realism whose manifesto is to acknowledge the reality of the natural order as well as the events and discourses of the social world, arguing that we will only be able to comprehend—and thus change—the social world if we identify the structures at work that generate those events and discourses. These structures do not emerge spontaneously from the observable pattern of events; they can only be identified through the social sciences' practical and theoretical work (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Critical realism is one of the epistemological perspectives used in social science, particularly in resistance and emancipatory research. It became prominent in the 1970s and 1980s, popularised by Indian philosopher, Roy Bhaskar (Williams, Rycroft-Malone and Burton, 2017). Critical realism and critical theory, the philosophy associated with this research, are inextricably linked in that both pursue emancipatory goals and emerge from Marxism and the Frankfurt school (Whelan, 2019). Additionally, critical realism exposes and challenges hegemony and conventional wisdom about relationships, groups, communities, societies, and organisations, intending to promote social change (Gramsci, 1975; Tallack, 1995; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Critical realism generally seeks to undermine the assumed power of those in dominant positions including, but not limited to, the researcher-subject relationship and the relationship between the government and its people. Additionally, it asserts that all people can become less discriminatory or oppressive through deliberate, affirmative human action, regardless of their beliefs.

The central tenet of critical realism is that social reality should be understood as stratified systems composed of objects connected by causal relationships that result in actual events, such as practices and human experiences; thus, the social world becomes understandable

only when the unobservable factors that cause events and experiences are understood (Bhaskar, 2013). This epistemology is consistent with critical theory (e.g., Dant, 2003; Crossley, 2005; Collins, 2019), critical race theory and feminist theory (e.g., Hooks, 1981, 1984; Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 2008; Mohanty, 2013; Nash, 2019) among others. According to Given (2012), "Researchers engage in critical inquiry to better understand the systems of power and oppression at work in society and seek ways to disrupt unjust systemic power structures." The inquirer identity's role is reimagined by social interactions, processes, and historically ingrained ideas to reform society toward democratic practices and social equity values. Critical inquirers are typically members of the communities they study, or those develop extremely strong, caring, emotional, and intellectual attachments to members of those communities as part of their methodological praxis" 142–143 (Given, 2008).

Some criticisms of critical realism centre on the concern that its pragmatic openness to diverse epistemologies, including unconsolidated positivist and interpretivist perspectives, while opposing their ontological concepts, rendering it incapable of taking a stand (Fleetwood, 2014). Another criticism is that there is a lack of generalisation, and that some of the terminology used is misleading (Okpokiri, 2017b).

As a community member and a researcher, critical realism corresponds to many of my beliefs and subjectivities. Thus, it is worth noting that when I began this project, I believed critical realism would be the most appropriate framework for this research, as I approached it with a critical or transformative mindset. The research examines the motivations and impediments of Black African HQHSM women seeking senior organisational leadership positions in the English public sector. As an academic researcher, I realise that it is difficult to make changes if one does not understand the issue, and thus I needed to consult the literature. The review aided me in taking a step back and comprehending the issue. As the available literature revealed a different story, I needed to hear the women's stories, as this would assist me in elucidating phenomena that transcended my subjective position. As a result, it became clear that the research should be conducted within an interpretivist paradigm. The subsequent section addresses interpretivism and how it applies to this study's purpose.

Interpretivism

Interpretivism, also known as the interpretivist paradigm, is predominantly concerned with the researcher's position to gain insight into the research subjects' lived experiences. These insights are interpreted using qualitative data from various sources (Blaikie and Priest, 2017; Denscombe, 2017). The researcher then interprets the study by integrating numerous, nuanced, and complex human phenomena. This method is primarily used in social sciences and has been hailed as possessing numerous ideologies, which are traceable to the hermeneutics school's interpretation (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Its overarching thesis is that the most recent contributions come from symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, and phenomenology. The key running theme is that:

Interpretive scientists gain access to everyday life sites of actual social interaction relevant to research and observe interaction as it naturally occurs in real-life contexts. The researcher analyses data to discover members' concepts, including keywords, constructs and theories that explain the subjective meaning of everyday life settings and actions and develops first-order descriptions of interactions and settings from their point(s) of view (Cassell, Cunliffe and Grandy, 2018, p. 38).

Proponents of interpretivism contend that its key objective is to offer sense-making of the subjective intentions of people in particular spaces without enforcing derivable rational classifications, thereby understanding the world from the participants' positionality (Babones, 2015). Another way of understanding is outlined by Bryman and colleagues, who state that:

Interpretivism denotes an alternative to the positivist orthodoxy that has held sway for decades. It is predicated upon the view that a strategy that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action. Its intellectual heritage includes Weber's notion of *Verstehen*, the hermeneutic–phenomenological tradition, and symbolic interactionism (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 17)

Interpretivism assumes that social life is constructed and re-constructed by members of society (Denscombe, 2017). Therefore, researchers in this paradigm assume that access to reality is socially constructed through attributes such as consciousness, language, location, cultural beliefs, and shared meanings. Moreover, interpretivists are largely cynical regarding being able to attain objectivity, "arguing that researchers' thinking will

predictably be shaped to some extent by their own experiences and identities as members of the social world within which their research takes place" (Denscombe, 2017, p. 8). Nevertheless, there has been a critique of this approach, with opponents arguing that interpretivism is prone to manipulation due to its subjectivism, therefore leaving it open to bias by researchers. The other argument pattern is the over-dependence on participants' viewpoints, thus impacting generalisability and reliability (Myers, 2008; Bryman, 2015; Blaikie and Priest, 2017; Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019).

The position suited to, and thus chosen for this research, is interpretivism. The research examines Black African HQHSM women's drivers and barriers to seeking senior organisational leadership positions in public sector organisations in England. This research examines how reality is constructed in the practices that keep people from acting, respecting the migrant women's cultural norms with a central focus on uncovering knowledge in personal and social practices and acting towards mutuality (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). If the leader is to construct an image that is acceptable to the followers which, according to Bryman and Bell (2015, p.18), "relies on the construction of an identity and narrative to make sense of organisational events", then it is critical through this study to seek a deeper understanding of the process of identity meaning-making based on individual participants' self-concept. The interpretivist epistemology allows this to happen. Interpretivism primarily uses qualitative methods (Denzin and Lincoln, 2007, 2018; Creswell, 2009; Creswell and Poth, 2017; Silverman, 2017). More precisely, some LOS researchers have suggested that more recent interpretivism work shows an inclination and sits towards the edge of critical realist orientations by nature, as it focuses on the identification and understanding of the subjects (Alvesson, Ashcraft and Thomas, 2008; Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011; Alvesson and Spicer, 2012; Atewologun, Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2016; Sealy *et al.*, 2017). This study used the qualitative approach because of the nature of the subjects, which is explained further in this chapter.

As discussed above, positivism focuses on a single reality and interpretivism on multiple realities, and I argue that this research is conducted at the edge of interpretivism's slight delineation to critical realism. However, it does not cross over into the critical realist

worldview. Future studies may use the findings from this study to cross the paradigm with the uncovered reality of the hostility and inequalities within the UK immigration system, which appears to have no provision for support on arrival or at the stage of indefinite leave to remain. The following section discusses another critical aspect of research: ontology.

4.4. Ontological standpoint

The term 'ontology' comes from the Greek combination of 'ontos', which means 'being', and 'logia', meaning 'logical discourse' (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, pp. 5–10). Ontology is a philosophical standpoint that questions how things come to be; for example, questions such as what is science, or what types of structures are objects, thus explaining and classifying what is to be examined (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2018). In short, reality exists regardless of humans (objectivism), or reality is constructed by the perceiver, such as the underlying structures that affect people (constructionism). Bryman and Bell (2015, p.21) describe objectivism as an "ontological position that asserts the social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors". In other words, our everyday social activities are separate from us. In contrast, [social] constructionism or [personal] constructivism or subjectivism, subjectivity, or inter-subjectivity asserts that social actors continually accomplish social phenomena and their meanings. Accordingly, it implies that classification and categories of reality are produced through social interactions and continuously evolve depending on multiple factors as they gain new knowledge. Since ontology counts as knowledge, it could be assumed that the constructions of the research participants will produce subjective knowledge, which is also crucial for understanding the experiences of those being researched.

Knowledge can be personal (constructivism) or social (constructionism). Some authors suggest that the literature on constructionism and constructivism is ambiguous (Atewologun, 2011, 2014; Atewologun, Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2016). These authors contend that constructivism emphasises creation while constructionism emphasises interpretation. Constructionism is commonly prefixed with 'social'. The word 'social' emphasises how meaning is formed and interpreted concerning the (social) environment, including historical and contemporary issues.

On the other hand, constructivism emphasises personal meaning-making. Society, background, cultural nuances, conventions, politics, and experience all influence our perception of reality. Gold (2012) contends that people and groups faced with social issues and their typical problems tend to find ways to deal with them or navigate through them. Consequently, the structures and contents will differ based on origin, culture, and place.

As a result, Black African HQHSM women can assume new identities or alter them accordingly. A researcher must gather deep insight from the participants, based on how their identities have been shaped as they construct knowledge as individuals. Therefore, this research is situated within the qualitative tradition, interpretivist epistemology, and constructivist/constructionist ontology. However, it is noteworthy that not all research neatly situates itself as this study has. Some scholars have urged caution in researchers taking these positions as definitive, as there can be crossovers between ontological positions. For example, some quantitative studies have used constructivism, and vice versa (Cassell, Cunliffe and Grandy, 2018; Bonache and Festing, 2020). The constructivist ontological perspective on research infers that the researcher must constantly be aware of their ontological presuppositions and rein in their subjectivities. They must communicate them clearly when entering an investigation; that way, no one is confused concerning the 'baggage' the researcher brings with them to the research (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005, pp. 305–306).

Self-inclusion in leadership is a major part of this research. Despite the contention that the power to select participants rests in the hands of the researcher, the participants must self-identify and therefore self-select to participate by responding to the criteria set by the researcher (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Checking against the criteria and ensuring that participants understand what is involved, along with their participation, will help foster a better understanding of their experiences. In addition, the researcher must maintain a duty of care and confidentiality for the participants by following strict criteria within the allowed ethical boundaries (Denzin and Lincoln, 2007, 2018; Bell, Waters and Bell, Judith; Waters, 2018).

Deductive vs inductive approach

According to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2018), researchers taking an inductive approach are more concerned with a deeper understanding of the participants' world, perceptions and reality at a given time. The inductive approach involves drawing themes, patterns, and generalisable observation, which is opposed to the deductive approach commonly used in quantitative studies. The deductive approach suggests that a researcher deduces a hypothesis that must be examined through an empirical study, thus either proving or disproving the hypothesis (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). It has been argued that inductive approaches have deductive elements and vice-versa. Bryman and Bell (2015, pp. 12–13) offer a good example of studies such as the Hawthorn plant experiments' (Roethlisberger *et al.*, 1939) example of studies that appear to have started from a deductive approach in seeking to "explore the relationship between conditions of work and the incidence of fatigue and monotony among employees". After using variables such as temperature and lighting and finding unexpected results from their set hypotheses, they turned to an 'inductive approach'. They started observing the workers over time in an informal work setting, leading to understanding the informal human relationships in the workplace. Some studies start from an inductive approach, then the researcher decides that aspects may benefit from testing hypotheses in a deductive manner. That said, the researcher must understand their starting point and continuously check the results of stages to check if the research still meets their objectives and answers the research question (Flick, 2018).

This study started from a deductive position. However, following a combination of researching and reviewing extant literature to understand the gap, an inductive approach was adopted after taking a few steps back to listen to the participants. Within the time constraints of the PhD study, data was collected through semi-structured interviews. This mode of data collection would allow for a deeper analysis of the interviews while allowing a level of structure. Doing this allows a clearer picture of the emerging themes (Bryman, 2015). This process was by no means straightforward, involving the complicated iterative process of defining and redefining my participant cohort in consultation with my supervisors, some would-be participants, and other PhD colleagues.

This process also helped with reflexivity and tested some assumptions in the research. For example, UK diversity and inclusion speak tends to treat all people from all minority ethnicities as a group (Aspinall, 2002, 2021; Fernando and Kenny, 2018). This broad-brush approach may help organisations tick boxes from the 'majority' communities' approach. However, this can potentially also mean that the differences among the ethnic minority communities are missed, and ethnic hierarchies are perpetuated, thereby disadvantaging some non-salient groups (Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010; Brewis, 2019; Nkomo, 2021). The findings from the literature review and communities made me reflect and aided my decision to focus on Black African HQHSM women. Initially, the plan was to interview Asian and African women; however, the literature review and initial contact drive highlighted the gap in research, illuminating the voices of Black African HQHSM who, despite having multiple degrees, find themselves deskilled and at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchies (Zwysen and Demireva, 2018a). Opting for the inductive approach ultimately led to a focus on interpretive exploration. This type of interpretive inquiry:

Requires dialogue (or conversation), and dialogue requires interpretation. Interpretation is a reciprocal act between text and reader, situation, and researcher, and each influence/directs the other. Using such a vehicle, it is possible to conceive of a researcher exploring a situation and then asking others to explore the same situation and the researcher's explorations. Recursively, the researcher can then explore those critiquing their interpretations. As such a recursive method goes on, spaces open between the interpretations (Given, 2008, p. 77).

The process of reflexivity, which is expanded on further in the following section, helped me recognise how deeply held views and beliefs as a Black African migrant researcher with a similar background to the participants, impacted the values and allowed me to put aside my assumptions to the point of really listening, then interpreting in an iterative manner (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 2007, 2018). Cognisant of the limitation, some scholars view the telling approach as subjective. However, this study follows the path of scholars who have conducted similar research and have underscored their position as part of the communities they have researched (Rigg and Trehan, 1999; Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2021a; Vershinina and Rodgers, 2020; Trainor and Bundon, 2021; Vershinina and Cruz, 2021). The next section discusses reflexivity and its approach in this study.

4.5. Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a key feature within the interpretivist principles; it provides a valuable process by which theoretical assumptions and design decisions influence and delineate the results and contribution of the study, as well as the act of reflecting on the role and the overall nature of the relationship between the researcher and the subjects (Palaganas *et al.*, 2017; Palaganas and Estacio, 2018; Braun and Clarke, 2021b). Qualitative research, especially fieldwork, changes a researcher in several ways. Through reflexivity, they recognise their subjectivities and the changes brought about in themselves due to the process and how these changes affect the research. Identifying how researchers shape and are moulded by their experience as an insider to the process offers powerful iterative tools, particularly when their positionalities are challenged. Thus, the researcher acknowledges that reflexivity is a significant component of the study findings. They must consider the epistemological assumptions, theoretical frameworks, and personal values and beliefs they bring to their study (Given, 2008; Bryman and Bell, 2015; Blaikie and Priest, 2017; Denscombe, 2017).

As I am seeking to recommend some action beyond merely understanding the barriers from the migrant women's point of view, it is important to be self-reflective of my subjective standpoint, and the 'political' viewpoint and emotions that I bring to this research, both from my practitioner and researcher point of views. Given (2012) states that qualitative researchers must pay attention to reflexivity, a process whereby researchers recognise, examine, and understand how their social background, location, and assumptions affect their research process. Thus, this type of research allows me the opportunity to keep asking the questions: How did I become fixated on this body of knowledge, and why is it important to use this lens of how to view the world? The aim is to help me understand my role as a researcher, a Black woman, and an insider, and to acknowledge how I might have influenced some of the processes herein. How can the participants be empowered to change the status quo as opposed to merely accepting it? How can I continuously seek to control my awareness and take a researcher's standpoint to observe the transformation? I seriously considered the relational and unpredictable nature of social life in planning this

research (Palaganas *et al.*, 2017; Zadeh, 2017). Reflexivity has been an important part of this project, stemming from an awareness of my research position, starting from a critical practitioner viewpoint. Alvesson, Hardy and Harley (2008) argue that reflexivity is critical in every step of the qualitative research process. Fundamentally, my considerations are articulated and weaved into the sections of this chapter to consolidate and offer the thinking behind my position as a researcher, allowing the participants to speak their truths, both as individuals and as a collective (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). Part of this process entails giving the reader an understanding of my background and how I fit within this study.

Personal reflexivity

In this section, I acknowledge my position as the main research instrument; there is no doubt about the significance of research into high labour migration and HQHSMs to aid policy development and practice around the world. Not a day goes by without hearing the word 'migrant' in the media, and the stories are rarely positive. Nonetheless, migrants toil to keep the machinery of the UK economy moving. The subject of ethnic minority and migrant women in leadership as co-creators of positive social change is of great interest to me; I have always found pride in helping the marginalised find a voice, perhaps because of my own upbringing, which I will not outline further in the thesis, other than to acknowledge that it is always at the core of my existence. I have always said I fight for the "underdog". Still, until I started this PhD, I had never considered myself a feminist, and I have always distanced myself from the term 'feminism' (Ferguson, 2017; MacLeavy, 2018). However, we can never unlearn what we learn. Once we learn, we must act to create opportunities for positive change because if we do not, we are part of the problem, and therein lies my position as an activist feminist researcher within organisational studies (Heiskanen *et al.*, 2018; Collins, 2019c, 2019a, 2019d, 2019b). Even though all migrants face varying degrees of obstacles, the phenomenon of Black African HQHSM women has had a profound effect on me as a researcher, and I therefore cannot appear as an unaffected observer. Despite this, I have refrained from offering my subjective opinions. In the qualitative framework, the research process is seldom objective, yet this does not imply a transition towards a subjective and value-laden research process. I recognise that

research objectivity is a necessity but not natural attribute. Research cannot be entirely without value. Therefore, I have been on a learning journey and that journey has led me to conduct this research. The three human interests - prediction and control, mutual understanding, and freedom from oppressive power relations - help us recognise that when issues of concern arise in systems practice, we must speak and act. Therefore, I will share why I chose to take on this PhD challenge to explore the participants' lived experiences. As researchers from ethnic minority backgrounds, we need to share our stories, because it helps other academics appreciate our work (Lorde, 1984; Demmer and Hummel, 2017; Palaganas *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, the experiences need to be documented without fear of being seen as less academic. Therefore, I have shared my personal reflexivity on this research below, starting with my background as suggested by (Palaganas *et al.*, 2017):

I arrived in the UK as a skilled migrant in 2001. I came to study, sponsored by my employers for a two-year information technology course. My spouse and two children joined me, only to find that the UK needed his expertise as a biomedical scientist. He got a job within the health service within two months of arriving in the country on a spousal visa as my dependant. After completing my training, it was easy enough to switch from my student visa to his work permit; after all, he was a Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP) who already had a job, and the programme was open. My career transition was not such a straightforward journey because I was told I did not have UK work experience for the jobs that matched my qualifications, and I was overqualified for lower jobs. After many attempts to secure a job in information technology, I joined the health service initially as an administrative assistant on maternity cover, after 'removing' some of my qualifications. Later, I applied for an IT trainer role within the team where I was working. This role was also below my qualifications and experience. To my astonishment, after the interview, I was told I had performed well and was being offered the role, but at a lower salary than advertised. I was told that this was due to the lack of UK work experience, despite holding a UK qualification, and having been in the team and supporting training for six months. The implication was that I was good enough for the job, but, I had to pay the penalty for being a migrant in the UK (Lindley, 2009; Zwysen and Demireva, 2018b). I took the job anyway because I saw it as a way of gaining the UK experience, I was told I lacked.

After this deskilling experience, and other social integration challenges coupled with seeing other members from ethnic minority communities struggle to access certain services and employment, I left the NHS job in 2005. I wanted to make a difference and not just exist as a number. I founded a non-profit consultancy with the help of the local NHS commissioner, local authority community cohesion team, and the Council for Voluntary Services. I led a team of staff and volunteers for ten years, helping ethnic minority women, children, and men with social issues to access mainstream services, and

equally to help the mainstream organisations; i.e., the public sector – health service, local authority, police, and other mainstream and voluntary sector organisations to develop more inclusive policies and practices. It was at a time when West Sussex had seen a sudden rise in the migrants from Africa and Eastern Europe. There was also a sizable settled yet somewhat invisible community from the Indian Subcontinent. Safe to say, my organisation was the leading ethnic minority-led charity bridging the gap between ethnic minority families and the mainstream organisations in terms of direct service provision to communities; the only other ethnic minority registered charity in the area was an infrastructure organisation that provided capacity building to small groups. All was well until the change of government in 2010 when, with austerity, funding became a challenge for charitable organisations. Despite soldiering on until 2015, the pressure of fighting for the same pots of funding with private sector providers became unbearable for my mental wellbeing, and unfortunately, I closed the charity, leaving many women and children who were experiencing domestic violence, mental health challenges, sex trafficking, and other social issues, without the service we were offering.

Soldiering on, determined to continue with my career journey, and with my 'UK' work experience gained through the NHS and charity work, the master's degree in leadership and management, and my PRINCE2 practitioner certification (project management), I re-joined the health service in a leadership position. Employed to do the same job as a younger white male with only a few years' work experience and not even half the experience or qualifications, he ended up on a higher pay band than me. When work was divided, I was given the less complex tasks. I raised my concerns with my manager and was told that there were six words in the job descriptions that made the difference in our bands. I stayed in the job but felt undervalued, which led to my having a problematic relationship with my manager. A year later, I moved on to another organisation within the health service for a higher band job. Within six months, I moved up again by applying elsewhere. Eventually, I left the substantive job and became an interim (self-employed). At the time there were several frustrations on many levels that led to the decision. It became very apparent in all these endeavours that it was incredibly lonely and white at the top for an ethnic minority person, I *et alone* a woman who had not been born or grown up in the UK. The few other senior ethnic minority managers were male. The middle lower positions, however, were multi-ethnic and female. I quickly became an unintentional mentor for my ethnic minority colleagues who were in middle management and below. I have been known to push some boundaries and include myself in outgroup networks during my career journey. I was already in a leadership position in my early twenties in Zambia, which did not start traditionally. After being made redundant in a bank, I joined an academic research project for the University of London in Zambia, and I stepped up into a leadership position in a time of a crisis. The excerpt in the section above led to many other observations which I will not go into in this thesis, but suffice it to say, they greatly influenced me and helped grow my interest in learning about the lived experiences of Black African HWHSM women with similar backgrounds, and in so doing, raising the salience of the group.

My experiences shaped my identity and led to me approaching the research through my specific lens. They initially helped me to establish my opinion of the challenges, and of my subjectivities. There is a small but growing body of research showing the need for more academic study on ethnic minorities in leadership and organisational studies. There is also increased pressure for organisations to be more inclusive, casting a 'biased' burden on employers to motivate an unmotivated people into leadership positions and, ultimately, onto leadership boards.

Critical reflexivity

The critical reflection on my own positionality and self-scrutiny throughout the entirety of a research project made me self-conscious about the way perceptions are shaped by things like 'power positions' of the researcher and the subjects, meaning that I then tried to moderate their impact (Denscombe, 2017). This research started from a place of passion to see fair change within my community and clients, but also it grew out of personal frustration regarding the observations of society and the lack of progress for ethnic minority women. The main issue I found is that I underestimated how much personal 'stripping' of my beliefs and experience I needed to do in order to become a researcher. It is hard to believe that I am the same person; the growth and challenge has been huge, and I am still learning and growing into academia and philosophy.

The greatest lesson by far has been to step back from my thoughts and let the literature and scholarly work of the giants on whose shoulders I stand do the work. With tireless guidance from my supervisors, for whom I am forever thankful, everything became clearer with time. I learned early on in the process to record my reflections and go back to them at any significant stage throughout the research in order to challenge my own assumptions. The training provided through the university, coupled with further, external training, all served to aid my critical approach. I have presented my research at academic conferences, entered thesis competitions, and taken on several other opportunities as a way of checking and challenging myself, as well as gaining feedback to help me stay on course. Additionally, I have challenged my own internalised ideologies and I continue to do so. Over time, I grew

less anxious and more interested to see what the research revealed. This process will continue in my ongoing development as a researcher.

Considering the multidisciplinary nature of this research and the weight of the responsibility I had in trying to perform to the requirements of my main discipline of LOS, I struggled to prevent it from being dismissed as merely feminist research, which suffers from extreme and sometimes unfair criticism by those who appear to be the gatekeepers of the best way to conduct research (Nkomo, 2021). This procedure has heightened my awareness of the difficulties that are inherent in such a task. Coming from the same background as my participants and holding problematic ideologies, I occasionally felt the need to overexplain myself and my decision-making process. As a consequence of the tenacity of my participants, I gained a deeper and broader appreciation of the complexities of life at the intersection. This investigation provided me with the opportunity to collaborate with participants occupying diverse positions. I realise that research positionalities are continuously negotiated by many qualitative critical scholars, in the construction of decisions that are encouraged and embraced when conducting difficult but rewarding field research.

Multiple perspectives and voices produced a synergistic and expanded understanding of the lived experience of marginalised communities, such as the one I was researching. The research allowed me to investigate certain hypotheses concerning the unanticipated consequences of situating the study during a time of heightened responses to the global pandemic and ethnic unrest. I questioned whether this research could produce comparable results in a distinct environment. For instance, the designated social identities and the response to the initial aspect of the migration journey had a significant impact on the career decisions and, ultimately, the trajectories of the participants; however, I wondered if the prevailing unrest influenced their responses. However, the values of those who viewed it as such influenced the socially constructed responses to the interviews. Social Identity Theory's findings support this assertion. Indeed, one of the respondents whose responses were influenced by social identity, power relations, and differentials experienced initial insecurity.

Methodological reflexivity

While the process of coding required laborious iterative processes, it confirmed to me the significance of being representative of participant voices, accurate in identifying categories and data, and mindful of separating my own interpretation during these phases of data processing. It taught me how to be discerning when selecting essential information, as opposed to selecting quotations at random. This allowed me to appropriately weigh the participant information provided. As I listened to the stories and perspectives of the participants regarding their migration journeys, I realised that they could define their challenges not only in terms of the resources and capabilities available to them, but also in terms of their positions at the time of the interviews.

I admire the participants' fortitude in the face of precarious circumstances, as they were able to take pride in their struggles and maintain hope despite adversity. Through analysing my own journeys and career path, I acquired a deeper appreciation for my current position, and as such, I worked hard not to abuse the trust placed in me by the participants and the university. This imbalance of authority has had a significant effect on the research procedure, and through the addition of a second question, the response was refined. As soon as the participants disclosed their strategies, their contributions would enrich the research findings and foster the co-creation of a future model.

4.6. Research design

Selecting qualitative research

The preceding sections underscored the need for a deep understanding of the participants' lived experiences within the qualitative tradition, interpretivist epistemology, and constructivist/constructionist ontology. Thus, this study adopted the qualitative method as the best approach. Several scholars have asserted that the researcher must explain why they chose qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, and why that is important to the research and the subjects or objects (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018; Flick, 2018). Qualitative research has been described as the study and observation of people and artefacts in their natural environment, leading to narrations and interpretations of phenomena according to

the researchers' worldview (Denzin and Lincoln, 2007, 2018; Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). Van Maanen (1979), cited in Merriam and Tisdell (2015, p.15), define qualitative research as:

An umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency [quantity], of certain more or less naturally occurring in the social world Van Maanen (1979, p.520).

Unlike quantitative research, the frequency and numbers referred to above relate to qualitative research, which mainly emphasises the numbers and frequency of occurrences. Therefore, based on the detailed discussion of my intentions for this research, qualitative seemed to be the best fit. Researchers seeking to understand both quantitative and qualitative methods use a third method called mixed methods. The decision lies in what the researcher sees as the most appropriate way of drawing out the responses (Blaikie and Priest, 2017). The numbers are not of interest in this research as the literature review discussed the challenges and shortage of research around Black African HQHSMs, and the need to listen to the participants' interpretation of the world around them and how those interpretations shape their identities. That is where this study's original contribution is situated, as elaborated in the final chapter of this thesis.

A key feature of the qualitative method is that it employs the researcher as the primary instrument for collecting, analysing, and interpreting the data. The researcher works iteratively, responding and adapting to what they discover through interaction with the subjects of the research in both verbal and non-verbal cues, allowing them to revisit, clarify, reinterpret, and deduce meaning (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). Consequently, themes or narratives develop, which can then be discussed. It also allows the researcher (the instrument) to check for the participants' understanding of their role in the research (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019).

Qualitative research has not always been readily accepted as it has been accused of bias, being anecdotal, and lacking rigour; however, when properly executed and in the right circumstances, it leads to credible, meaningful results (Anderson, 2010; Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Arguably, the same qualitative research critique often serves as a blessing

to researchers seeking to understand localised phenomena within groups. Most researchers in this domain are not seeking generalisability and credibility, where many quantitative proponents look to understand the subjects in their natural world (Silverman, 2021). Another critique of qualitative research, which can be seen as both a blessing and a curse, is the issue of familiarity and subjectivity. Many scholars have argued that the researcher must not eliminate subjectivities but must identify them and be aware of their position and possible power relations. It is critical to be aware of biases that can impact the study and build sufficient reflective and interrogative techniques (Agee, 2009; Flick, 2018). The research is more about the quality of the responses to understand what barriers Black African HQHSM women experience. It requires in-depth interviewing and focuses on the quality of those interviews, rather than the quantity.

Credibility, validity, and trustworthiness

It is essential to ensure the reliability and validity of the research results. Unlike quantitative research, which is more about numbers, hypotheses that can be tested, generalisability, controls and replicability, qualitative research has come under fire for its lack of validity and reliability measures. According to Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) and Nowell *et al.* (2017), an explanation of the stages required in Thematic Analysis and rigour in a qualitative investigation is required. As a minimum, research best practice dictates that a thorough coding procedure that balances deductive (from the philosophical framework) and inductive (from participant conversations) should be clearly outlined. In this research, consciously following the process and reflecting on the phases helped with questioning the interpretation of the participant's voice and challenging my biases and assumptions. Ultimately, it provided a richer understanding and revealed how the participants' replies affected their meaning-making and identity reconstruction. Observing the relationships showed the trajectory map of the women's self-inclusion at various moments in their career mobility. This detailed description of the actions and processes exhibits the clarity of data analysis application. Attending to the issues of reliability, qualitative researchers seek to understand the depth of experiences of people and the natural occurrences in a

changing world. Situations change, and people change; it is impossible to claim reliability (Flick, 2018).

There has been progress regarding the rigour of qualitative research from the 1960s to the present; indeed, there have been many advances in how the researcher can consider rigour (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Qualitative researchers have sought a way to ensure that the research is trustworthy. For example, relating to quantitative analysis, the following criteria have been proposed for checking the trustworthiness of the research to respond to the criticism stemming from the quantitative world. Loosely, they are (1) **confirmability**, which parallels objectivity; (2) **dependability**, which parallels reliability; (3) **transferability**, which parallels external validity; and (4) **credibility**, which parallels internal validity (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2018, p. 363; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. 801). This study has measured and kept an audit of validity and reliability.

Bell, Bryman and Harley (2018) described confirmability as ensuring that the researcher shows that they have acted in good faith and have not allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations to affect the research outcomes driven by their agenda. It must be noted that complete objectivity is impossible in qualitative research with a critical edge, but the researcher must ensure that the research findings represent the participants' voices (Blaikie and Priest, 2017). I have laid bare the political and, potentially, emotional baggage that has led me to carry out this research. Equally, by acknowledging it, I have ensured that I remain the researcher and respect my participants, representing their views and responses, not my assumptions.

Dependability can be proven in this study as I started by ensuring that I had all records pertaining to the research in a secure location, and adequately backed up. The records included communication relating to the research, ethics documents, anonymised records of research participants, fieldwork notes, interview transcripts, data analysis decisions, and other relevant information (BSA, 2017, 2019). The preparation of the research was discussed with some women who have been my clients, former peers, and community members, to ensure that the investigation is both relevant and required. I have also discussed the research with my academic supervisors.

Credibility concerning research requires ensuring that good practice is adhered to throughout the research process and beyond. The researcher, thus, must act professionally. Respecting the stakeholders in the research and understanding the social world in which the research is conducted, are both essential aspects of credibility (Nowell *et al.*, 2017; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Therefore, the researcher should demonstrate the processes followed in data collection and analysis. In adhering to these principles of demonstrating credibility for the research, there is a clear trail of the processes and thoughts (reflexivity) that went into the actions, decisions and, where necessary, doubts and outcomes. This research's credibility was established by ensuring that approval was sought through the university ethics committee (see appendix 1), the British Sociological Association's code of practice.

Generalisability and transferability

In qualitative research, the generalisability of the results is based on the quality of the theoretical inferences made from the data, instead of the preoccupations of quantitative research, such as the lack of transparency in how the research was conducted (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2018). Additionally, the issue of representativeness ought to be considered. It pertains to two aspects of a research study; in the positivist paradigm, for example, random sampling is used to promote sample representativeness and avoid bias relating to the sample and the findings. Every population constituent has the same probability of being included in the study's sample (Flick, 2018). When using purposive sampling, it is important to consider whether the population that is purposefully sampled is 'represented' to meet the purpose of the study. Representativeness is also utilised in generalising findings to the population and its aspects are not included in the sample. In this instance, this research did not require the findings to be generalisable; only to offer a snapshot of a small population's issues.

This research focuses on Black African HQHSM women in public sector organisations in England. The public sector was chosen due to similarities in the different organisations regarding expected progression levels; e.g., salary bands, grades, and leadership development programmes. They are also bound by the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector

Equality Duty (EHRC, 2013), which places responsibility on public bodies and others carrying out public functions to ensure that they treat all individuals fairly in shaping policy and delivering services concerning their employees. Public sector organisations, thus, in principle, must adhere to diversity and inclusion.

Moreover, research has shown that many migrant women tend to be recruited to work in public sector organisations. It is envisaged that the results will help those in a similar position and encourage further research and discourse into marginalised communities in the context of LOS. This research does not aim for the findings to be generalisable to the whole population or to change laws; instead, it seeks to understand the drivers and barriers from the women's unique perspective. The themes that are drawn from this data, and the subsequent model have the potential to produce insights that may resonate within migrant communities and the wider ethnic minority community. Semi-structured interviews were adopted for data collection within the qualitative method, as discussed in the following section.

4.7. Data collection

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are a form of interrogation whose main characteristic is that the researcher sets a broadly uniform set of questions while leaving enough leeway to ask further questions depending on the participants' responses. The questions are somewhat more open in their frame of reference than those typically found in a structured interview schedule (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018; Flick, 2018; Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019; Silverman, 2021). The interviewer usually has some scope to dig deeper and, if necessary, rephrase the question for clarity and ask further questions in response to what are seen as significant replies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Black African migrant women falling into two clusters; the first group comprising HQHSM women with a post-bachelor's degree level, and who are in middle or lower management jobs. The second group comprised HQHSM women who hold senior leadership positions. For this study, senior leadership self-identified as assistant or associate directors. It is worth emphasising that

although the women were separated into the two groups at the point of data collection, they are part of the same cohort within the study to help identify the participants' position and allow an easier check for relationships in the themes. I underscore that this is only one study, and the data analysis will treat the interviews as such.

Participant criteria

The field of study is vast and can be further researched to understand the different aspects of non-salient populations. In staying within the narrow focus for this PhD research and adding further clarity, this study applies a strict criterion for selecting participants. To qualify for the study, the participant must:

1. Be a Black African woman who holds 'indefinite leave to remain in the UK' status or British citizenship. Thus, they are no longer under the limited stay visa, work permit, and have 'no recourse to public funds.' Holding 'indefinite leave to remain in the UK' status or British citizenship means that they have equal opportunities to the rest of the population, although this is not explicitly stated by government documents, which focus on duties to UK (Home Office, 2019a).
2. Be educated to above first-degree level to pass the Home Office highly qualified test and be considered as highly skilled migrants according to their definition of a highly skilled migrant as per the Tier 2 skilled visa (UK Migration Advisory Committee, 2015, 2019a, 2019b).
3. Work in the public sector within England at the time of interview. No time limit has been imposed.
4. Be in middle or lower management, a professional, or in a senior management position.

The study also excludes women who arrived in the UK before the age of 16 because it can be argued that as they have attended secondary school education within the UK, these women have received the same access to education and career advice as those who were born within the UK; thus, they lie outside the scope of the research as they may well have

undergone an integration process and received extra support from the system (Obinna, 2016). Integration is the two-way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and the societies in which they live, whereby migrants are incorporated into the receiving community's social, economic, cultural, and political life (IOM, 2019). It entails a set of joint responsibilities for migrants and communities, and it also incorporates other related notions, such as social inclusion and social cohesion.

The final criterion was that the research participants had to be from English-speaking countries. The rationale behind this selection was their shared former British colonial linkage (Niranjana, 2000; Mignolo, 2007; Lee, 2009; Fornäs, 2010; Tae, 2014). Most of these countries also share a link with the British education system. The sub-Saharan region is connected by the broader and deeper awareness of the empire's complicated coexistence and conflicting continental connections. The countries share several comparable influences of colonialism, imperialism, and post-colonialism. Many Black Africans think that because of that link, their former colonial masters would view them more favourably than if they went to the land of another former colonial master; e.g., France, Germany, or Portugal (Arvin, Tuck and Morrill, 2013).

The participants were provided with the information sheets explaining what would be involved, then given time to read through before being contacted to see if they agreed. Then, a mutually agreeable time and medium was set for the interview. Once consent was sought, the suitable candidates were interviewed (Aron, Aron and Smollan, 1992; Jo, Nelson and Kiecker, 1997; Fisher and Katz, 2000). The process was repeated until the number of participants met the criteria for valid data analysis. The process stopped when I was convinced I had reached saturation, and no further interviews would provide any new insights (Emmel, 2013; Flick, 2018). Sampling and saturation are discussed in the following section.

Sample selection

Sampling denotes selecting part of a population for research (Denscombe, 2017). There are two main sampling techniques; namely, probability and non-probability sampling.

Probability, also known as scientific sampling, is mainly used in randomised trials and large-scale research. It requires that the participants are chosen randomly such that the selected population should have an equal opportunity to participate (Miller and Brewer, 2003; Tracy, 2019). Denscombe (2017) outlines that the term “random” in research involves specific constraints in terms of how objects are selected, and in statistical terms, randomness means that each unit should have an equal probability of inclusion, thus reducing researcher bias. Non-probability sampling is the umbrella term used to capture all forms of sampling that are not randomly selected (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). It allows the researcher to determine the characteristics of the sample because they meet pre-determined criteria, and it is mainly used with small samples in qualitative research (Given, 2008). Therefore, the type of sampling is determined by the researcher's purpose, size, and type of research paradigm. Both probability and non-probability have some advantages and disadvantages; however, sampling works well within the domain in which they are used.

Considering the nature of this study and the women who are being researched; i.e. (1) HQHSM women with a bachelor's degree level of education and in middle or lower management jobs; and (2) HQHSM women who hold a position of assistant or associate director and above, it was necessary that the selection of participants follow a strict criterion (addressed above). Furthermore, these women can be hard to reach as they are a minority within a minority population. I considered that not every Black or brown woman is a first-generation migrant, and that these were difficult and unpleasant questions to ask directly.

One of the barriers presented from early in the research through to advertising for the interviews, was considering African and Asian first-generation migrant women. Egharevba (2001) highlighted the challenges that can be presented to ethnic minority researchers accessing participants from other ethnic minority communities. In this research study, it was a challenge as a Black researcher to gain access to participants in South Asian communities. The COVID lockdown made it challenging to build relationships and gain access to the community to which I did not belong. Additionally, some significant

differences were found in the initial review of the literature. For example, the issues of the ethnic hierarchies within organisations mean Black African women often find themselves even lower in the organisational hierarchy than their Asian counterparts despite being highly qualified and, in some cases, more qualified (Chin, 2011; Zwysen and Demireva, 2018a, 2018b). Given the depth and detail required in the PhD research, these were discussed with my supervisors, and the challenges of combining the two groups were debated in detail. The challenges were historical and beyond my control, coupled with further challenges brought about by restricted access due to the lockdown. It was agreed that the context be adjusted to focus only on Black African migrants, as outlined in chapter one.

The nature of the research outlined above lent itself to non-probability purposive sampling using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. While researchers have argued for the differentiation of convenience and purposive, the flexibility of deciding on the choice of participants meant I could adjust and adapt the collection mode as appropriate, and at short notice (Marshall *et al.*, 2013; Bryman, 2015; Lewis, 2015). For example, the data collection for this research was undertaken during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020-21; therefore, the convenience of time and space led to seeking participants to be interviewed virtually, as opposed to the originally planned mix of face-to-face and online. Purposive, convenience and snowball combinations were selected to help find participants who met a set criterion and were willing to be interviewed online.

The original plan was to offer the prospective participants an option between a face-to-face in-person interview or online, partly based on preference, but also because the study focused on women across the breadth of England. I considered time, distance, and convenience constraints, and allowing flexibility by offering the two options ensured that prospective participants were not missed because of distance or other factors that would make it difficult to meet face-to-face. Besides, online interviewing is becoming a perfectly acceptable format of data collection and offers benefits Flick (2022) asserts that online interviews may be favoured over in-person interviews for various reasons. One benefit is that neither the interviewer nor the participant must travel to meet for the interview.

Others argue that conventional interviews need transcription before researchers can analyse the data, which can be avoided with online interviews because the responses are instantly shown as text on the screen. Online interviews are sometimes easier than face-to-face interviews, but they are restricted to participants with Internet access. Finally, the subject or population under research may dictate the utilisation of online interviews. The ethics application for the research was approved on 7th February 2020 (appendix 1).

As part of contacting people, I considered it difficult to select those who met the criteria, and I needed to allow the women to feel free to self-identify and self-select. I prepared the advert with a pre-interview recording with a few demographic and screening questions (Appendix 2). The three-minute video outlining the research and the type of participants I was interested in interviewing, together with a short Google form, were sent out to prospective interviewees. The form consisted of seven generic questions asking if they were based in England, the level of qualification, the sector/organisation (to check they were public sector), and a few other questions about how they learned about the research, and contact details for me to send the relevant documents.

Process followed

I began preparing to start contacting prospects through my network, but in March 2020, the first unforeseen challenge occurred as the country went into lockdown, and the university announced that we could no longer conduct face-to-face interviews. To mitigate this issue, I adjusted and tailored my contacts for the interviews to be online only.

The next step was to send the participant information sheet and consent form (Appendix 3) to my networks and contacts on LinkedIn and Facebook. I also sent it out to my email contacts in July 2020. As I received the responses, I could then contact the respondents with the information sheet and the consent form, thanking them for getting in touch, showing interest, and providing them with the options of their interviews with a range of dates. There were two slightly different questions for those in senior positions and for middle managers and below (see Appendix 4). Forty-two (42) women responded. Out of those, thirty-one (30) were interviewed. Of the remaining twelve (12), seven (7) did not

respond despite my emailing them and following up. Three (3) prospects completed and sent back the consent forms, but they did not have the time in their diary; all three were key workers dealing with the pressure brought about by the pandemic. Two (2) withdrew their consent. The first interview occurred within three weeks of sending out the invitations in August 2020, and the majority of the interviews were conducted between August and November 2020. This process happened seamlessly and more quickly than I had initially thought it would.

Participant demographics

Timestamp	Are you a woman who came to live in the UK as an adult (over 18 yrs)	Where do you currently reside?	What is the highest level of education you have completed?	Do you work in the public sector?	What type of organisation is it? (e.g., education, police, health service)	Which of the following best describes your current job level?	What is your origin continent?	When is it best to contact you?	How did you first hear about this research?
11/08/2020 01:18	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Health Service	Middle to Senior Manager but not HOD or director role (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekends	Social Media
18/08/2020 22:30	Yes	England	Postgraduate Diploma	Yes	NHS	Lower Manager or first-line manager, team leader (or equivalent)	Africa	Any day	Word of mouth
19/08/2020 22:53	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Local Authority	Lower Manager or first-line manager, team leader (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekdays	Word of mouth
23/08/2020 12:18	Yes	England	Bachelor's degree	Yes	Other Government agencies	Middle to Senior Manager but not HOD or director role (or equivalent)	Africa	Any day	Social Media
23/08/2020 12:39	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Education	Lower Manager or first-line manager, team leader (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekends	Word of mouth
26/08/2020 02:38	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Healthcare	Deputy Director, Head of Department (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekdays	Word of mouth
18/09/2020 22:42	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Healthcare	Administrative or professional with no management responsibility	Africa	Weekends	Social Media
28/09/2020 22:39	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Education	Administrative or professional with no management responsibility	Africa		Social Media
28/09/2020 22:42	Yes	England	Postgraduate Diploma	Yes	Healthcare	Lower Manager or first-line manager, team leader (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekends	Social Media

28/09/2020 10:45	Yes	England	Postgraduate Diploma	Yes	Healthcare	Deputy Director, Head of Department (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekdays	Social Media
28/09/2020 22:47	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Local Government	Chief Executive/ Director/ Principal (or equivalent)	Africa		Blog post
28/09/2020 23:27	Yes	England	Postgraduate certificate	Yes	Social Care	Administrative or professional with no management responsibility	Africa	Weekdays	Word of mouth
30/09/2020 01:43	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Social Care	Lower Manager or first-line manager, team leader (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekdays	Social Media
30/09/2020 23:45	Yes	England	Postgraduate Diploma	Yes	Healthcare	Middle to Senior Manager but not HOD or director role (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekdays	Word of mouth
30/09/2020 23:49	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Social Care	Chief Executive/ Director/ Principal (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekdays	Social Media
02/10/2020 20:55	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Social Care	Middle to Senior Manager but not HOD or director role (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekdays	Word of mouth
02/10/2020 22:00	Yes	England	Postgraduate Diploma	Yes	Social Work	Lower Manager or first-line manager, team leader (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekdays	Word of mouth
06/10/2020 01:01	Yes	England	Postgraduate certificate	Yes	Social Care	Administrative or professional with no management responsibility	Africa	Weekdays	Blog post
10/10/2020 23:46	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Education	Administrative or professional with no management responsibility	Africa	Weekends	Word of mouth
11/10/2020 17:53	Yes	England	Bachelor's degree	Yes	Healthcare	Lower Manager or first-line manager, team leader (or equivalent)	Africa	Any day	Social Media
12/10/2020 14:17	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Other Government agencies	Deputy Director, Head of Department (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekdays	Word of mouth

13/10/2020 09:13	Yes	England	Postgraduate certificate	Yes	Healthcare	Lower Manager or first-line manager, team leader (or equivalent)	Africa	Any day	Word of mouth
13/10/2020 11:11	Yes	England	Postgraduate certificate	Yes	Healthcare	Middle to Senior Manager but not HOD or director role (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekends	Word of mouth
17/10/2020 19:30	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Social Care	Administrative or professional with no management responsibility	Africa	Any day	Social Media
17/10/2020 19:35	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Local Authority	Administrative or professional with no management responsibility	Africa	Weekends	Word of mouth
17/10/2020 19:54	Yes	England	Doctorate	Yes	Education	Administrative or professional with no management responsibility	Africa	Weekdays	Social Media
18/10/2020 23:37	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Other Government agencies	Chief Executive/ Director/ Principal (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekdays	Social Media
18/10/2020 23:51	Yes	England	Doctorate	Yes	Healthcare	Deputy Director, Head of Department (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekends	Social Media
23/10/2020 21:16	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Healthcare	Middle to Senior Manager but not HOD or director role (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekends	Word of mouth
13/03/2021 14:08	Yes	England	Postgraduate certificate	Yes	Healthcare	Lower Manager or first-line manager, team leader (or equivalent)	Africa	Weekends	Word of mouth
29/03/2021 16:35	Yes	England	Master's degree	Yes	Healthcare	Administrative or professional with no management responsibility	Africa	Any day	Social Media
25/04/2021 19:19	Yes	England	Bachelor's degree	Yes	Healthcare	Administrative or professional with no management responsibility	Africa	Weekdays	Word of mouth

Figure 7: Participants' demographics

On reflection, I can only attribute this to the fact that it was easier to engage people and find times for the interviews because they did not have to travel anywhere, and I did not have to travel myself. Therefore, it is important to note that while the pandemic insurmountably obstructed people's lives, it did not cause a problem to this research because of the purposeful selection of participants who already had internet access and IT facilities, in order to ensure that the interviews occurred seamlessly. Snowballing was applied to access a broader range of Black African HQHSM women beyond those known to me and the supervisory team. As Denscombe (2017) asserts:

'Purposive sampling' works where the researcher already knows something about the specific people or events and deliberately selects subjects because they are instances that are likely to produce the most valuable data. They are chosen with a particular purpose in mind, and that purpose reflects the specific qualities of the people or events chosen and their relevance to the topic of the investigation. It is often used in conjunction with qualitative research based on small-scale exploratory samples, and its use is perfectly compatible with purposive sampling (Denscombe, 2017, p. 42).

The purposive process involved initially accessing participants through my professional and personal networks as a starting point (Atkinson and Flint, 2001; Miller and Brewer, 2003; Agadjanian and Zotova, 2012). Miller and Brewer (2003) suggest using this type of sampling in researching hard-to-reach communities; e.g., the elites, sex workers, certain young people's groups, migrant women's communities and those with specific disabilities or illnesses. Using this process yielded the first sixteen (16) participants. Snowballing helped engage further participants by requesting the initial participants to introduce the research to their networks, yielding a further eight (8) women. My supervisors introduced the remainder; some said they had found the advert on my social media. The flexibility of the purposeful snowball sampling meant that I could include them despite them not being in my contacts or network. The important part for me was finding the right participants, rather than sticking rigidly to the rules of snowballing. Saturation is discussed next.

Saturation

The data saturation point phenomenon is highly subjective, and the researcher must determine when that saturation point has been reached. Therefore, despite best intentions, saturation is determined at the stage when enough data has been collected and

no further interviews are revealing any further information (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006; Fusch and Ness, 2015; Faulkner and Trotter, 2017; Saunders *et al.*, 2018; Kumar, 2019). These researchers argue that no one size fits all for qualitative data collection; only the researcher can determine when that level is reached based on factors such as the scope of the research and the number of variables. Fusch and Ness (2015) argue that failure to reach saturation can negatively impact quality and content validity. Some researchers have tried determining the sample sizes in qualitative research (Marshall *et al.*, 2013; Hagaman and Wutich, 2017; Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi, 2017). However, a consensus is yet to be found, and the academics who have attempted to study this have found no definitive conclusions. In more recent years, saturation has become popular in qualitative studies.

Mason (2010) argues that while saturation determines most qualitative sample sizes, other factors can dictate how quickly this is achieved in a qualitative study. Gubrium and Holstein (2008) suggest that the study's aims are the ultimate driver of the project design and, therefore, the sample size. They state that a small study with modest claims might achieve saturation quicker than a study aiming to describe a process that spans disciplines. Considering the above, and the need to arrive at the correct number without being prescriptive, consensus by researchers suggests between 20 to 50 participants (Mason, 2010; Lewis, 2015). As the collection is for a PhD, 31 participants were interviewed, and one eventually withdrew their consent, leaving 30 moving to data analysis. On reflection and familiarity with the data, it became apparent that saturation was reached when I interviewed circa 20 participants. Nonetheless, using the 30-participant interview was extremely comforting in ensuring I had not missed any key discussions.

4.8. Data analysis

The preceding section covered the overview of matters on data collection; this section gives an overview of the data analysis process. Data analysis, when conducted correctly, gives the research credibility and allows the researcher to articulate the steps followed to reach and report the findings of their study. Therefore, researchers must consider different approaches to data analysis and justify their choices (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2019). Qualitative data, by its nature, is non-numerical and unquantifiable. The volume can vary

immensely depending on what the research is seeking to understand based on the research question and objectives; it offers several approaches to data analysis. For this research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 31 black African HQHSM migrant women between August 2020 and March 2021. This led to the next step of analysing them to elucidate the meaning of the participants' responses to the interview questions and objectives. Next, I review and justify the Thematic Analysis, including why I opted for Braun and Clarke's approach.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis (TA) was selected as a preferred method (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994; Nadin and Cassell, 2004; Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2021b; King and Horrocks, 2010; King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2018). King and Horrocks (2010) describe TA as "a diverse array of interrelated approaches that incorporates the method of detecting, organising, and analysing themes in textual material. Themes are recurring and unique elements of participants' tales, defining certain views and experiences" (Cassell, Cunliffe and Grandy, 2017, pp. 219–20). The fundamental influence of Thematic Analysis is that they give structure while allowing the analyst to adjust them to their research. Nowell *et al* (2017, p. 1) contend that "theme analysis is a significant qualitative research approach, but nothing has been written to educate researchers on how to perform a rigorous thematic analysis". The Thematic Analysis offers theoretical flexibility that can be highly adaptable and may produce a detailed and thorough yet difficult description of data. It is said to be effective for comparing and contrasting different study participants' views and revealing unexpected findings. Thematic Analysis can also assist in summarising large data sets by forcing the researcher to handle material systematically, resulting in a more ordered eventual presentation.

While TA has numerous benefits, it also has drawbacks. Indeed, when compared with other qualitative research approaches, its flaws become apparent (Braun and Clarke, 2008; Nowell *et al.*, 2017; Flick, 2018). Some of its criticisms include the dearth of literature on Thematic Analysis aspects such as rigour, compared with grounded theory, ethnography, and phenomenology, which may prompt beginner researchers to doubt their abilities.

Unlike other methods, basic Thematic Analysis does not allow researchers to make assertions regarding language use. The flexibility of Thematic Analysis might lead to inconsistencies and a lack of coherence when constructing themes from the data collected (Denzin and Lincoln, 2007). An epistemological viewpoint that underpins the study's empirical assertions can help establish coherence and cohesiveness (King and Brooks, 2017).

Besides counterarguments around the obscurity of TA's history, the most salient development was that of Braun and Clarke (2006). This offered six-phase guidance which has been adjusted, refined, and enhanced over time, underscoring reflexivity, raising the importance of subjectivity as part of the process, and renaming it 'reflexive TA' (Braun and Clarke, 2021b). Reflexive TA "emphasises the active role of the researcher in coding and theme development, the unavoidable subjectivity of these processes, and the significance of the researcher reflecting on their preconceptions and philosophies, as well as how these may influence and delimit their data analysis" (Braun and Clarke, 2021b, p. 293). Reflexive TA goes beyond the basics of finding themes or being a precursor to other TA or QA methods. It offers an active epistemological perspective that supports the empirical assertions of the researcher, helping to establish coherence and cohesion. It can be used to analyse both small and larger datasets based on commonalities.

The earlier versions of TA were used interchangeably and shared some features with other data analysis methods. For example, some of the most common types of analysis include **Content Analysis (CA)**, arguably the most common and basic qualitative data analysis method. The material analysis finds patterns in content (words, sentences, images, or communication channels). With CA, the researcher codes, categorise and tabulates vast data volumes in a method that can be used with both qualitative and quantitative data. However, critics argue that combining qualitative and quantitative elements may result in subtleties being missed, and depth being compromised (Flick, 2018). The second is **Narrative Analysis (NA)**, which is concerned with how stories are narrated and may reveal a lot about individuals. NA helps researchers better understand their subjects by evaluating research and everyday life stories. Proponents believe that focusing on different

components may lead to equally essential and useful interpretations and conclusions. The structure, function, content, and performance of a narrative are all factors to consider (Allen, 2017; Flick, 2018). Limitations of NA cited by critics include small sample sizes, the time required to recount stories, difficulty recreating Narrative Analysis owing to social and lifestyle variables, and study bias. The third is **Discourse Analysis (DA)**, which involves language in context to understand the discussions completely and is mainly used in studies concerning race, culture, and other marginalised cases. It can be used especially where the researcher aims to understand contentious issues such as politics, terrorism, and sexual abuse. Some of DA's criticisms include the over-focus on words and language at the expense of people's dynamic nature of human cultural nuances (Taylor, 2013). Other methods in QA include **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**, which helps the researcher grasp a subject's perspective of detailed lived experiences on their own terms as opposed to those ascribed by theoretical presumptions, often in psychology (Smith, 1996; Smith and Osborn, 2015); and **Grounded Theory (GT)**, which uses facts to evaluate and refine new concepts from the bottom up (Glasser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2014). It is worth noting that the comparison above only demonstrates how vast the domain is and how challenging it can be to settle on one method.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

I chose to broadly follow the approach offered by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021), not because I feel it is better than the other methods, but because its lucidity and focus on interpretation and meaning-making through the analysis process aligned with how I was seeking to represent the participants. It helped me endeavour to recognise, explain, and reflect on my personal and theoretical assumptions that could affect and limit the research processes and analysis, and allowed me to question my thoughts and subjectivities. As the main research instrument, I researched people from my group, which can be both a positive and a challenge. Compliant with the interpretative orientation that seeks to explore and 'unpack' meanings and why those meanings matter, as opposed to descriptive-summatative orientation, it was critical to understand the meaning-making rather than truth-seeking or discovery.

The open and organic coding process offered by Braun and Clarke (2021) is dependent on the researcher's engagement, position, and introspective situatedness. Proponents assert that it is normal and acceptable for different coders to observe and make sense of data differently. Reflexive TA recommends that just one person codes (typically the researcher). Using numerous coders does not ensure a 'true' or 'accurate' analysis. Multiple coders can help build deeper and more detailed insights into data, although they are not required or preferred (Braun and Clarke, 2021b). If numerous coders are involved in the reflexive TA process, the goal should be to obtain richer or more nuanced insights, not to agree on every code. Crucial to the reflexive TA analytic process is meaning-making and interpretation, not the multiplicity of coding.

Therefore, after comparing with other forms of TA; e.g., template, matrix, and framework analyses (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994; Boyatzis, 1998; Nadin and Cassell, 2004; King and Horrocks, 2010), the richness of Braun and Clarke's TA approach was chosen for its clarity of detail, the level of which during the phases was more straightforward to comprehend while simultaneously holding myself to account to ensure a clear audit trail was kept. The six phases of this Thematic Analysis approach are listed below; Braun and Clarke stress that analysis is a cyclical and iterative process, not linear, and that the six steps outlined are guidelines for researchers. It is ultimately up to the researcher to decide how to effectively apply these to their study questions and data (King and Brooks, 2017). This iterative nature of this analysis meant going back and forth and engaging in reflexivity over a long period, demanding a pace that allowed time to evaluate and re-evaluate in order to fully consider the participant's voice.

Overall, all studies have limitations, and several researchers suggest using multiple coders, member checking and other ways of rigour assurance. In doctoral studies, it can be argued that rigour, integrity, and competence lie largely in the detail provided by the researcher. Due to the nature and limitations of this doctorate project, data were categorised and themes discovered, then discussed with the supervisor, some fellow PhD colleagues, and a few of the participants who were able to offer time beyond what was agreed for the interview; a procedure that ensured the consistency of technique. However, different

opinions from experts could not be sought due to time pressures. Using this strategy in future research might entail getting more people to snap-check some of the coded data, and further discussions through interactions with other researchers, experts and, where possible, participants, as suggested by Nowell *et al* (2017) and Castleberry and Nolen (2018). That said, additional strengths of the themes were tested through discussion at a in March 2022, where presentations to some public sector leaders were delivered, as discussed in the contribution impact section.

The above review and discussion rang true with my experience, as this process was neither linear nor easy. It took many months of sweat, abandonment, immense self-reflection, and decisiveness. In introducing their updated guide, Braun and Clarke (2021b) assert that they have been accused of approaching their Thematic Analysis process as if they were a blueprint for creating analysis as a whole, something that they argue was not their intention. They acknowledge that they may have underestimated the complexity of qualitative analysis, but by no means do they underplay the theoretical debate and research required in performing Thematic Analysis. They recommend considering their process as a guide to establishing the thorough, introspective analysis required for successful qualitative research, and acknowledge the challenges with using certain terminology, metaphors, and comparisons that can sometimes be challenging to diverse groups. “Academic research assumes the reader is not disabled or neurodivergent and is conversant with complicated research language. Inclusive language is crucial for emotional and political well-being. We have worked hard to avoid phrases that imply specific sensory, cognitive, emotional, or physical capacities, to explain our terminology, and to recognise the limitations or constraints of methods or technology, yet we have failed” (Braun and Clarke, 2021b, pp. xxvi–ii).

I found some terminologies in this process challenging. Nonetheless, I found phases one to three straightforward, and I found combining phases four and five to be easier for me to grasp what I was doing. With that in mind, I followed the guidance they outlined while adjusting and adapting as I saw fit, and as required as an independent researcher.

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the dataset

This phase entails immersing oneself in the dataset's content. In practice, this entails reading and re-reading the data (and, if dealing with audio data transcripts, listening to the recordings at least once) and writing (short) notes regarding any analytic ideas or insights, both for personal data items and for the dataset as a whole. Transcription translates recorded audio (typically spoken word) into a written form that may be used to study an event (Duranti, 2006). In considering what I wanted from my transcription, I researched and consulted various literature on transcription, spanning many disciplines. However, most tend to focus on linguistic research challenges (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006; Davidson, 2009). Transcription as a theory is becoming more evident in journals, especially psychology and linguistics.

Conversely, research does not explicitly address a consensus on the ins and outs of transcribing (Davidson, 2009). Several social researchers state that they used verbatim transcription without explicitly stating what this means to the particular study and their philosophical standpoint. Lapadat and Lindsay (1998) argue that researchers should articulate why they chose to transcribe, and the process for the transcription. In addition, in choosing the type of transcription in line with the type of data analysis; e.g., discourse, narrative, and phenomenology, they must also critically think about what was important; for example, language, themes, intonations, or interpretation in line with their research paradigm. They argue that failure to be precise results in difficulties in examining or following the findings. Others have argued that researchers ought to decide whether transcription is theory-laden or a means to an end; in the latter case, transcription is a tool for coding themes (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006; Flick, 2020).

A verbatim representation preserves the original information's surface shape, such as accurate numbers. The remainders are qualitative interpretations of the data (e.g., whether pauses, coughs, laughs, and numbers are considered "high" or "low"). Compared to verbatim details, Gist traces are more accessible, easier to absorb, and less likely to be forgotten. (Nolte, Löckenhoff and Reyna, 2022, p. 198).

Transcribing has become routine for many qualitative researchers without critical thought about the aim (Da Silva, 2021). Reflecting on the aim of the study, transcribing the data was

challenging. The transcripts were used for coding and excerpts in the write-up because it was more important to interpret the responses. Conducting this process helped the nuances and richness of dialects to be fully appreciated, including ensuring the preservation of *how* the words were spoken. The initial focus was on ensuring the words and sentences were represented verbatim as a key part of how participants expressed themselves; *their* words were the priority. The verbatim nature of transcribing helped me elucidate the conversation, as discussed later. It also helped with understanding and familiarity with the data, as well as to prepare for the coding process.

This process started after the first interview and took place from August 2020 to July 2021. It was critical to transcribe the interviews as soon as they were completed to maintain the integrity of the individual voices of the participants. Various scholars recommend manual transcription, stating that it is the best way for the researcher to get close to the data. Transcription software (otter.ai) was used for the first-level transcription. The audio recordings were then compared several times with the transcripts (in a Microsoft word document), correcting where the software had missed or misheard the language and wording. Doing so helped with further familiarisation with the interviews. The average number of times interview audios were played varied depending on aspects such as accents, length, material comments and other nuances. The minimum number of repeats for each audio was five.

Another key part of this phase was the labelling and anonymising of the interview transcripts. This process screens the transcripts, removing identifying information such as names, mentions of any organisations and self-references when the interviewees emphasise or recall a scenario. Once convinced that due diligence and familiarisation had been performed, the data was left for a few months before a further round of listening in November 2021. Each interview transcript was revisited by randomly picking the audio, and most of the listening was conducted on the drive to and from the university (a 90-minute drive). That ensured a break between each interview, allowing for further reflection on what I had heard and the chance to compare it with previous listening episodes.

Phase 2: Coding

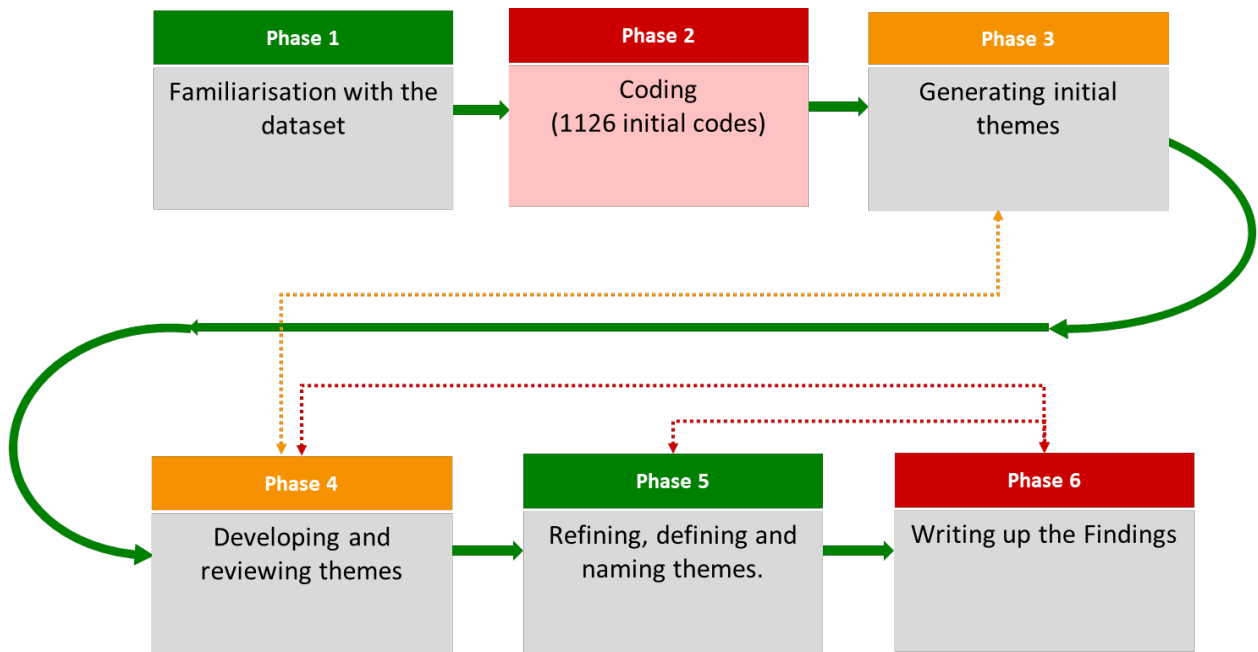


Figure 8: The reflexive Thematic Analysis process adapted from Braun and Clarke (2021, p. 34)

This process involves iteratively navigating the dataset and closely searching for data segments that are interesting, relevant, or beneficial to the research. The aim is to find and provide brief analytical explanations (code labels) designed to capture specific meanings or concepts. Coding occurs on several levels, from semantic to conceptual, implicit, or latent. It involves coding, capturing the data's analytic interpretation, summarising, and condensing content into usable chunks. The entire dataset is methodically coded and integrated into labels and data segments for each code (Flick, 2020).

This phase began in December 2021. Initially, a template created from the research and interview questions was used. This process felt onerous because trying to fit the codes to the questions was not the intention. The start was difficult because it took a few attempts before the final selection of QSR International's NVivo qualitative data analysis software. After a few false starts, the real work began, developing the inductive in vivo (using the participants' own words) open coding. The inductive and deductive Thematic Analysis method was utilised, and a rigorous step-by-step approach was employed with a hybrid method (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2021b). The analytical strategy used in this study was a

combination of data-driven inductive and deductive, a template of codes derived from the research and interview questions.

The two approaches complemented the study objectives by allowing the results to be interpreted and reflected upon (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In vivo codes from participant interview transcripts were created inductively, picking up new codes organically. The iterative process resulted in the most common codes being consolidated. Afterwards, the rest of the transcripts were reviewed to ensure nothing important had been missed. This format offered a more comprehensive and balanced perspective of the data. At the end of this process, I had 1126 codes deduced from 823 occurrences; the number of times the 30 transcripts had been coded (see Appendix 5). I reflected on this for around two weeks before starting to read through, moving to phases 3 and 4.

Phases 3 and 4: Generating initial themes, developing, and reviewing.

These phases will be discussed together because, in my experience, there was no clear line between the two. Braun and Clarke (2021) propose that in phase three, the researcher accumulates clusters of codes that appear to have a central notion or concept, and which may yield information that is pertinent to the research question. The datasets are then coded and compiled to ensure they appropriately represent the data and satisfy the study topic.

In phase four, the researcher revisits the entire dataset to assess the initial fit of the preliminary themes, verifying them using coded extracts, then the entire dataset. The themes are examined to ensure that there is a significant pattern of shared meaning in the dataset. If the themes do not highlight the most significant patterns in the dataset, radical ideas may emerge. Some topics may be united, while others may be divided into new themes. Because this method is iterative, it may be necessary to examine each subject's quality and breadth. The researcher might examine the issues starting with current knowledge, practice, or a mix of both.

In my case, I initially examined all 1126 codes, looking for those I could combine. I was not keen on removing any codes at this stage, so I reviewed the data multiple times while

simultaneously renaming the codes as necessary. I thought of this process as 'cleaning'. Next, I went to the research question and the theoretical framework to remind myself of the central aim of the research. I then analysed the coding several times, emerging with three levels of theme, core theme, and subtheme, then critically examining if they fit with the research question and theoretical framework. The process also involved breaking up, grouping, ungrouping, or moving some codes as appropriate. I went back and forth with this process between NVivo and a downloaded Word version (from NVivo), sometimes reading the codes separately from the others.

In addition to working alone on the data, I shared the 'themes document' with my research supervisors and met with my first supervisor, who offered his input and advice. It was also an opportunity to check if someone else could make sense of the themes. Another step was to share the theme's documents with the research participant and some fellow PhD students to seek their feedback regarding the representation of the broad topic; i.e., how they understood the research. Ultimately, data was reduced to seven themes, with some having received feedback from supervisors, fellow students, and some participants. The themes are discussed next.

Phases 5 and 6: Theme refining, defining, naming, and writing up.

Phases 5 and 6 are combined due to there being no clear demarcations, as the process was iterative. These phases began with completing this chapter's writing and beginning to tackle the next chapter (Chapter five: Findings). Braun and Clarke (2021) suggest that phase five should ensure that each theme is distinct and has a strong central notion or idea. It involved determining the narrative that the data presented, the interpretation, and how it all fit together. The critical tasks were to create clear descriptions of each theme and name them succinctly, which involved revisiting the research question, objectives, and theoretical framework, and re-familiarising myself with the interviews to ensure the study's parameters were maintained. Certain themes necessitated further elaboration and movement, even through these later stages. Writing was a vital part of the analytic process for reflexive thematic analysis. Thus, informal writing began even before phase one, through transcribing, reflexivity, familiarisation, note-taking and mind maps. Some of these

writings were included in the formal output, contributing to the finalisation process. This process made phase five easier to compile, as I began seeing the flow in my written record of the findings.

4.9. Ethical considerations

According to conventional definitions of ethics, it is defined by doing good and avoiding harm, and has been largely associated with the role of ethical principles and guidelines in advancing the pursuit of knowledge. Numerous scholars define ethics in terms of the appropriateness of one's behaviour in light of the rights of others who become the subject of, or are impacted by, one's work (Israel and Hay, 2006; Bell and Bryman, 2007; Stacey and Stacey, 2012; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). An exploratory investigation of nine social scientific societies' ethics codes undertaken by Bell and Bryman (2007, p. 71) identified nine core ethical principles and underpinning ethical considerations as follows:

Harm to participants — the likelihood of harm occurring during the research process and the need to protect participants, researchers, and others.

Dignity - respecting the dignity of study participants, researchers, and others.

Informed consent — full and informed consent of research participants.

Privacy — the necessity to preserve or avoid invading the privacy of study subjects.

Confidentiality — keeping research data about people, groups, or organisations private.

Anonymity — maintaining an individual or group's privacy.

Deception — the risk of dishonesty in the study process.

Affiliation declaration - Obligation to declare any professional or personal relationships that may have influenced the research, including conflicts of interest and funding sources.

Transparency and honesty - demand for research material dissemination to all interested parties and trust.

Reciprocity — the idea that research should benefit both the researcher and the participants.

Misrepresentation – not misrepresenting, misinterpreting, or reporting study findings.

Leadership and management research ethics must adhere to sustainable development and comprise procedural, intrinsic, and extrinsic ethics. It has been argued that because there are no one-size-fits-all ethical principles in leadership and management research, the researcher should conduct their study with due diligence, protecting all stakeholders (Miller and Brewer, 2003; Stacey and Stacey, 2012). Therefore, adhering to strong ethical frameworks assists researchers in anticipating and avoiding potential unintended, often long-term consequences. In line with the above arguments, academic researchers must adhere to their university's and their own appropriate professional ethical body's guidelines, asserting that the participants' privacy, consent, and non-disclosure must be considered (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The participants' privacy must be protected, and the research must be transparent. Recent legislation and ethical standards have been implemented to protect participants' privacy and respect the values of integrity (Creswell, 2009; Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012).

Some researchers have argued that the overbalance and over-focus on obtaining permission from participants, especially in underrepresented and critical research communities such as those from marginalised communities, can weaken trust in the researcher and cause fear in participants about the study and its process (Dowrick *et al.*, 2009; Berget and Macfarlane, 2019). Rigid adherence to regulations may prevent subjects from seeing their own interests addressed. Nonetheless, universities and other educational institutions now have Research Ethics Committees (REC) to ensure that research is conducted ethically, adheres to relevant legislation, protects research subjects, and encourages best practices and transparency. The ethics committee of De Montfort University's Faculty of Business and Law sought the appropriate permissions and approvals in the first year of this PhD research study. In addition, the British Sociological Association's ethical guidelines are applicable (BSA, 2019). The BSA's main goal is to promote awareness of ethical issues and urge members to own their ethical behaviour. The BSA code of conduct is based on the ideals of respect, competence, responsibility, and integrity throughout the study. The university and BSA guidelines emphasise gaining participants' informed consent. The standards also advise that participants' confidentiality and privacy be respected, and that personal information be kept private.

Furthermore, conducting research during the coronavirus pandemic lockdown period was fully conducted using digital devices. I had to take further care to ensure that the blurred boundaries did not risk the university, participants, and myself (the researcher). The BSA provides guidelines for ethical practice in this often complex and unpredictable domain, acknowledging that:

Working with digital platforms, networks, and data often raises new ethical concerns and unanticipated dilemmas. E.g., we have to rethink concepts of informed consent and confidentiality (including anonymity), work with new, messy and often confusing definitions of the private and the public and resolve unprecedented tensions between the researcher and the researched (BSA, 2019, p. 3).

The study received full ethics approval from the De Montfort University, Faculty of Business and Law ethics committee. The anticipated issues were outlined in the research ethics application, along with a plan for mitigating and resolving any risks or issues. Prospective participants were assured of their privacy and confidentiality by making available the participant information sheets, consent forms, and relevant contact details of the research supervisors and myself, should they require further clarification regarding the research and the process. These were provided during the participant seeking process once initial contact had been established, as it was a critical part of the data collection process.

Once the prospect had agreed to participate, a mutually suitable date and time were agreed upon; again, the process was clearly explained, and the participant was offered a choice of MS Teams or Zoom or, where these were not agreeable (in one case only), a telephone interview was conducted. The participants also gave consent via the participant information sheet and consent form, which they emailed before participating. The former outlined the study's purpose, length, and data-gathering methods, further stating that participation was voluntary and that participants may withdraw by contacting the researcher. The participants were also told they could check the scripts after transcription and before analysis, and that their contact information would be necessary for further consultation. The participants were informed that their data would be utilised to construct a PhD thesis and publish findings in academic journals.

Given the nature of the research, it was also crucial that I prepared for and dealt with potential problems during the interviews (e.g., as a consequence of participants recounting experiences of struggle to attain a current position, discrimination, or harassment). To avoid any such scenarios, I informed all participants on the participant information sheet and at the start of the interview that they could terminate the procedure without worrying about failing themselves, or the research process.

The aim of this was to reassure participants that their information would not be exploited, and to show that there was due consideration for their well-being in order to ensure that no undue pressure was being applied. As stated prior to the interview, the participants' names and any workplaces mentioned were withheld. The data for the study were securely stored in an electronic format using the university's password-protected OneDrive, with securely stored backup copies. International copyright laws automatically protect digital media, granting the creator of the work economic (monetary compensation) and moral (personal credit and reputation) rights (World Intellectual Property Organization, 1979). These protections continue to apply to all forms of online media, including images, text, audio, code, and data compilations. Certain countries and territories have strengthened their data protection and usage laws, including the European Union and the UK. As such, these impact this research and the university's obligation. While the details of these statutes are beyond the scope of this research, suffice it to say that I understand and have complied with the Data Protection Act 2018, and the UK's data protection law framework, which modifies and replaces the Data Protection Act 1998 and adapts the GDPR for the UK (Legislation.Gov.UK, 2018).

This research has underscored how fundamental it is to be aware of core ethical issues in research, and to understand the measures necessary to ensure that any research is ethical and has the necessary clearances from relevant authorities. Thus, this research undertaking underwent a thorough ethical review through critical reflection.

4.10. Limitations

The United Kingdom is undergoing a tumultuous period regarding immigration, migrants and Brexit (Goodwin, 2016; Hozic and True, 2017; Abrams and Travaglino, 2018; MacLeavy, 2018; MacLeod and Jones, 2018). Research involving migrant communities can raise anxieties about political correctness, backlash, or the fear of identification and alienation. It may have an impact on the participants speaking their truth. While the recruitment of participants is a public process, participation is private and confidential, with pseudonyms used, and the right to withdraw consent is assured. None of the participants were contacted through their place of employment.

Secondly, this research only covers a small number of Black African HQHSM women. While their views can be generalised, the study does not purport to represent the views of similar Black African HQHSM women working in the target areas. Nonetheless, it is anticipated that disseminating the results as widely as possible in academia, policy, and practice will prompt dialogue.

Thirdly, this research falls short of the criticality required to enact real change and shift the dial towards more research. Nonetheless, a small, growing body of work supports incorporating intersectional perspectives in human resources management, leadership, and organisational studies. I argue that a philosophy that combines the more salient characteristics such as race, gender, age, physical disability and ethnicity, and the invisible self-identifying characteristics such as class, nationality, neuro-disabilities, and sexuality as harmonised methods of identity together, or as a selection of multiples in social and organisational practice, fosters complete and accurate outcomes, thus leading to better and more balanced policy change applications (Berry and Bell, 2012; Cooper *et al.*, 2014; Kallschmidt and Eaton, 2019). These reflections strengthen the push to do more for our communities internationally.

Lastly, there is still much to be done to make this type of research mainstream, and there is a need to broaden the intersectional path in organisation studies. Here, I draw from Holvino's (2010) reflection and remain aware of my privileged position as a researcher, and

the insider relatedness regarding some of the challenges of researching women from my communities with a similar background. As Holvino states:

"As much as I would like to think that, as a Black woman, I am (like others) uniquely positioned to do this work, claiming a practical standpoint from which to do simultaneity research and practice, it is also clear that we are the less powerful and have less access to research institution funds. At the same time, we are usually less trusted or credited in the minority communities we seek to represent, as we are 'not one of them' in our shifting class status and identities. Our 'outsider within' status is thus not such an advantage, for our knowledge production becomes suspect when we are caught between the power relations of our disciplines, research institutions and academic practices and the communities and women we seek to give voice to through our research. Our privileged position at the intersections is easily transformed into a deficit, making working the simultaneity of race, ethnicity, gender, class, nationality, and sexuality a much more difficult and less likely enterprise. How do we encourage and 'raise the bar' for dominant people in various dimensions of difference in a challenge to do research that acknowledges their simultaneity? Furthermore, how do we engage in inter-disciplinary work across even greater boundaries?" (Holvino, 2010, p. 266)

Kelly *et al.* (2017) contend that the researcher is far more than an instrument of data collection, and fully engages with a range of emotions and embodied identities. While the researcher will always be an outsider in some respects, there are also responsibilities, reciprocities, and relationships to be nurtured in communities to which the activist academic belongs. The above researchers argue that academic activist researchers can remain objective in their findings, understanding that dilemma and expectations of academic rigour and broadly contextualised analysis to satisfy academic career requirements may mean that the findings are quite different from those helpful in furthering activist causes. However, Lewis (2012) argued that:

We must recognise the persistence of colonialism in intersecting systems of oppression and domination and seek to include such an ethical understanding in our research practice. We must recognise ourselves as allies in solidarity with Indigenous and anti-colonial struggles; imperative to unsettle and decolonise within our communities and selves. We must rethink our collaborations, contests, privileges, and practices and conceive of them ethically in anti-colonial terms as a process that is never complete. 'Anti-colonialism' must be articulated in the interests of all who struggle against colonialism, racism, myriad oppression, capitalist imperialism, and other antihuman systems. Anti-colonialism, to borrow from bell hooks, must be for everyone. (Lewis, 2012, p. 237)

Therefore, we can push through limitations and turn them into opportunities.

4.11. Chapter summary

This chapter established the research paradigm, philosophical perspectives, and research design, which helped best address the research question. It covered the essential elements guiding this research study; i.e., the research paradigm and philosophical perspective, covering the epistemology, ontology, and approach (inductive and deductive). It then offered a rundown of the research design choice, including the participant criteria, data collection, credibility, validity, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. Subsequently, I discussed the data analysis, offering a justification for thematic analysis, particularly the six-phase analysis offered by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021). Alongside this, I also shared how reflexivity has been demonstrated in this research project. The chapter closed with the ethical considerations and limitations. The subsequent chapter presents the findings from the data analysis.

5. Findings

5.1. Chapter overview

This chapter presents the research findings following the rigorous thematic analysis process outlined in chapter four. In this research, I used reflexive TA, which focuses on themes as the primary tool for conveying the findings. These findings aimed to answer the key research question and the supplementary questions in this chapter's corresponding sections. The key question for this research was:

How do Black African Highly Skilled, Highly Qualified Migrant women's lived experiences shape their identities and the likeliness of seeking leadership positions in public sector organisations in England?

The analysis captured seven themes, anchored by three organising or overarching themes that capture multi-faceted representations of a single, fundamental thought. Each theme's organising notion distinguishes it from the others in the study, and the additional structuring of overarching themes has improved interpretive depth and the ease of travel through them (Braun and Clarke, 2021b). Reflective TA can work at up to three levels depending on the complexity of the research: overarching themes, themes, and subthemes. An overarching theme is an umbrella concept or theory whose purpose is to group related themes, revealing deeper conceptual ideas. Overarching themes were not comprehensively reporting upon in this section, as this was done in the theoretical framework (see section 2.6). Using an overarching theme is viewed as a structuring or organisational tool, while sub-themes analyse and emphasise one facet of the theme and share its organising principle. Thematic relationships are horizontal, subthemes are subordinate to a theme, and an overarching theme is superordinate to multiple themes.

I undertook a strict process to narrow down the codes to reach the target number of themes, avoiding the temptation to have too many. I am satisfied that seven themes to answer my research question has proven sufficient, as will be expanded upon further in the chapter. Notably, although there is no set limit for the number of themes a study can have,

a rigorous analysis will typically have between six and twelve on a maximum of three levels. Trainor and Bundon (2021) contend that too many themes and subthemes risk making the analysis disjointed and superficial. The outline of the themes in this study follows.

5.2. Outline of themes

These themes were generated from the participants' responses, recollection through familiarisation with the dataset, and the reflexive process. They reflect the interpretation of the lived experiences of the 31 participants interviewed between August 2020 and March 2021. The themes were based on my informed judgement of which viewpoints affected the interviews most deeply and accurately. For clarity, I organised the overarching areas based on the research question (section 1.2) and theoretical framework (section 2.6), as elaborated below.

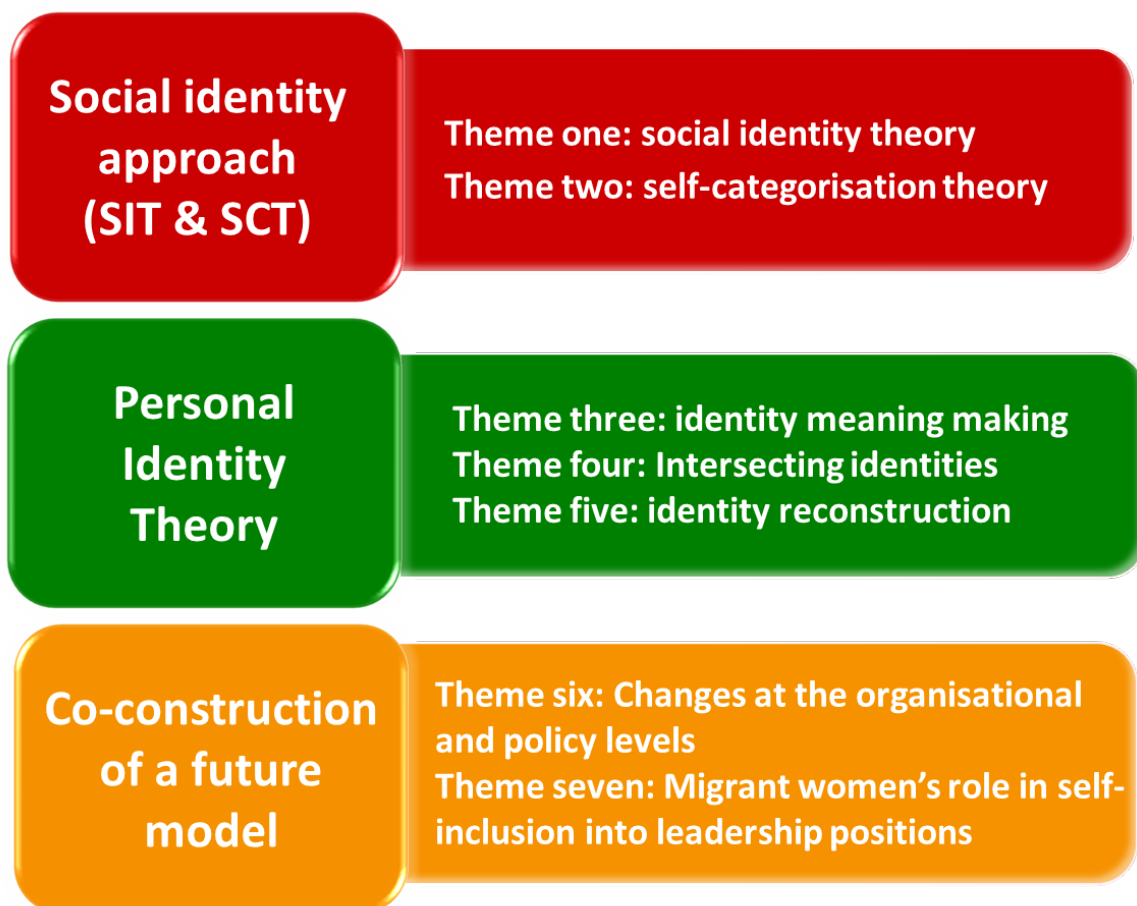


Figure 9: Outline of the seven themes gathered around three areas

Themes one and two were organised around the first overarching theme, the **Social-identity and self-categorisation (Social identity approach)** of the Black African HQHSM women's lived experiences and socially ascribed identities (Turner, Brown and Tajfel, 1979; Sindic and Condor, 2014).

Theme one: Social Identity Theory – This theme relates to how Black African HQHSM women's lived experiences shape their identities. It comprises the beginnings, journeys and the likelihood of seeking leadership positions in public sector organisations in England.

Theme two: Self-Categorisation Theory - This theme is related to the moments that triggered identity-challenge dynamics due to the women's lived experiences (Turner *et al.*, 1994; Ellemers, De Gilder and Haslam, 2004). These themes are discussed in section 5.3.

The next three themes were organised around the second overarching theme, **personal identity**, discussed in section 5.4. They relate to the meaning-making and reconstruction process that the Black African HQHSM women stated they experienced through the immigration system and the workplace experience while on the 'limited leave to remain' visa on their career trajectories (Carbin and Edenheim, 2013; Atewologun, Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2016).

Theme three: Identity meaning-making – This theme concerns the impact of the beginnings and journeys of the interviewed Black African HQHSM women through the immigration system and their workplace experience while on the 'limited leave to remain' visa on their career trajectories.

Theme four: Intersecting identities – This theme pertains to the complexities of Black African HQHSM women's gender, race, ethnicity, and status as first-generation migrants in the workplace.

Theme five: Identity reconstruction – This theme is related to the awareness of jolt moments (moments that cause unpleasant shock or surprise, as they occurred suddenly during the process) (Atewologun, 2014) and the interpretation of how the Black African

HQHSM women navigate multiple intersecting identities, opportunities, and challenges to reach their positions and career trajectories.

Part of the purpose of the research was to find out what the Black African HQHSM women believe organisations must do to increase access and opportunities for women like them, and to identify common attributes possessed by HQHSM women who already hold leadership positions in public sector organisations. The above themes lay the groundwork for the third overarching theme: **Co-construction of a future model** (discussed in section 5.5).

Theme six: Changes at organisational and policy levels – This theme relates to organisations' actions to ensure leadership positions are filled equitably.

Theme seven: Migrant women's role in self-inclusion into leadership positions – This theme pertains to the critical success factors and proposals for Black African HQHSM women's successful career advancement, and the development of a resource or strategy to assist other women in closing the gap.

All the themes here are multi-dimensional and provide the most accurate interpretation of how Black African HQHSM women might increase their prospects of reaching and staying in senior leadership positions, as well as what organisational leaders must do to help them. Concurrently, interrelationships and overlaps exist among the main themes to strengthen the clarity of the findings in this study, ultimately helping to effectively answer the research question:

How do Black African Highly Skilled, Highly Qualified Migrant women's lived experiences shape their identities and the likelihood of seeking leadership positions in public sector organisations in England?

5.3. Demographics

This section provides clarity regarding the participants' demographics. Current employment and migration concerns in the UK highlight significant challenges in recruiting and retaining staff in key positions. As argued throughout this thesis, a gap remains within

Leadership and Organisational Studies (LOS) around research directly focussing on Black African HQHSM women's career upward mobility in public sector organisations (Trehan and Rigg, 2015; Opara, Sealy and Ryan, 2020). It is common knowledge that many public services' key frontline jobs are filled by migrants or 'international staff,' as they are sometimes termed (Zwysen, Di Stasio and Heath, 2021). Research fails to emphasise the importance of understanding the retention and recruitment problems that public sector organisations encounter with highly qualified migrants, and their experiences and influence on economic prosperity and growth. This research focuses on England and emphasises the need to understand how identity structures affect participants' trajectories. It conceptualises the data and conclusions in line with the above themes, which are detailed in the following sections.

The participants in this research were Black African women who migrated to the UK mostly as highly skilled professionals, and who had settled in England as their permanent residence at the time of the interviews. The first chart below shows the breakdown according to their reason for migrating.

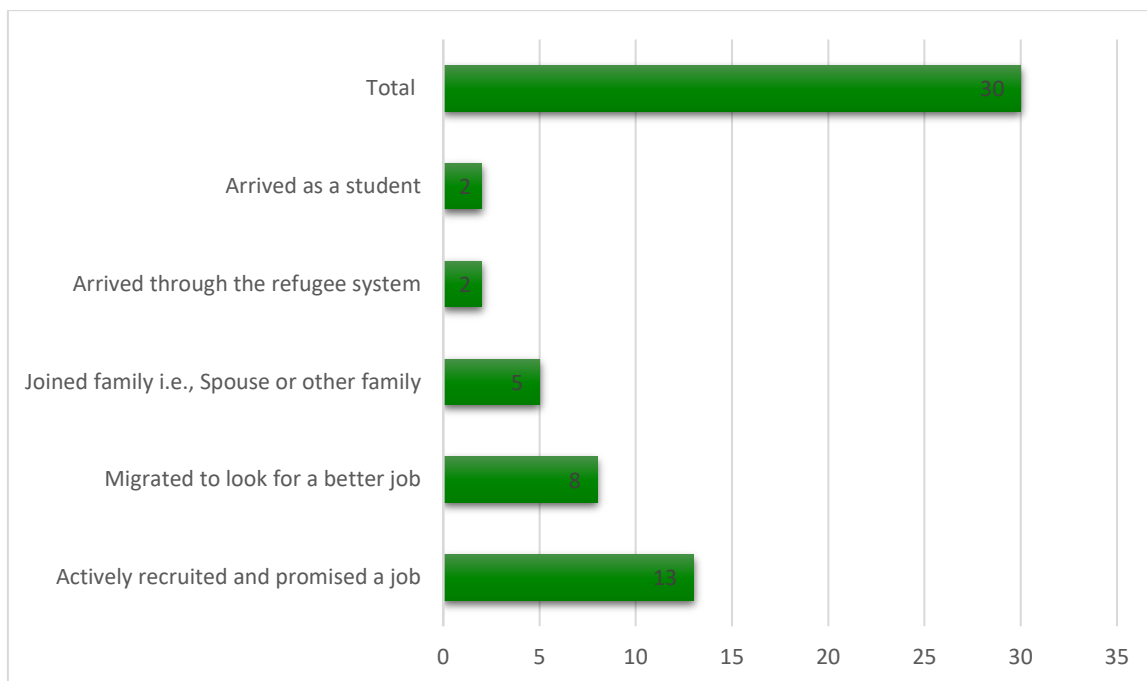


Figure 10: Reason for migrating

The migrant journeys of the women who participated in this research varies. The majority, thirteen, arrived because the UK employers or agents actively recruited them from their countries with the promise of a job, especially in the health and social care sector. Eight arrived in the country on a highly skilled migrant visa and were able to arrive in the country without a job because they passed the highly skilled visa requirements and could prove they would look after themselves (HSMP Forum, 2008; UK Migration Advisory Committee, 2012). Five arrived on a dependant visa, meaning the accompanying family member was on a work permit or student visa. Intrinsically, they were free to work, although they were still under immigration restrictions (no recourse to public funds). These three groups of women have in common that when they left their countries, they were highly skilled professionals, and they felt their qualifications and transferable skills would afford them employment at a similar level in the UK. Furthermore, they lamented that while they were not sure what to expect, they did not anticipate being met with myriad ascribed identities, the hostility of the immigration system, and racism in the UK.

Of the other five participants, two arrived under a humanitarian visa as asylum seekers, then obtained refugee status; and three arrived as students, then later obtained indefinite

leave to remain as they managed to get jobs after qualifying. It can be argued that for these five, the journey was slightly different in terms of expectations of their professional identities at the point of entry. Nonetheless, they, too, experienced the same challenges as the other women. The next chart shows the distribution of the participants' qualification levels.

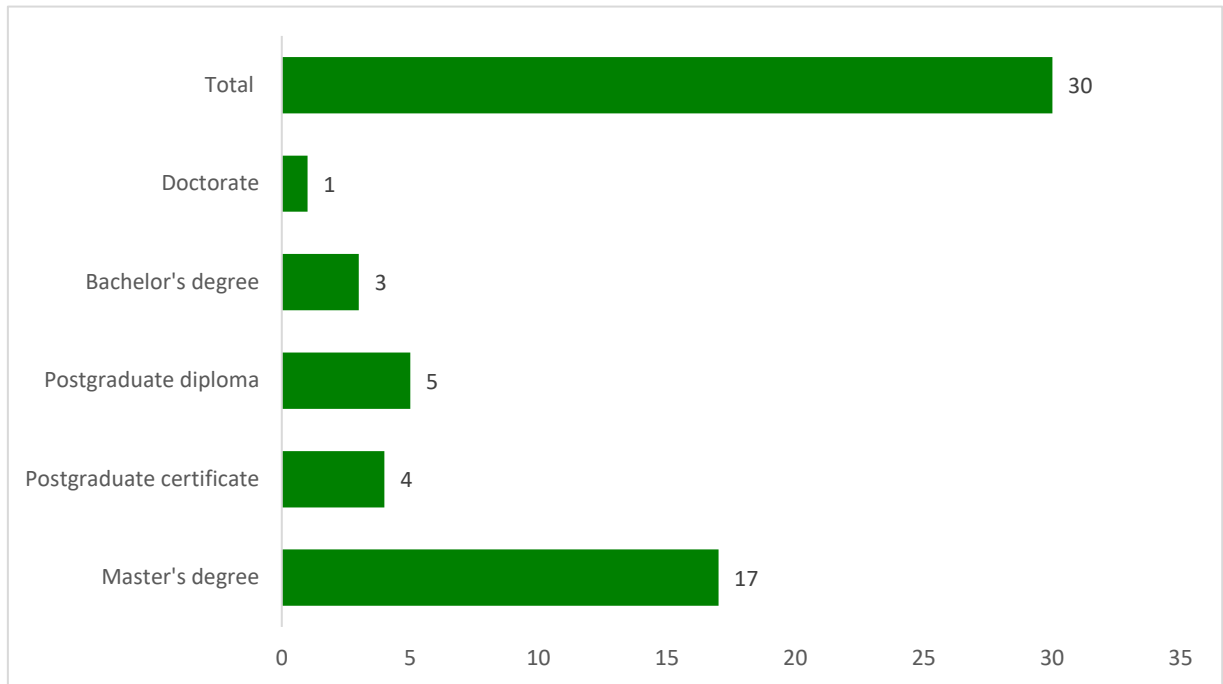


Figure 11: Highest level of education

One of the prerequisites for participation was that they held a bachelor's degree or higher academic qualification, as can be seen in the figure above, the majority of the women hold at least one master's degree qualification, while several hold more than one master's degree, or a master's degree with an additional postgraduate certificate or diploma. The next chart shows the distribution of the women's self-determined position at the time of the interviews. I asked them to choose the level they thought best matched their position.

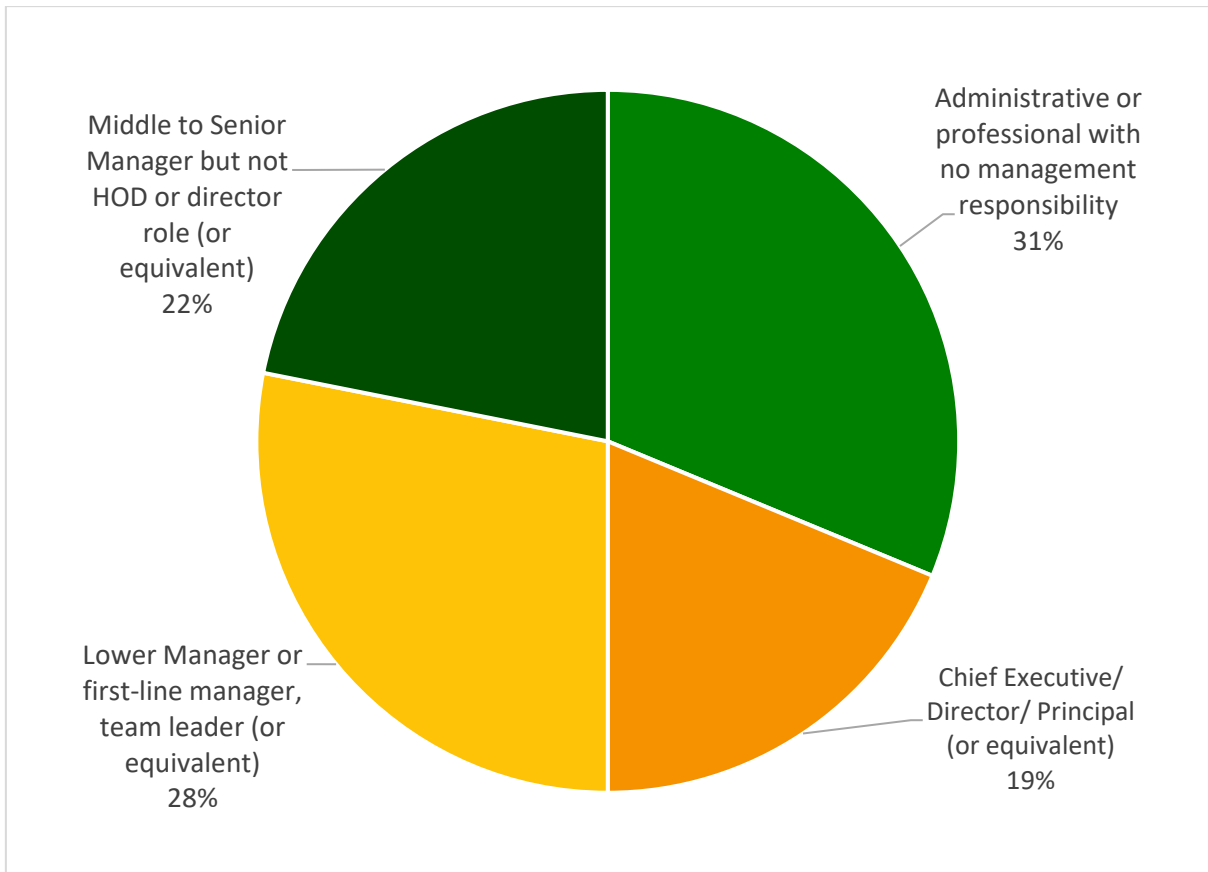


Figure 12: Position held at the time of the interview

The numbers here show that ten hold an administrative or professional role with no management responsibility, nine consider themselves to be a lower manager, first-line manager, team leader, or equivalent, and seven said they were in a middle-to-senior manager role, but not a HOD or director (or equivalent). Finally, six considered themselves as being at the level of a chief executive, director, or principal. Because the sample was a purposeful snowballing sample, these figures did not aim to provide a complete statistical representation of the distribution of the population in leadership positions. Notwithstanding, the minor differences could suggest that more women are in the lower positions category.

The next chart shows the distribution of the types of public sector organisations in which the participants worked. As discussed in chapter three, the women self-selected where they worked. The complexity of the public sector employment arrangements makes it

difficult to determine if the women would be classed as public sector employees otherwise (see ONS, 2019).

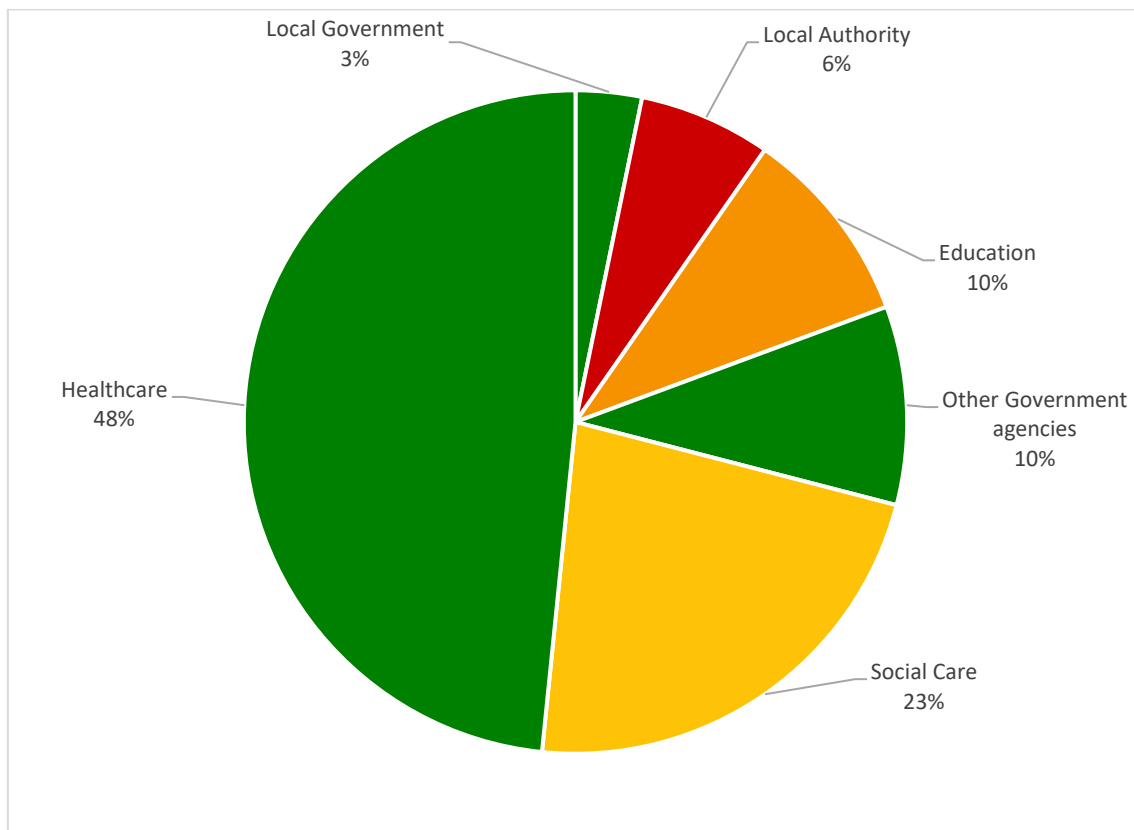


Figure 13: Distribution of type of public sector organisation

The largest number of participants, fifteen, self-identified as working within the health service. This proportion was somewhat anticipated as the health and social care industries tend to be the largest staff recruiters. Indeed, the second largest number, seven, self-identified as social care. It is worth noting that some of the participants who, at the time of the interview, were working in the NHS (substantively, through agencies or self-employed banks) started their journey having been downgraded from nursing, for example, in their country of birth, to starting as care assistants in social care. As soon as they obtained indefinite leave to remain, they returned to university to obtain a UK degree and joined the NHS, as per some of the excerpts.

That said, the issues of racism and othering led some to leave their substantive jobs, then return to work as agency staff. A common reason for leaving substantive roles was how

they were treated, and the opportunities for which they were overlooked. As discussed in the excerpts below, the reasons for these moves varied from needing a better work-life balance, better pay, and the experiences of discrimination, bureaucracy, and office politics. Having indefinite leave to remain and a record of further education gave them the autonomy to choose where to work without being bound by the types of contracts that are encountered on limited leave to remain visas. The following sections review excerpts from the themes and a commentary. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the women were split into two groups, each with slightly modified questions (see appendices 7 and 8). In labelling the excerpts, I used the following abbreviations: Middle Manager (e.g., MM1, MM2) for all participants who identified as administrative or professional with no management responsibility; lower manager or first-line manager; team leader (or equivalent); and middle-to-senior manager but not HOD or director role (or equivalent). The other group was labelled as Senior Leader (e.g., SL1, SL2), with these people self-identified as holding a position of, or equivalent to, chief executive, director, or principal in the public sector organisation where they worked at the time of the interviews. The next section covers the social identity approach (SIT and SCT).

5.4. Social identity and self-categorisation theories

This section covered the first main area, as detailed below.



Figure 14: Themes one and two

The themes that responded to the supplementary question were provided as follows: How do the beginnings and journeys of Black African HQHSM women through the immigration system and their workplace experience while on the 'limited leave to remain' visa affect their career trajectories? The themes followed the participants' responses to relate their journeys to the UK, the transitions, challenges, and their lived experiences of ascribed social

identities and self-categorisation. The social identity approach (reviewed in chapter two) has several interoperable and intertwined aspects, including Social Identity Theory. Tajfel and Turner's (1979)'s original focus and motivation was towards **social identity, social comparison, group dynamics, and self-enhancement**. Proponents of this state that when category distinctions are clear, people observe group similarities ('we are all the same') and differences ('we are different from them'), which affects how they view each other. Secondly, in the self-categorization theory, Turner *et al.* (1987) placed cognitive emphasis on the categorisation process, including **depersonalisation and comparative and normative fit**. The categorisation activates a different self-concept level (Abrams *et al.*, 1990; Rubin and Hewstone, 2004; Hornsey, 2008). At the intergroup end of the spectrum, self-concept will mostly consist of one's social identity, defined as the components of an individual's self-image that derive from their social categories, and the emotional and evaluative repercussions of group membership (Turner, Brown and Tajfel, 1979). It is believed that a positive self-concept may promote intergroup competition. On the interpersonal end, people's self-concept comprises attitudes, memories, behaviours, and emotions that identify them as distinct individuals ('personal identity' covered in the second overarching theme).

Theme one: Social Identity

Social Identity Theory is the oldest theory of what is now commonly referred to as the social identity approach. It operates at intergroup level; i.e., people evaluate their group using outgroups. Comparing groups creates psychological reality which, in the case of this research, reflects the reality of a new life in England (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). The process was underpinned by intergroup differentiation and outgroup vitriol. In this study, the Black African HQHSMs who migrated to the UK reported finding themselves in various ascribed groups; e.g., Black, foreigners, and new employees. When they arrived in England, they saw themselves as members of lower status groups, as exemplified by some statements such as "it is not our country, so they will not give us respect or treat us fairly" (e.g., MM2, MM6, SL5) with regards to what they saw as the dominant group (native colleagues, employers and, in some cases, other ethnic minorities and white migrants).

Social identity theorists explain how a low-status group member might regain their social standing. Hogg (2001) suggested multiple options, including leaving the group (physically or mentally). In this case, the women talked about intentionally not wanting to feed the stereotype and pointing out attitudes within their groups with statements such as the “click mentality, chicken thinking. They do not give jobs to people like us” (e.g., MM2, MM3, SL6, SL9). Ultimately, this created intragroup comparisons between themselves as individuals within the migrant communities who are progressive and encouraging, as opposed to those who have been in the same lower-level jobs for many years. These individuals tended to focus on ingroup-positive qualities; i.e., talking about the positives they bring to the workplace. For example, some of the participants said that they bring diversity and global thinking, work twice as hard, or just get on with work and do not complain (e.g., MM5, MM10, SL4, SL11). When it came to the hostile immigration policies and employment prospects they were experiencing, some women also called out some negative aspects of intragroup dynamics, such as discussing the lack of cohesion within the African communities. They also called for the need for self-inclusion transformation to reverse the status hierarchy; in this instance, fighting to get the positions they aspire to and going back to education as an example. Social Identity Theory was the first social psychology theory to identify groups' status and power levels, and to recognise that intergroup behaviour is governed by people's ability to criticise and recognise alternatives to the status quo. Below are some of the main areas this theme encompassed.

The participants' environment was narrated mainly as a swim-or-sink situation. The standards they lived by as professionals in their home countries were challenged by the labels and treatment they faced upon arrival in England. Many arrived with high hopes and expectations, believing that their qualifications earned them their visas to migrate to England, and that the educational systems based on UK Cambridge standards would earn them good jobs. Thus, they were not adequately prepared for the life that awaited them. Their collective social identity became a vital component of the Black African HQHSM women's views of themselves.

Identity, treatment, and culture shock

One of the most significant challenges was selling their possessions and leaving their well-paid work with a clear career path, only to discover that in the UK, they were starting at the bottom of the professional ladder, assuming they ever managed to acquire a position in their profession at all. For example, nurses that were recruited and promised work as nurses in the UK, found themselves working in care homes as care assistants. Participant MM15, who was actively recruited and arrived straight at a job, narrated the challenging treatment she and her colleagues faced in this scenario. She expressed how important the collective social identity was, demonstrated by statements such as “we”, “they”, “people”, or “others”, signifying the ingroup-outgroup dynamics and intergroup biases and favouritism (Turner, Brown and Tajfel, 1979). Tajfel and Turner (1979) describe ingroup bias as unreasonable or unfair favouritism that exceeds objective norms or justification. MM15 shared the following:

We came in 2006; it was hard. The process was challenging, especially since, unbeknown to us; we were recruited as senior health carers. Though before we came, we were told that we were coming to work as nurses, only to find ourselves as carers. Fine, we accepted the situation. We were placed in nursing homes, coming to work in a different environment from the familiar background they left. It is hard, and it is a different culture. We started working, but this situation for me, I could not take it. That is the point where I felt I could go back home [to her country]. However, I had a friend who called me to move to a different place. I went and joined them. It was a tough life. It was hard, especially when you had left your family behind. Everything was strange. Everything was new to me. We were in a different culture, different from whence we came. We fitted in as best as we could though there were people who would not accept us [white co-workers, patients, and their relatives]. It was not only about the people we were looking after. People we were helping would call our supervisors and our bosses as they would not accept us. It was hard. We just had to accept that it was not our place, but in the end, because we knew what we wanted in this country [they persevered]. So I said, let me stay until I have got my papers [Indefinite leave to remain], the right papers, so I can go back to university, upgrade myself, and do something better [get a better job] (MM15).

Another participant who worked as a teacher in a school, despite having worked as a lawyer in her country of origin, explained the challenges she faced and why she settled on teaching:

In terms of my qualifications, when I came to the UK because I was practising law in my home country, I was unaware that I would have to do extra qualifications to practice law. So that was quite a shock. It [Law] was also extremely difficult to get to. ...I always saw myself as practising law, then working as perhaps a visiting lecturer in an institution, but

the practice side of it is out of it. Now all I do is the teaching. ...But also, as a migrant with few family connections and support. Because I had just gotten married, and I had a very young family at that time, it became almost impossible to throw myself, if you like, into some very rigorous qualification process to prove that I was capable. So that was a difficulty. So that was a big deciding factor in settling into teaching (MM12).

Another participant who arrived on the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP) had this to say:

There was a highly skilled migrant programme [HSMP]. That is the visa I had; it entailed that you needed to have a minimum of first-degree level or a professional qualification and then to get into the UK. ...you did not need a job before getting into the UK. You could get in and then find a job. When I applied, we were allowed to settle in the UK for two years. However, after I arrived, that was changed to 12 months. And then they added further requirements that we should have gotten a job within those first 12 months and be earning a certain level of income before we could have the visa renewed, to extend it to four years, and then to get to indefinite life to remain. When that was changed, there was a legal contest against the UK Government because that was a huge change of the goalpost, which did not even allow those of us already in the country to continue on our visa path. ...Even though the final decision of the legal challenge against the government went through, “[on 8 April 2008, the High Court ruled in favour of the HSMP Forum”. (HSMP Forum, 2008, p. 1)], I still had to process my extension using the 12 months gap (SL11).

Participants who arrived as spouses on dependant visas with the right to work still had to start from the bottom:

I had a biochemistry degree, and then yeah, I came with high hopes for a good career, you know, I felt I had the papers and got a good grade. Furthermore, yeah, it has been a [complex] journey. I have done every job going. I do not think there is any job from cleaning and care to the restaurant, hospitality, server, or waiter. What haven't I done? I do not shy away from that history of mine because I think it has made me richer. It has made me appreciate sitting in the position that I am sitting now with compassion and knowledge.

Furthermore, as a Black African woman and a woman who migrated older, I can speak honestly about how I got here. Because sometimes it is very easy to look at people in high positions. Moreover, these all roses are because they were educated, you know, they came in, applied to jobs, got a job, they love them. That was not my story. So I embrace my time as a care worker, cleaner, you know, when I used to work nights and only make sure I only see my children when we are handing over with my husband, but that has all made me the leader that I am, I think that it has given me a richness and an appreciation not of a position, but the process of evolution. I think the process is bigger than the position (SL6).

Another participant who moved with her [British] husband narrated her journey as follows:

When I moved over here, I moved with my two girls ...to come and join my husband. It was a very difficult decision at the time from a career and family perspective... Nevertheless, from a marital perspective, if you like, my husband and I have been married for some time. So it was about time. Something had to give. The last organisation I worked for in X was a financial service. ...It was at the height of my career. There were so many opportunities. I recall some of the executive leadership saying to me at the time, are you sure this is the time that you want to be moving away from here when we can see so much potential for you within our organisation?

Furthermore, as I said, moving over here was a very difficult decision to make from a career perspective. The children seemingly settled very quickly into schools. ...I had told myself that no matter what happened, I would try and get an office job. I have heard many stories of people moving here and changing their career paths. So I signed up with a recruitment agency. Within two days, they called me with the possibility of a job in the charity sector. I was not necessarily looking to go and work in the charity sector, having spent some time working in the financial services sector, but the role itself was in operations. I will say now that it took a couple of days to decide whether or not I wanted to go for it because it was a very junior role. So here I was, as head of a function head of a unit in the financial services sector, quite well established [in my home country], and I felt quite competent. ...the role that I was being put forward for was an administrative role. I decided I felt, right, there are several things I can do here; I can take this opportunity because actually, the way I was looking at it was whilst I had, I think by the time I was moving over here, I had over 15 years work experience in various industries in various operational positions. I felt, perhaps, that part of my life, that part of my career, did not account for anything. Because insofar as the UK standard is concerned, coming into this environment, I did not know to what extent people would go to validate your employment history from another country. That is why I decided to take the opportunity because I felt that if I did not take it, I would be forced to move in a direction that might lead me to a completely different sector (SL5).

Although this could be a grey area regarding someone of African origin being on an EU passport, the details are beyond the scope of this research. This response speaks to the complexity of the further tightening and hostility within the immigration systems, and the effects on one's mental well-being, both of which significantly impact career mobility.

Even if you thought, I am not a migrant, [Black African on a Portuguese passport]: It affects me. I will give an example; I have Portuguese documentation, but in 2016 everything changed with Brexit. Everything that you have, everything that you are, you cannot be anymore. I felt anxious. I was thinking, oh, what is happening in my professional life? Then it came to my status [live to remain]. Mind you, I am doing a lot for the country. I have done courses to improve myself and to give back to the community and this country. [After Brexit], I applied for a British passport. By then, they refused. I had been here for

15 years [on her Portuguese passport, which allowed her to work as an EU citizen]. They said no, you are not entitled with flimsy reasons.

I work as a teacher. They said I had changed workplaces and cities when I lived in the UK. Why? They pushed me to leave definitely [employers], but I could not tell them that I was psychologically pushed out of my workplace. They [Home Office/Immigration services] said I would not be successful if I wanted to reapply. They wrote long letters that I did not even know what they wanted at the end of the day. I had to prove everything since arriving in this country. I applied three times; the third time was when they gave me one. ...I had to hire a solicitor to sort out the situation. The big issue was that they wanted five years of consecutive work proof. Even if I was doing a hard job, teaching special needs kids and being in school [University for a second master's degree course] and working in the community because I do much volunteering. It was my big issue and very draining mentally and physically (MM1).

Nationalism and lack of appreciation affected the participants, especially in their early days, impacting their well-being and career journeys. Nationalism has been associated with an innate, conspicuous, and exalted national spirit and consciousness. It has been argued that it combines patriotism, negative media, and political rhetoric, encompassing the thought, feeling, or sentiments of a group of people living in a well-defined geographical area, speaking a shared language and adhering to common customs. In some cases, they also have a common origin and sense of belonging (Kecmanovic, 1996; Ince *et al.*, 2015; Narayan, 2018). It was once considered an ideology of national independence, a movement for achieving and preserving autonomy. The definition that reverberated most with the sentiments of the participants in this study was that of Smith (1971, 1975, cited in Kecmanovic, 1996), who defined nationalism as "(1) securing fraternity and equality among co-nationals or citizens, by integrating them into a homogenous unit; (2) unification in a single nation-state of extra-territorial co-nationals; (3) emphasising cultural individuality by accentuating 'national' difference from others; (4) a drive for economic autarchy and self-sustaining growth; and (5) attempts to expand the nation-state, in order to maintain territorial integrity" (Kecmanovic, 1996, p. 12). In summary, nationalism consists of the belief that people (for example, the English) exist solely for the nation to which they belong, that their nation is supreme over other nations, and that they should take aggressive action against outsiders who are perceived as threatening.

Nationalism continues to increase in many OECD countries (Horak *et al.*, 2019). In the UK, there has been a significant increase in negative sentiment and rhetoric against migrants; for example, the Windrush scandals, Brexit, the aggressive tightening of immigration rules, and the continued hostile policies against certain groups of migrants, despite the country's continued dependence on imported labour (Gov.UK, 2006; HSMP Forum, 2008; Anderson, 2013; Patel, 2020; Griffiths and Yeo, 2021; Hanne Beirens and Davidoff-Gore, 2022). While some may argue that these sentiments and actions only target illegal migrants, the negative impact on all migrants, both new and old, can be far-reaching. The problem is exacerbated because the natives do not know which migrants arrived illegally, and highly skilled migrants arrived through the right channels and by invitation. The negative treatment of foreign colleagues in the workplace can be exacerbated by cultural differences. A major theme in the issues reported by the participants as shocking and disheartening on arrival in England, was the negative media and political reporting around migrants, as well as poor treatment, discrimination, and racism in the workplaces they joined. They mentioned that discrimination and racism from co-workers were such immense issues that they either made or broke them. These experiences did not seem to abate even after obtaining indefinite leave to remain; however, some found ways of coping and focusing on their work.

Furthermore, there appears to be a lack of appreciation of their contribution, and a lack of education for natives about the benefits migrants bring. This correlates with the social and cultural normative characteristics posited by social identity theorists (Hogg, 2001; Turner *et al.*, 2019) in which dominant ingroups (the white majority) display prejudiced attitudes and social comparison, leading to prejudice and racism (Phillips, 2011). It also fits the depictions of nationalistic tendencies. Below are some of the excerpts relating to the lived experiences, and the effects on mental health and well-being:

They do not understand that it is of great benefit to this country for me to come here because I am committed, you know, I am abiding by the law, and I am contributing, whatever. Nevertheless, they do not understand us. All they see is a threat. You have come to get someone's job without realising that you are contributing more. ...I come from a culture whereby I did not see any difference from anybody. Everyone was treated the same. I know we are a very lucky country [country of origin] because we have not had

conflicts, we received so many people from surrounding countries, we lived in the same inner communities with those who came to us [migrants in her home country], there was no difference. However, when I moved here [England], I saw the massive difference, affecting me emotionally (MM13) immensely.

The media and politicians are always talking about immigrants returning to their countries. Well, if you look deeper into employment in this country, if you look at the people who are employed in this country, the hard workers are always the immigrants. The immigrants are the people who work hardest, and they put in the work and do not expect any favours. So that [Negative immigration sentiments] have impacted me negatively in the sense that regardless of what I do and how I do it, as an immigrant, I will always be overlooked because of that tag that I have as an immigrant (MM14).

Another challenge or shock some participants experienced was the devaluation and deskilling once they arrived in England, and the effect these experiences had on them, as narrated in the following excerpts.

The Zimbabwe education system was highly appraised because it was always in collaboration with [University of] Cambridge. So I assumed that coming here would automatically get me into the English system with my qualifications. Nevertheless, surprisingly, I had to do an English test to prove I was worthy of an English qualification. That was somewhat annoying and disheartening because I had to pay for that English test. It was sort of like a step back for me because the English were almost equivalent to 'O' level English sitting [meaning it was basic] (MM2).

Initially, I did suffer from extremely low self-esteem and mental health issues. ...I remember going through a poor mental health phase, particularly in the X, because I worked so hard. I was working for a clueless manager, a lovely guy, but clueless. I was working in white places, and I was the only mid-manager of my colour in the room, and it just was not a conducive environment. So those were some of the contributing factors for me moving on (MM3).

Initially, when I was looking for jobs, there was this requirement with some employers saying I needed UK experience. Well, I had just come into the country and had the vast experience of doing my work. Nevertheless, then, I was asked for UK experience. So how do I get the UK experience if you do not give me a job? So until I found somebody willing to give me a lower-paying job, the whole process was emotionally draining (SL11).

The participants narrated how they found themselves in a situation that felt akin to serving time in prison while awaiting confirmation of indefinite leave to remain. The long working hours to meet their financial obligations and supplement their low-paid jobs to meet the indefinite leave to remain requirements left them fearing for life. They described not complaining about any negative experiences for fear of losing the jobs that were a

condition of their visa. Nonetheless, while there was excitement about getting indefinite leave to remain and the expectations of the freedom of choice surrounding the jobs they would get, in many cases, the opposite rang true. They were met with different challenges, some of which were already in evidence, but which became more apparent as their categorisation continued. These experiences were supported by scholars including Hogg (2001), Hornsey (2008), and Turner *et al.* (2019), who found that dominant groups (ingroups) had tendencies that increased disparity between themselves and marginalised (outgroup) people. The disproportionate authority to set agendas, define identities, and mobilise people to achieve goals often led to selectivity in leadership prototypicality (Lord, Foti and De Vader, 1984; Turner *et al.*, 1987).

Lord and colleagues argued that consensual status and authority were mainly given to the archetype, and the leader would have disproportionate influence over group members' opinions, behaviours, and destinies. Some of the participants found that the bar was set so high for migrants that even though they would perform well in interviews and would not be discriminated against based on their immigration status and work experience, the employers still managed to find reasons either not to employ them, or not to offer them the position for which they were qualified; instead, they would offer them a menial position with lower pay. The excerpts below are examples of this kind of experience that the participants attributed to racism and the glass ceiling effect. One of the challenges was receiving responses that appeared to be copied and pasted in place of any meaningful interview feedback. The most common responses would state that there is just one candidate who performed better than them and was therefore offered the role. Below are some of the excerpts relating to the above:

There was a local authority I applied for, you know, for a role; they offered me everything. However, the scrutiny around it [was so high], you know, I had to take everything, which is acceptable, because that is the recruitment process. It so happened that when I was moving towns, I had to change my driver's license address. So I sent it to DVLA for a change of address. I did not have it back within, I think, two or three weeks then I was let down. The offer was revoked from me because of my driver's license, even though I explained to say, you know, I have sent it to them, and I showed them the proof. I could feel that there was that reluctance to offer me a job. I felt that it was just like scrutiny was to find something to let me go. Because even during the interview process, there were personal

questions, like, oh, so when did you obtain this or so? So you have this so well, you know, it made me feel that even if I was offered the job, I was not welcome (MM13)

After obtaining indefinite leave to remain ... [Reskilled] and I graduated from a UK University, I started looking for jobs. It was a struggle, although I did find a few jobs; for example, one was in South Wales the other two were in Scotland [she was willing to relocate]. They were not as a lab technician [which she was qualified for]; I was going to be part of the scientific research team. They told me that after the interview, everything went well. However, later on, I was told I needed five years of experience. Looking at it, where do I get the five years of experience I have just graduated? There is nothing I can do. ... one of them said if you want to come and be on the waiting list, you can work as a receptionist. ... And the hours were uncomfortable because I would start at night as a receptionist and finish at two o'clock. I just said no, let me leave it. I went back to university and retrained as a nurse (MM15).

I was working for a health organisation. However, because I had paid my way through, it was like my qualifications were not recognised, and I got tired. I applied for so many jobs, but there was always a but... I got to the point where I thought I had applied for these jobs, and I have done ABCD, and it is like it always ends up being the same [rejection] (MM15).

That has been the hardest lesson because you know you could do this job with your eyes closed, but they will not pick you up. Moreover, if you go for the interview, they will pick somebody else who is different [referring to colour]. Furthermore, as much as we do not want to acknowledge it because we do not want to be walking in that victim sense, we want to try and be as positive as possible. Because if you start bringing yourself into that mode, it stops you in your tracks. You stop going for those posts. You stop trying to be there. (MM17)

I am not kidding. It is tough, and sometimes I feel rejected, and my friends say, " Keep going. I just applied, but I am tired of just being told there is only one. ...Once, I was told, "out of 170 ...we shortlisted 12. You were one of the 12. "We like you, just like your vibe. The way you think is very simple. We like all this experience, we were sitting there thinking we can tap into that because we could see everything, the potential you have got it because we would". And they say it again, "the only thing why you did not get the job is because there is someone who is already working in outpatients and they are already doing the job". That is it. That is the answer I always get. That is how old it gets. So now I start to wonder how true it is. Because I get it, it is such a copy-and-paste answer (MM9).

You discover that the recruited person has not even had any experience, and you think that you need someone with a lot of management experience. That person who got the job has more experience than me when I know they have not. Alternatively, when I know they have the experience or one of the tickets that give them a ticket because they have a different skin colour than me, fine. That has never stopped me from applying, and it never stopped me from going applying and applying (SL3).

After I got British citizenship, it just changed. It opened the curtains so that I could apply them anywhere. ...I remember when I moved from the job, I applied for indefinite leave to remain. I felt indebted to this organization that looked after me while going through those immigration hoops. So I tried to get a higher-level job within the same organisation. It was a government department, but it was a smaller organisation. It did not work. So, I had to look out. I did not even have to look for long and had a job. However, funnily enough, I moved to another department. And then, seven months into moving to that department, there was a change of government, and that department was closed, and the whole department. It had nothing to do with me, and the whole department was closed. ...They were merging one smaller department with a bigger department. So that meant they had two teams. For each role, there were two people. They said some people are going to be deployed and stuff. Some of us that had been there for a short time had to be let go (SL11).

Social comparisons and disrespect at work

Social comparisons across groups focus on developing evaluative distinction for one's group because social identity is self-evaluative and derives its value from the ingroup. Intergroup connections involve an appeal for a favourable identity in which groups and their members defend or strengthen positive distinctiveness and social identity (Turner *et al.*, 1994; Sindic and Condor, 2014). People's subjective view of the psychological permeability of group boundaries, and the stability and legitimacy of status interactions between groups, determines how this happens. The excerpts below provide examples of people trying to push forward, refusing to see themselves as a victim. It also details their reasons for not applying for higher positions directly, instead choosing to work as members of bank staff through an agency, which brought more income, but little or no career progression:

I think I have been naive. I have grown up in a place whereby, you know, if you work hard, you get there. Furthermore, regardless of colour, race, or immigration status, I never thought about being an immigrant [would be an issue]. ...I always at least give it a try and apply for even posts where everybody within my immigration demographic will tell me, like, you will not get it. Moreover, I will be like. I can get it. You know, watch me. And yeah. They will watch me, and I will be like. No, I did not get it. {Friends asking} Oh, what did they say? I would be like, they say that there was a better candidate, or somebody performed better. I refused to bring myself to be a victim, to acknowledge the fact that this institutional racism or the glass ceiling is there. I refused that because I felt I deserved to be there. I have worked hard to be there. So I should be treated fairly. So, yeah, it [institutional racism or the glass ceiling] is there (MM17).

Yes, they were [discriminating against her]. It was my manager, and the way she used to talk to me compared to my fellow English colleagues was different. We all make mistakes. Nevertheless, you find that they will talk about it and tell the whole ward if you make a mistake.

Nevertheless, if it is your English colleague, it is put under the carpet and professionally discussed in the office. ...I remember I was in a situation where one of my colleagues shouted at me in the corridor in front of the patients and their relatives of the patient. It was a situation where we went to work and took our handover. We [at handover] were told that a certain patient was supposed to go home, and the patient was supposed to go to the discharge lounge to open up the space to free up the bed for another patient who was going to be admitted. I was looking after the patient. The colleague in question was a band six who was in charge of the shift that day.

There was nothing I did wrong. I did all the paperwork and sent the patient to the discharge lounge. For some reason. I think there was a phone call from I cannot remember who phoned, and I said the patient there had gone to the discharged lounge. She [the band six colleague] just freaked out and said she did not know that the patient was going to the discharge lounge. I said, but we were told at the handover. So it means we were not listening during the handover. I did the right thing. She said, " Oh, you are supposed to tell me that we are moving the patient to the discharge lounge. It was not my mistake because we both went for the handover. We both listened to the handover. She knew the patient was supposed to go to the discharge lounge. So she freaked out and shouted at me. I would not say I liked it to the extent that I had to involve many people.

Moreover, when I got people involved, she was told to apologize because I was really angry. I told them that I was not taking an apology from anyone else today. Because she has been doing many things and I have been quiet, so I am only taking an apology from her. She shouted at me in front of an unprofessional patient, especially from somebody in charge of the shift. She was not even supposed to behave like that. However, does she have the right to talk like that just because she was talking to me? [reflecting this to me] Just because of different skin colour. That is what I thought, you know (MM19).

She indicated in a letter [to HR] that she was concerned that we have very expensive equipment. She was worried about them getting damaged. Before that, my line manager asked me when I would leave, and I asked why, [the manager replied] "because no black person last more than a year in this team". So I made sure I was resolute and would last, and I did last for six years. ...Even HR had to get involved. We had a meeting [with HR], and it was agreed that my manager had to speak to me personally to sort out the matters. She never did, besides. Things did not go well. After that, I did not feel comfortable. Eventually, I got redeployed to work on the ward (MM20).

Sometimes you feel ignored. you feel disregarded., So what is the point of, like, bringing up more ideas? Furthermore, the other thing is like, it comes from some families, the way they look at you when they visit. Suppose they find that you are the nurse looking after their patients. When they approach you, the attitude they give you, you know. It is not a

good feeling because they will look at you like you are not even knowledgeable. That kind of attitude puts me off [from working there permanently and applying for higher positions (MM5)].

If I go into a job role, I have the induction to learn about the role and the team. I have someone to shadow me. I will perform, but if I am deemed to say she is African from the start, she may not understand English properly. I heard people question how someone is going to read and write. Alternatively, when you hear comments like, "You speak very well. When did you start speaking English?" I say, you know, I grew up speaking English. We discussed it at home, and I learned it at school. I even joke and say the English I know are different from yours. Because mine is more Queen's English, we learn Cambridge English. Yeah, then you see some roll their eyes. These people think we are dull. I do not blame them; maybe it is because of their prior exposure. There is not much information about us, you know (MM13).

Two government departments were merging where I was working, and some of us who had not been there long had to be let go. Some people waited until the final decisions. I started looking again. Furthermore, I jumped out. At that point, I changed the way I work. I stopped going for permanent jobs. You see, the belief is that a permanent job is more secure. It was not one job that went off. It was a whole department that was shut down. So I say if a whole department can be shut down, do not make me think that only a permanent job is secure. So a whole department, a government department, but looking back, it was good I went through that. Because it made me look at the scenery differently. ...I stopped looking for permanent roles. I now go into short-term roles and contract roles. So that as I get into a job, I have a project to work on, and my foot is standing at the door. I never feel those insecurities of, oh, there is a restructure. So even if all those things are happening, my mindset is already ready to move on to the next. I do not have to go through those emotions again (SL11).

The preceding excerpts suggest that the women's self-identity was greatly influenced by their first employment in England, their education, family, geographic location, and the immediate setting in which they found themselves, as well as how they began to build new professions or reconstruct themselves (Trepte and Loy, 2017; Steffens *et al.*, 2021). Research emphasises intergroup interactions in micro and macro structures on personal career formation. However, these stories provided unique insights into the factors that influenced careers in the Black African HQHSM setting (Kloosterman, 2010; Arvinen-Muondo, 2012).

Theme two: Self-categorisation

Socioeconomic background, including ethnic hierarchies, geographical location within England, and current position in terms of leadership or leadership aspirations, all impacted the participants' experiences in organisations and their careers in general. These events included where experiences arose and impacted how the participants understood their career journey, in the jolt moments that brought about their shifting identities and the need to do something to change or fit into the environment.

A critical feature of SCT is its depersonalisation, contending that humans are social group prototypes; thus, individuals view themselves and others as interchangeable prototypes when a category is popular (Turner *et al.*, 1987; Hogg, 2021). The prototype is a subjective judgement of the properties of a social category. Group identity determines acceptable attitudes, emotions, and behaviours, and cohesion, influence, compliance, and leadership are all enhanced by depersonalization. SCT permits a more comprehensive analysis of intragroup dynamics than SIT, which is primarily concerned with intergroup interactions.

The other aspect of SCT is perceived readiness represented by past experiences, expectations, objectives, beliefs, desires, and requirements. Those that provide environmental knowledge self-classify similarly. The degree to which a group is valued and involved influences a person's usage of social categories. We are more likely to infer that a set of stimuli belongs to a category if their average distances are less than those of other stimuli in the reference frame. Meta-contrast states that humans are likelier to see a group of stimuli as a single entity if their differences are minute. It also predicts ingroup or outgroup membership based on an individual's average likeness to outgroup members. The meta-contrast ratio is classification-dependent and compares cognitive stimuli. If the frame of reference is lowered, ingroup members will see the individual as less comparable to the group and act on jolt moments that trigger identity-challenge dynamics due to lived experiences and community support, or the impediment and absence of role models or assistance in achieving their current position.

Although SCT and SIT share methodological similarities, when category distinctions are clear, people observe group ingroup similarities ('we are all the same') and differences with other groups ('we are different from them'), which affects how they view each other. These

categorisations activate different self-concept levels on a continuum. At the interpersonal end of the continuum lies people's self-concept, comprised of attitudes, memories, behaviours, and emotions that identify them as distinct persons (personal identity); and at the other end, the intergroup self-concept mostly consists of one's social identity, which is defined as the components of an individual's self-image that derive from their social categories, and the emotional and evaluative upshots of group membership (Hornsey and Hogg, 2000; Hornsey, 2008).

According to Abrams *et al.* (1990), fit is the degree to which social categories accurately reflect reality or diagnose inequities. When inter-category differences are accentuated, and intra-category differences are diminished, compatibility may be high (comparative fit). Comparative fit takes category structure, not content, into account (i.e., where category borders are, and where stimuli lie regarding those limits). Here, the meta-contrast ratio originates from traditional work on categorization, which proposed that categories evolve to maximise intraclass similarities and interclass differences. According to SCT, this process is argued to be dynamic, situation-dependent, and something which can be perceived (Hogg and Terry, 2000). On the other hand, categorisation may be effective if social behaviour and group members conform to expectations (normative fit). Normative fit investigates how inputs influence cognitive category characteristics. Turner *et al.* (1987, 1994) contend that given the multiplicity of social identities, the level of play is determined by lived experiences, and accessibility and compatibility define SCT classification.

Expectations vs reality

The participants talked about dealing with their expectations versus the current situation, the lack of help, and the communities in which they found themselves. They compared where they were at the interview, where they started from and where they would have been having support. At this stage, they were comparing themselves within their groups (intragroup) and relationships with people similar to them (Turner and Oakes, 1986b; Mummendey and Wenzel, 1999; Reicher, 2004). Here is a collection of excerpts:

With no one to look up to. You know, because ... [It felt like] you were disliked, perceived as inferior, and not worth it. It did not feel like I belonged, even in very lowly paid jobs. It was hard. However, I think one of the things that I would look back on that affected me

was not having role models. Not having people I could go to, for example, no mentors, coaches, and all that, we did not even know they existed (MM16).

In the very beginning, there was not much help. I say this because if I had known 15 - 20 years ago what I know now, it would have made the journey faster and smoother and less traumatic. However, there was no support. There were few places you could go as a Black woman aspiring to leadership and seeking help (SL2).

I think we, ourselves, I think we have not helped one another, you know, because we come from different cultural backgrounds, we do not understand everything, we do not support one another, unless you are very close to people that you come from the same area with, who understand your cultural background, your core group, otherwise, you cannot go to any other group, you are not accepted because the cultural understanding is different to yours. That is how I think there is some failure of integration between communities. Africa is a very big continent, and cultural differences vary from country to country. When we come here and meet others, sometimes we clash and fail to help each other thus, it is very difficult for us to progress. That is how I feel there is that failure of integration amongst ourselves, and it has brought the realisation that I am different in this country (MM13).

I do not think we have a cohesive community regarding minorities uplifting each other. I think there is a lot of what I can say. I sort of like, if I tell her how to progress, she will do more than me. That is just my perception as well (MM2).

Friends in the side circles here now are like, why are you investing so much in education? They are shocked to see that I am where I am today. Because as I have told you, that top-up degree was two years. And then, now my master's, I am bringing it over three years (SL7).

Some women reported using education as a driver to keep the hope of getting a better job and progressing into leadership. Returning to education in the UK was a way to overcome obstacles and regain lost professional capital while drawing favourably on qualifications, as these can never be lost. An example of this lies in the two excerpts from MM3 and MM1, who shared their reasons for going back to education, and SL4, who elaborated to her manager the reasons that Black African women go back to education and get more qualifications:

Education as a steppingstone: So I got frustrated, and then five months into my stay here, I went back to education because I wanted to go into the third sector ...I am passionate about helping people. I joined the third sector and worked my way into middle management, ...then moved into the civil service, and I am almost in senior leadership, but not quite there yet. I aspire to go into senior civil service in the next five years. I aspire to be a permanent Secretary of the Department at the Deputy Director level and probably

after that director level. So at the moment, I am not thinking that far ahead, but it is definitely on my radar (MM3)

Education is my refuge and fortress. I am frustrated, but it makes me think that one day I will get it [the higher/leadership position]. If it is not for me, it is a legacy for my daughter because she sees me studying, going to bed late, and trying to be the best. Workwise, in trying to impress, I do the course all the time. I have got many courses. I once went for an interview, and the admin person at the reception said to me. "Why do you have so many certificates? The others do not have as many" What I do now when I do my CV, I do not put everything that I have done. I downgraded my CV to get on the boat [shortlisted] even though I did not get the posts. It is very frustrating for so many reasons. ... it is always the same outcome leaving; I go back to education because I feel many things over there. It is my refuge (MM1).

We [with her manager] tried to think about the differences between cultures as well, you know, we used to talk a lot about differences in cultures. She used to say that sometimes you Africans like going to school too much. It is not about going to school; sometimes, it is about developing your skills; you do not have to have all these degrees to progress. Furthermore, I would tell her, look, that is the difference. Because if I went for an interview [as a black woman/African], I would need something that would make me stand out from everyone else. Moreover, for me, it is a qualification if anything else. If I am at that level, we have the same skill as a white person, they will give it to the white person, and they will not give it to me.

Nevertheless, they will give me the job if I have something extra. That is why you find us black people going for more education. So, we used to have very open conversations (SL4).

Uneven playing field and messiness

The following excerpts discuss the jolt sensations and realisation towards a shift in mindset and, to some extent, breaking away from the perceived 'normative' state and moving towards self-reconstruction (Bhaskar, 1989; Haslam *et al.*, 1999; Alvesson and Sandberg, 2014):

I feel like I aim to give a different perspective of that, not to make young people already afraid of the system, you know, we want to bring them a different personality. I want to show them that you can do it differently but have to think differently; that is what I have learned. That is how I have thought differently to achieve what I have, but I find our community [tell you], "oh my goodness, you will never do it". I remember when I moved here, someone, a black woman told me that I could never move up. She said when she came here 20 years ago. She had to start by stocking shelves. I told her I was not a shelf stacker. I am not going to do those jobs. I was so shocked. I remember praying to God and telling God, "You know how far I have come. You know how hard I have worked. Please

do not make me stack shelves. I decided to banish those thoughts and decided my story would be different from anybody else's. I am going to write my own story in my way. So I am going to do things differently in order to write my story differently and get the jobs I am qualified for [MM3]

I will discuss my support network and some work colleagues. Maybe now I consider them as my community. I worked in an environment with much more people of colour. I remember about 17/18 years ago, one of my colleagues, who came from Zimbabwe, I said to her, "I am going to work hard, and I will be a home manager one day. I will be a director one day" and she replied, "Oh, dear, I have been here for almost 30 years, our job here is to be carers. Just do this job or be a cleaner. We can never be in any management position. No one will give you that opportunity. Do not even waste your time. You will just be breaking your heart". So that was a hindrance because she was telling me about our own beliefs, perceptions, and journey, having been here for almost 30 years, and she had not moved in her position and thinking. She was a support worker. I remember then we were on the floor [working with residents]. That can affect your ability to move forward or achieve what you want. I had to unlearn that belief for my well-being, sanity, and economic growth and development. I did not want to walk our walk and belief that, although I know for a fact there is some subtle kind of discrimination or racism, and opportunities are not given on merit, I know that for a fact, they are not given easily. I had to unlearn that belief because I believed in myself. I knew I could do it. Moreover, I still talked to the lady, and I proved myself in some way and proved her wrong (SL10).

There were also examples of uneven or unfair competition, or lack of career development and advancement opportunities, as well as the postcode lottery that influences professional growth prospects in terms of proximity to London.

In terms of where I am coming from, that stops me from Applying for a leadership role. So again, I know they will look at my friend and say, compared to another person or name. Moreover, that is just my perception that sometimes I think they look at the name and then disregard the application straight away. And then, I got unmotivated to apply for a leadership role like that (MM2).

I tried to get in. First, it was man's world. Secondly, it was predominantly very, probably, I would say, white and Asian-dominated. It was almost impossible for me to get a job in IT. I tried and applied for jobs here and there. I remember going to XX for a lower position. I did my assessment and got through the final stage. They just said, "well, you know, you did not get through the final stage".

Nevertheless, we are happy all along the way. So try next time and whatnot. I kept getting all that pushback. [In the end] I thought, you know what, information technology is probably not my thing as in, I cannot seem to get a job in this field, I had better try something else to survive (SL4).

I remember thinking, okay, I could either sit here and mourn and cry or do something about it. So, I just decided to level up. ... It is very disheartening, but I think you have got to have a... as I said, I am very positive, very upbeat and always look on the bright side of things. And then I remember, oh, okay, this is not my country, and these are their rules. Okay. What am I to do? I can never sit at home and mourn about it or get in with a system. I chose to get in with the system (MM3).

SL11 demonstrated that even though she was part of the collective that challenged the UK Government and won in March 2008 (HSMP Forum, 2008), she had to think of her situation and find a way of surviving the hostile policy. Thus, she took actions that fit her circumstances as she made meaning of the situation in which she had found herself, as narrated below:

I still had to process my extension using the 12 months gap, so I had to do this. ...to break into the market, I just picked up a job which was even lower than the job I was in before I migrated to the UK, to break into the market. Nevertheless, to meet that new income level requirement, I had to double it up with a weekend job. I did manage to get through, but it just created extra work for me. It was tough. So by the time the decision was made [the government losing the case], it was just a few days before my visa expired. I had already put all those things in place because I did not know what the outcome of the challenge would be. I jumped over that challenge. The UK Government changing the rules for the HSMP program meant some people had already come to the UK, they had made plans, and suddenly the plans, like I was explaining in my situation, changed initially, there was no minimum, but then suddenly it was over £20,000. ..and then again, they changed the rules. They moved the goalposts again and said you need to earn more. I cannot remember exactly (SL11).

When the women started comparing themselves with the people within their group (intragroup differences) and realised that the groupthink effect on their communities was not progressive, they sought to detach themselves and build their self-identity.

You can see it; the racism is there. [other black women] they will be like, have you heard what these people are saying [referring to white people]? Furthermore, I am like, why do you come to x with these people? So, very quickly and dissociated, I rose in leadership within x because I thought I could not be in this sphere and expected to rise. I cannot be among this thinking and expect to rise because this is self-pity. This is chicken thinking. I want to be like an eagle (SL6).

I never fit in, ...and I do not try ... the click mentality that I found, especially in nursing, is that they [migrants] say they [dominant majority] never accept migrants? "who told you? How many positions have you applied for"? Moreover, that is the one mentality I distance myself from, and some say, "I hear they that they will never give a band seven to a black

person". Oh my friend, ...they always give their own and that. "So that there is that they need people in order to be to move on to higher positions, migrant women need to position themselves, show that they have interest in applying. It is simple, things that sound very simple.

Furthermore, this is the one thing I deal with learning and progression. When people go for the one-to-one meetings [with their line managers] and get asked, "where do you see yourself in the next year?" once they say, this is what I would like to do, ABC, it is up to them to come to me and say, I would like to attend this particular course. However, many will write that in their appraisals but never come forward. I would like you to do the prescribing course. Because it is then up to me to find out where the commissioning will come from, and then liaise with the head of education, head of nursing in their area, and, you know, make it happen. ...And if it does not happen, they do not know they are owed an explanation. Moreover, they think it is very political when they do not do their part (SL9).

Comparison and intragroup differences

This theme has demonstrated how the beginnings and journeys of Black African HQHSM women through the immigration system, and the workplace experience while on the 'limited leave to remain' visa, have such a mentally challenging impact on how they see their place in their new environment, and how they seek to navigate the barriers and challenge some experiences. Most of the experiences discussed by the participants can be classed as a result of socially ascribed identities. The participants narrated their lived experiences and referred to their communities; i.e., fellow migrants who were similar to them, regardless of when those people arrived in the country initially, as a source of supporting narrative in terms of the treatment they had experienced as a collective. For example, MM15 narrated that when she was at her lowest, a friend invited her to move to where she was working. This could be interpreted as the existence of a sense that moving to where there were familiar people, would help her with the challenges she was facing (power in numbers). Separately, MM19 narrated the struggle of paying bills while she was on limited leave to remain. Her employer gave her accommodation when she arrived, but her income could not cover the rent and feed her family, so as soon as she was able, she left and joined an agency, resulting in her earning more money than she had done as a permanent employee.

We started working, but this situation for me, I could not take it. That is the point where I felt I could go back home [to her country]. However, a friend called me to move to a different place [where the friend was working]. I went and joined them (MM15).

I was working full-time for the NHS, and when I was working as a full-time nurse, I was not meeting my daily living. My financial daily living pay-outs were cut off. ...I was getting paid and paying them to rent [NHS]. I had three young children by then. ...when I get paid, all the money is finished on bills. Sometimes, I could not even pay some of the bills. So that led me to leave my NHS job to work as a freelancer, then I was getting more money and could meet my bills, rent, and everything else. When I joined the agency and got paid, I could even take my kids on holiday, which I could not do when working for the X [organisation] (MM19).

This similar scenario demonstrated clear fractures and intergroup segregation in which the women spoke about their experiences as a group against those of the dominant majority. Over time, they began to compare intragroup dynamics and categorise themselves alongside those within their group and subgroups. Self-identity started emerging, signified by the gradual move from the use of “we” to “me”; for example:

I had told myself that no matter what happened, I would try to get an office job because I had heard many stories of people moving over here and changing their career paths (SL5).

Similarly, participants mentioned challenging some of the mentality of the beliefs within their groupings, and seeking to be different. For example, one participant discussed the clique mentality among African migrants in her organisation, an issue she distanced herself from:

I never fit in, ...and I do not try ... the clique mentality that I found, especially in nursing, is that they [migrants] say they [dominant majority] never accept migrants? “Who told you? How many positions have you applied for”? Moreover, that is the one mentality I distance myself from, and some say, “I hear they that they will never give a band seven to a black person”. [SL9].

These moments had no specific timeframe. Some participants, like SL5, arrived with the drive not to end up like the ‘statistics’, seemingly basing this on the experiences of other migrants who were already in England, or on her own research as she contemplated joining her husband. She was not the only one; MM3, SL6, and MM7 shared similar sentiments. These participants had in common that they were all joining their husbands and thus did

not have any restrictions on their dependant visas. They could work anywhere they wanted straight away, but it is worth noting that they still found the early days challenging and had to start with lower-paid jobs.

It has long been argued that the lines between SIT and SCT are blurred, with the two theories sharing several similarities (Hornsey, 2008). Participants' experiences played a key role in developing their sense of agency, mental wellness, and connection to those who they presumed shared similar experiences. However, the difference becomes more apparent in SCT; participants' shift in their higher identity and personal agency was associated with better mental well-being. Therefore, from their narrations, the participants appeared to begin experiencing increased agency, and they started to separate themselves from the members of their groups. It appears that something triggered them, causing jolt sensations and the creation, and living, of a new self-image (Turner *et al.*, 1987; Hains, Hogg and Duck, 1997; Atewologun, 2014). Agency is how people reflect on their actions and respond to life stresses; if it is not heightened, it can affect their adaptive development. Agency brings about a feeling of being in charge of one's lives and the pursual of goals and outcomes. Thus, dramatic life and identity breakthroughs lead to a self-awareness revolution (Hogg, 2001; Hogg, Rast and van Knippenberg, 2012).

While SIT posits that elements of cognition, motivation, and social history facilitate intergroup relationships, Turner *et al.* (1987) seek to enhance some of Tajfel's aspects by adding views on intragroup dynamics in addition to SIT's intergroup emphasis, calling it Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT).

5.5. Personal identity

After addressing the theme of social identity, I moved on to the personal identity theme, capturing the intersectionality characteristics of a person's meaning-making and reconstruction in line with the research question and objectives of this study.

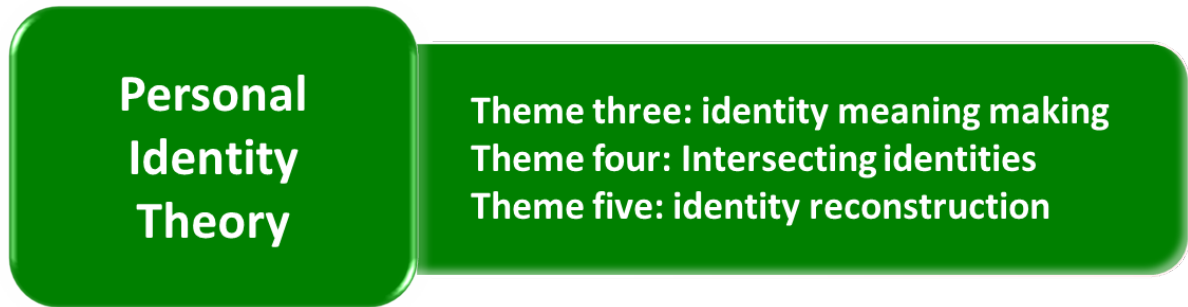


Figure 15: Themes three, four, and five

The collected empirical data underlined the effect of micro and macro structures on career mobility, highlighting the need to understand the interrelationships between immigration policies, media and political rhetoric, systematic racism and discrimination, and the effects on the Black HQHSM women's identity meaning-making and reconstruction. The identity theme exemplifies how I conceptualised the facts and thoughts, while the previous theme focussed on responses relating to social identity. This section focuses on the personal identity meaning-making process when faced with challenging or new environments (Stets and Burke, 2000; Stryker and Burke, 2000; Platow, Grace and Smithson, 2012; Atewologun *et al.*, 2018).

There was a clear pattern in the move from focusing on group membership to seeing oneself and navigating the system as an individual, as well as identifying the moments when career trajectories started diverging for those who went on into leadership positions and those who took a different path. Over time, as they learned more about their new life in the UK, the women began to ask important questions and make meaning of their self-identity. Ashforth and Mael (1989) define identity as the process by which individuals answer the question, "who am I?" For example, figure X shows some of the women's salient identities in the interviews. Before arriving in the UK, the participants knew they were

women, professionals, and parents/providers. They were never reminded because they had gradually built up those identities over their lifetime. However, their racial and ethnic identities became salient on arrival in England. At the same time, they acquired a new identity as a migrant. These intersecting identities have the potential to leave women more disadvantaged. Below is a figure representing some common ways the participants identified themselves during the interviews. The list is not definitive; however, it represents the most used terms.

Theme three: Identity meaning making and reconstruction

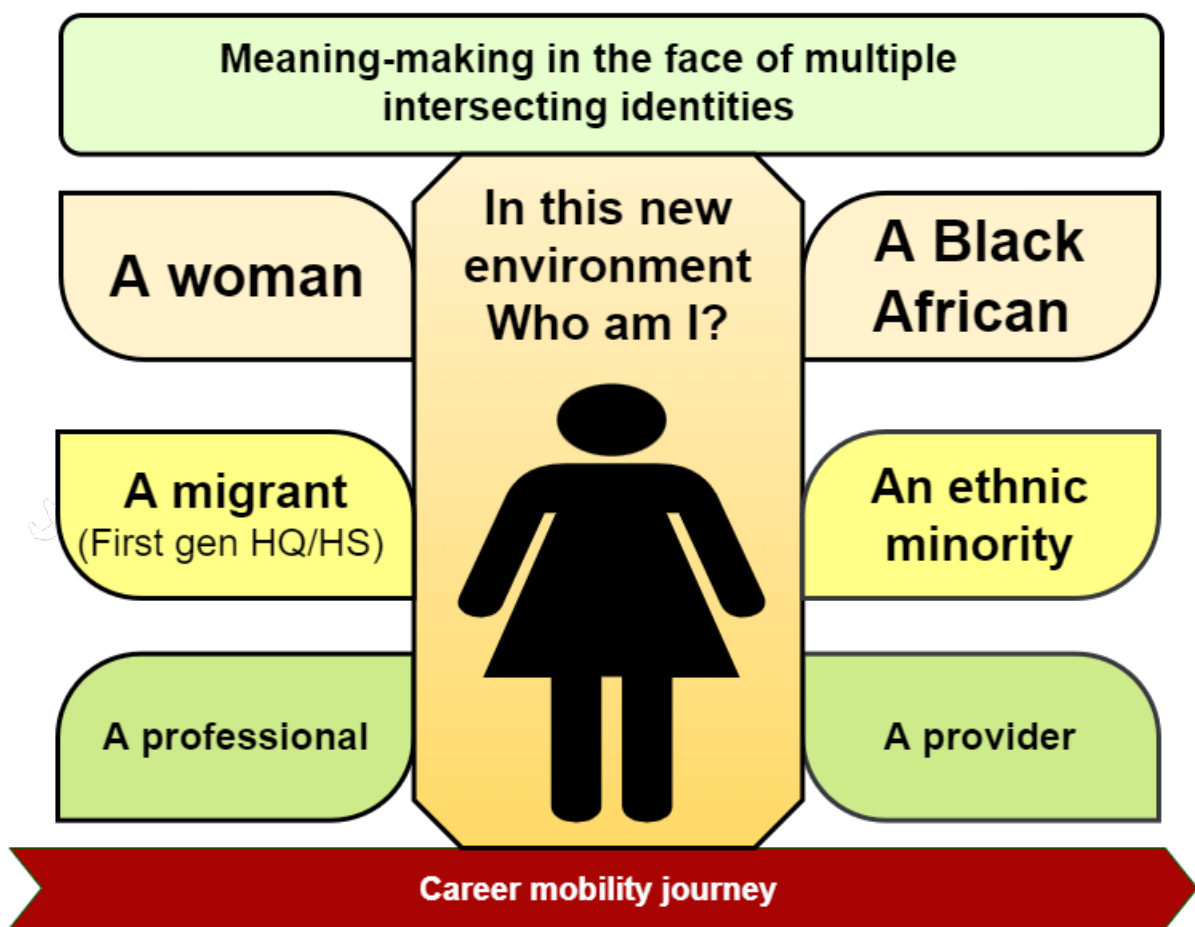


Figure 16: Participants' self-identification based on the most salient references

The world shapes identity around us and is influenced by culture, upbringing, gender-related roles, professional environment, and society. In this theme, the similarities in experiences in terms of the efforts made in the journeys of the Black African HQHSM women through the immigration system are examined, as well as their workplace

experience while on the 'limited leave to remain' visa on their career trajectories. It also captures how those expectations were sometimes quashed, meaning they had to revise and re-strategise. For example, MM13 responded to the question about how she felt about applying for higher positions after upskilling herself and gaining a UK degree after obtaining indefinite leave to remain, and the experience of no longer being restricted to the one job she had during the limited leave to remain period.

I was so focused after my bachelor's in community development that I thought that apart from engaging and empowering communities. I thought that including health would make it broader. I wanted to do that, but it changed my vision when I finished. I realised that it does not matter, ... maybe I could say that as an African, it does not matter for you to be able to have a higher achievement or a higher qualification to be able to work in higher positions. Because I tried using my qualifications to apply, and I was turned down many times, not because I did not meet the criteria. It is because somehow, I felt it was because I was overqualified for the posts, and I found out that in some roles, I was maybe the highest [qualified] of all, and I am being interviewed by people that maybe have not even gone to university. They are in that post because of other things ...it has changed my thinking around my goal and expectations, so I found myself doing things differently from my first roles and initial intentions (MM13).

Similarly, MM2 decided to upskill herself and obtain a UK master's degree for a better chance at a higher-ranking job after obtaining her indefinite leave to remain. However, she faced similar challenges of being turned down many times. Eventually, she went back to do a bachelor's degree in a completely different field to start afresh, as per the excerpt below:

For example, my master's degree, I paid money for it, and I even took a loan out of the bank to pay for it, but I could not get to work in the development sector. So I had to go back and do a BSc honours degree in occupational therapy. If that makes sense, I had to step back and lose three years of training to work towards a skilled job. ...Because the one that I did initially, and I thought I would get a job straight away, I did not. Why? Because, again, I am not UK white privileged. That has, in a way, demoralised me. ...The treatment in the jobs made me pack the idea of moving up in the organisation. Now I work when I want and earn more [as agency staff] (MM2).

The strategies that stood out were two-fold. While some women opted to change careers or upskill in a different field, others had a different strategy of starting at the bottom of the organisation, then proving themselves and rising in their careers that way. This group was also where participants likely self-identified as holding a senior position. These positions did not come without struggle; the participants narrated aspects of losing themselves and

having to 'fit in' to be viewed as part of a higher-order ingroup, e.g., ignoring racism, being careful with what they voice, and consciously looking for loopholes to move up.

You lose yourself a little Do not get me wrong, it is not everything that works. However, I have done much networking, as well as [working extra hard] for me to be where I am. It has been quite challenging along the way. As you know, I cannot even get into some of the things [experienced] because it is not just the other senior colleagues, is even the people that I am working with, some consultants being very racist to a point where it is clear, they even say the word, and you are thinking, did you say that?, but in all that, you just turning a blind eye and the deaf ear, because if I took up all that, I would not be where I am (SL3).

I moved from an x [admin role] to a leadership role. ...I moved to a higher role in a different organisation because the problem with being in the same organisation I learned is familiarity, and people will never forget you be the administrative assistant. So I moved to X Agency. Moreover, that began my career. In one move, I jumped five grades. Why? Because I did not let making the tea define me. I knew who I was above the tea-making. Once I realised the situation, I knew who I was despite what they thought about me, and I just waited for my opportunity and took it (SL6).

By the time I moved here, I had over 15 years of work experience in various industries and operational positions. I felt, perhaps, that part of my life, that part of my career, did not account for anything. Because insofar as the UK standard is concerned, coming into this environment, I do not know to what extent people would go to validate your employment history from another country. Moreover, I decided to take this opportunity [administrative assistant role through an agency] because I felt that if I did not take the opportunity, I would be forced to move in a direction that perhaps would lead me to a completely different sector. Within a year, I was promoted to a manager position. Later, I was promoted to a senior manager position, putting their risk and governance structure in place. Furthermore, I felt that because I took a chance to dip down and get into an environment, I was comfortable with, I perhaps had sufficient knowledge and experience to prove myself. ...I felt happy and comfortable knowing that it aligned with my skill set, experience, and profession (SL5).

Another prominent topic under this theme was participants' confidence to challenge 'othering' tendencies. Participants reported witnessing othering attitudes toward them by white and Asian supervisors and co-workers. They discussed there being different rules for "them" [the dominant majority] than for "us" [Black African HQHSM women]. Despite their skills and experience, racism is very much present, and as a result, several participants reported fear of discrimination, lack of motivation after unpleasant encounters, and generally poor treatment due to their non-Caucasian-sounding names and accents. There was also the issue of the excessive usage of English idioms and wordplay. Even though they

were qualified and competent for the job, individuals unfamiliar with the local vernacular language found it challenging to comprehend and compete fairly in these situations. The further away participants lived from the centre of London, the more apparent the difficulties they faced. Some felt that these difficulties stemmed from the Black African HQSM women's gender, race, ethnicity, and status as first-generation migrants in predominantly white workplaces.

When you have got an opinion or you have done something good. You hear it is [praise or credit] taken by somebody else. I am trying to keep it all together. However, each of these experiences goes deeper about what happened, what made me feel, and what I did about it because it impacted me in every job I started. Furthermore, whenever it takes something away from me, I try to fight it back by saying, "do not allow it. Do not allow it to eat you up". So that is where I am now. When I apply for a job, on paper, I am very confident, but once they have screened me [call me for the interview], [However] as soon as I appear [at the interview], I see it on their faces, I can tell, I do not fit in. (MM9).

I noticed that my [white]colleagues would probably have moved twice each time I moved roles. They would have been able to secure positions where for instance, we would sit together and discuss the role, and I will give them ideas of how I thought they fit into the role and how they would perform in interviews. I had this concept or this belief that I was applying for roles that I knew I was confident I would be able to perform and excel in. However, I never quite always got them. Moreover, the more I started to interrogate why the more it became clear that it was not my ability that was the question. It was the system and how it was designed to challenge people like myself when we started to aspire to move into areas of influence. So I took time talking to the most senior people. Something became very apparent, the whole concept of emotional fatigue. I was beginning to fail it when I was thinking, oh God, is it because I am not good enough, or why can't I? I challenged the decisions, asked for feedback, and asked for ways to improve because I initially thought I had to improve because something was missing. I discovered that it was not me that needed to improve. The system needed to be reconstructed to accommodate me.

Furthermore, all of the new experiences I would bring with me into those leadership positions. ...I was not going to be coming into a team leader or manager role purely from a white British perspective. I would come in with a cultural narrative, a global view, an international experience, and a multicultural viewpoint of how people could be missed, even though we say the services are designed for everybody. So, that was one huge challenge and barrier I faced in getting to where I am now. So for me, it was about challenging the narrative, but I also had to get myself to a point where it was about understanding where the barriers were and how to unpack those barriers, such that there was confidence in my suitability, as opposed to a worry about my adaptability. (SL2).

In the next excerpt, the participant narrated her experience with her line manager, who labelled her passive-aggressive without directly telling her, instead putting it in her appraisal and trying to make it look like it came from other people. The conversation would be seen as another example of this theme, showing how unpleasant treatment could easily be added to one's record without a valid reason, but with detrimental consequences to their career progression or promotion prospects. The participant highlighted the constant attacks she experienced and the meaning-making process she went through upon the realisation of how she had been labelled by her manager; and how she took action to challenge it:

...in my appraisal meeting, my manager said someone in the interview for a promotion. I did not get fed this back to her "...sometimes you can feel that this person, you can work with them. There is just something that he said". So I asked her, "what do you mean by that something?" then, jokingly, I said, "you mean being too African?" she did not say yes or no. She laughed and said, "oh, you know, sometimes, ...when you can feel that this person you cannot work with them, they cannot fit in the team". She did not say more or elaborate on what she meant. However, when she went and typed up the appraisal, she wrote that sometimes I could come across as passive-aggressive. When I saw that [what had been written], it bothered me as I tried to make sense of it. I raised it with one of my coaches and the diversity manager. She advised me to say, "you know what? Go back and let her tell you exactly what she means". So I went back and spoke to my manager, but she could not pin it down (SL3).

Theme four: Intersecting identities

One of the strong sentiments that tended to permeate when the question was asked about how the women saw themselves in line with applying for a senior role was, resoundingly, the lack of diversity in the upper echelons of organisations, on recruitment panels, and in professional and social networks.

Navigating multiple identities

The participants spoke candidly about knowing their place and harbouring multiple identities. They discussed experiences with the issue of being seen as the least important person in the organisation; i.e., ethnic hierarchies (Zwysen and Demireva, 2018a). They also mentioned experiencing microaggressions and the glass ceiling and glass cliff effects. They mentioned not managing to go beyond a certain level, and those who identified as being in

senior positions felt lonely at the top (meaning that there too few or no other people who looked like them). Another point arising from this theme was the participants managing colleagues and sometimes upward moderating expectations and understanding the complex dynamics of sovereignty, especially relating to others' whiteness:

The last interview was about the deputy chief nurse role ...At the first interview, there was a consultant whose behaviour was questionable. The second one was the panel members; I think they all looked like they were bored. I swear, I knew I was not getting that job, and I could feel I was not myself. The nerves set in because so much is happening in your head. You are already going into that discrimination, the race issue. They were all white, not even Asian. I had even looked at their board after [not diverse]. When I apply for a job, I look at their board. If they are all white, I do not even bother to go (MM9).

It can be lonely at the top because you can feel as if you are trying too hard for people to understand what you are trying to say. The simple, basic things can be so exhausting. ...If you are going into a meeting, and you are the one chairing it, and you are thinking, ...I hope they can hear what I am saying, to such an extent that you start to think, maybe you are not good enough. I know many incredibly dynamic people, and they can make incredibly dynamic managers and leaders. ...Why don't we see many Black people at the top? Because sometimes it just simply is not worth the hassle (SL11).

The main thing is that I find myself trying to prove myself by working much harder, for lack of a better word. My worth, abilities and skills are more than my colleague of a different colour [white]. I see that quite a lot, even up to now. So you put in more effort, you are doing reports, and even at home, you are catching up and responding to emails. Nevertheless, your colleague is happy to tell your line manager in a conference call. I am not going to do that at five o'clock. I will do it on Monday, today is Friday, and that is it. However, I do not even feel that confident in myself to be able to express myself in that way. Even if I have the skills and experience, I know I should. Nevertheless, I should prove myself and continue working to prove my worth and value. Yeah, if that makes sense in any way (SL9).

A participant narrated realising that one of the issues they faced because of their experience and competence on the job was role creep. Role creep is where more aspects or projects are added to your role without extra remuneration for the additional work. These additions come with empty promises and compliments, de-skilling, and covert and overt discrimination while denying one's career progression. They are also used as cover for higher positions without higher pay. However, the participants did not ignore instances of role creep. Rather, most reported having challenged these instances and questioning

why they were good enough for the extra work, but not for more pay. Some of the experiences are narrated in the following excerpts:

...they brought out some clinical lead jobs. So I told my manager I wanted to apply for the clinical lead job. She said, "no, you do not have to apply because it is the same team, and you have already been acting. So we can just move you across if that is what you want". I said yes, as I wanted to move to the clinical lead. She said she would leave me a post when she recruited, but she did not leave any post for me. ...I went to the head of service and discussed it with X. She said she would leave a post for me because I want to move from where I am to the clinical lead. The head of the service said, "oh, do not worry about it. We will see what we can do when the service is up and running. We will put you in one of the posts". Soon after, the head of service retired. The new manager came in. I went to the new senior manager. Moreover, I told them I was offered to move to the clinical lead. Furthermore, they were like, X is not here to confirm that she offered you to go to the clinical lead. Furthermore, they said you have to apply for the job, I applied, and I never got the job. In those jobs, I am still being asked to do overtime. When there was no one to cover, I was asked to do the job I was not given. So at that point, I think I felt like, do I leave? However, I thought if I left, it would look like I was going into a stop. So I stayed in the lower job. Nevertheless, I talked with the director, the assistant director of operations in our management line. I said to him, look, at the end of the day, after all that has gone on, I am still here, but I am not going to be here for long. Then he said to me. There are jobs which will be coming up. We can support you may be to apply for those jobs (SL4).

The role creep does not come with additional funding unless you start banging on the right doors to say, hang on, I cannot do ABCD without being remunerated for it. I am in the process at the moment. For example, with the black and Asian minority, minority work, I had to say that if I am trying to do this work properly, we should have a good and proper job description. ...So if I am going to be doing that, on top of all the other things I am supposed to be doing, then surely there must be some form of remuneration. ...In many scenarios, you do not see a pay increase and have to push and speak up (SL8).

For some, the choice to stay in lower positions is a strategic one that serves them financially in terms of being able to support their family in England, and their extended family in their country of origin. They spoke of holding multiple identities as per excerpts below:

A large number of BME people are unemployed, especially Africans. Not all my income goes to my household when I go to work. I am many things, and I send some back home. Everywhere back at home monetarily, someone needs money. Therefore, the reason why we strive for these positions is to complete ourselves financially. When you are unrecognised, it is not easy to continue pushing yourself.

Nevertheless, when you work in the Trusts' your financial returns are poor, and I believe this is the primary reason why so few individuals choose to stay in band six. Because if

you become a band seven, you will work from nine to five and lose all of your enhancements [extra pay for extra shifts and overtime]. So [in reality], you get a wage cut. If I am a band six, and I am working shifts, or if I work nights, weekends, or shifts, I receive Saturday Night enhancements.

Consequently, my salary has been completely reduced [going a band higher] to become a manager. This is why I believe that persons with no [minority] ethnic origin can thrive for so long in such posts. Because they typically care for their nuclear family, their income is sufficient to cover their mortgage and children's expenses. They do not have an aunt or uncle to give them money each month or a mother they need to assist them. I do not want to imply that everyone doesn't, but in general, they do not. It will not suffice if you have these responsibilities. So you pick up extra shifts to increase your income, so going bands higher does not work. (MM17).

Theme five: Identity reconstruction

This theme pertains to how the Black African HQHSM women navigate the multiple intersecting identities and start reconstructing their identities, finding opportunities, and challenging obstacles and inequality to build a life that resembles the one they had dreamed of before migrating. This is where the paths diverge into two distinct categories; the first group being those who seek to continue on the upward career mobility journey and get into the higher echelons of the organisations. The second group are those who have decided to seek ways of making money and living a comfortable life instead of trying to rise within organisations. According to the participants' responses, one could argue that both groups (those already in senior leadership positions and those who identified as not in senior leadership) shared the challenges they faced, but with clear distinctions within the trajectories.

Positioning and opportunities

Many participants described how all was not lost as they learned to leverage self-inclusion opportunities, playing to politics, and negotiating to gain some semblance of the life they had envisioned. These participants viewed responding strategically to obstacles in their career progression as a necessary price to pay to get where they needed and keep climbing the ladder, i.e., capitalising on advancement opportunities, seeking mentorship from beyond the Black race, and embracing assistance offered by those already in leadership positions or those who knew the system better (white natives and ethnic minorities who

had climbed the ladder before them). This group also spoke about having a superior and friend (mostly a white person) who saw their value and helped them through mentorship, sponsorship, and other ways in their early career journey when they migrated. They spoke highly of these people and called them 'the one angel' or similar. They credited the person who showed them the ropes and helped them make sense of the new environment with helping them understand the culture and build a mindset that would, in a way, enable them to fit in and see things differently. This could contribute to helping them see beyond racism and find ways of reflecting on what they could do differently to get where they needed to go, as per examples in the subsequent excerpts.

I had a great line manager when I was deputy. He was my mentor; he gave me much support. ...I have a great husband; he and his brother have been very supportive. His brother is the one who told me that after many failures and being turned down for higher jobs. He said to me, "use your married name on your applications and CV (Caucasian name), not your [African] maiden name". I followed this advice and things started changing (MM10).

I wished early on that I had some sponsors that I do now. Because all it takes with sponsors is just taking time and a number of them, I will give you a very quick good example. An executive leader approached me in an organization I worked for because he wanted to be reverse mentored by me. His view was that I always had a different perspective. Furthermore, I did not shy away from putting forward my opinion.

Furthermore, he found that refreshing, but what intrigued him was that sometimes, culturally, most people tend to keep themselves to themselves. Furthermore, he was interested to know why or what it was about me that made me behave that way. I will forever be grateful for that opportunity because I do not think that I would have ever asked or put my name in a pool or mentoring program that I would have ever been matched with this very senior member of staff. However, what that did for me, was open my eyes to the value of what a mentor can do for you, in your career and your work career. And from that point onward. I did not think about it in that sense, but that introduced me to constantly seeking a mentor wherever I go.

Furthermore, I am very deliberate and very measured. I tend not to stick to just women; I mix it up and people from different backgrounds. I think I have learned a lot. Moreover, in so doing, I think that over time, I have learned to leverage the relationship of the mentor and the sponsors, and I think those bring real value to breaking down the barriers for me (SL5).

Moving into a senior role: That is how I did it. I never did it, staying in the same organization. Because the more familiar they became with me, it did no matter how hard I worked. There were always my white counterparts who were always going to be ahead

of me. Why? As black people, we do not know how to suck up. So we are already at a disadvantage, we are not the bosses' favourite, you know. So, at some point, it does not matter whether you bring yourself, you lose a bit of who you are, you are not going to suck up, and you are not bringing cakes. You are not going to their daughter's birthday party (SL6).

It was tough; many things happened, but I thought, is it worth taking it up? What is that going to do to my career? I want to fight for everybody else; this should not have been. Nevertheless, then what am I doing to my career? Am I not committing professional suicide? Because sadly, in these organisations, I am sure every public sector organisation. At the top there, it just looks massive. However, the managers are the same people. So you will find your work for this person at a different Trust [Health organisation]. They are the same group of people that rotate around now. If you start picking up those fights, you pick up a fight with one of them. How, then, are you going to move to another Trust? Because, inevitably, they always want to have a reference for that person that is coming into the organisation at the senior level. So you want to know who they are.

Furthermore, if they say, oh, my goodness, she did this, she took us to the tribunal, or she took up a grievance against this person, you are done. I have seen one of my colleague's careers destroyed just like that. Furthermore, another colleague had a mental breakdown because she took her employer to a tribunal, which did not end well [for her] either. So for me, it has always been that I need to weigh my career progression against doing this [fighting the system]. I would love to speak for the voice of many, but the only way I have done it is by mentoring people. ...Learn by mentoring others: The more you mentor people, the more you like to develop yourself (SL3).

This narrative of people becoming more careful around you when you register a grievance was corroborated by several participants. For example, SL4 reported her manager in one care home, and she narrated what followed:

After complaining about a bad manager in one home, ...he moved me to another. However, in the home I moved to, the manager used to explain everything that would happen to me. You know, I did this because of this. So it became uncomfortable because she felt like I was someone who just reported people. So I had to sit down and tell her I did not report the other manager without talking to them. I sat him down.

Moreover, I said I was not happy with what was going on. Nevertheless, he did not acknowledge it until I went ahead and reported that I would not report you for anything. If I am unhappy, I will come and speak to you; I will say I do not feel this is the right way of doing things, and I will explain the right processes if they are being overlooked (SL4).

Research has shown that leadership development and talent management help prepare people for leadership roles (Seidle, Fernandez and Perry, 2016). With many companies' talent spotting is based on relationships and familiarity, mostly within those similar to the

perceived prototypical leadership material (Hogg, 2001). Therefore, those identified people will be helped and given opportunities to develop their skills (Horak *et al.*, 2019). The challenge the participants face would be making themselves visible and acceptable enough to be offered those development opportunities. The participants acknowledged that they had to be intentional in seeking development opportunities, especially executive sponsorship, mentoring, and coaching, as they attempt to circumnavigate obstacles and challenges to become 'leadership ready', or even to open doors into the ingroups. Some experienced trepidation regarding how this might work, but they alluded to the usefulness of executive sponsorship, mentoring, and coaching. The following excerpts attest to this effort.

Mentoring and coaching would help, I am not sure, because then it can help in having this conversation and talking to somebody about the frustrations that you are feeling, the anxiety that you have, and having some tools and strategies to take forward. Nevertheless, it would be nice to have two or three of you there so that you can laugh, joke, and maybe talk about ways of dealing with things. ...give each other a small quantity of that extra social network (SL11).

Since I have had some coaching, it has given me confidence and helped me build confidence and think differently than I have always thought. So that, for example, the thing about being selfish came from my coaching to say, you know, it is about not being selfish in a bad way. However, it is about thinking about what is best for you and getting it without thinking about everyone else. If I left the job, my coach told me they would still replace me if I died. They might proceed with them, the person as good as you are, but they are still going to replace you. So why can't you move on to be replaced? So coaching, I think, is one of the things that is lacking; we and that. He [the reverse or executive mentee] could talk about you more than you can talk about yourself, not when you tell him he is, (SL6).

Vision and self-belief

Even amongst those who did not identify as being in senior leadership, there was still a strong sense of vision and self-belief, and they spoke highly of having positive networks, which a few called the 'sisterhood' or simply 'the girls'. What was evident, was that they were also more likely to gravitate toward those with a similar mindset. They kept on moving even when they were frustrated and also mentioned working twice as hard as white people, hoping to be recognised. To them, it was just a matter of time and opportunity. Below are some of the excerpts:

[The sisterhood, as she called them] They are very positive. My, you know, people from back home are very hardworking, and they believe that if you put in the hard work, you deserve the position, so they are very positive. Recently, I told them about an offer I was. The university gave it to me. I want you to stop studying.

Furthermore, they, you know, the support did not stop studying, you know, you never stop learning, go ahead, and carry on. Learning is for life. So the support from people from back home keeps going further. Eventually, you will get there and keep trying to apply for leadership roles. Because you know, you have got it in you. Furthermore, I have it in me again. As I said, you always get overlooked in this country because of your status, MM14.

I will try hard to fight hard and go higher. I am trying to apply for one post. I need to do a small amount of training. There is one cause that I want to do, then I know I will go, I will try despite whatever is happening. It is not easy to get a scholarship. The X they have got money to give to people to go and do training. However, the managers restrict people from going for a master's. So people end up paying from their pocket. Good one, yeah. Coming from my background, and now here applying for all these leadership positions. You have to fight, try and influence others and just do it (MM11)

Because I was already qualified as a solicitor when I moved to the UK, the push was not to settle for just any role. So I constantly got that encouragement to keep going and keep going. The best way to look at such things is always to keep trying because, in many cases, it is out of one's control. Nevertheless, it has been hard. I believe that I should have progressed a bit further than where I am now (MM12)

All the women interviewed said that if all else failed, they left. It was extremely clear that leaving the company if they were undervalued was the right action, especially after they had received more freedom of choice after obtaining indefinite leave to remain status. The participants described understanding their value and what they were bringing to the organisation and the country, even if it meant downgrading their Curriculum Vitae (CV) or moving horizontally as the only way into a happier and more progressive role. Some of the situations tended to stem from their realisation that no matter how hard they tried to work, some managers were never going to allow them to progress, while in other situations, jolt moments arose from experiences and tip-offs from others who saw the discrimination that they were facing. Below are some examples of those situations.

What changed for me was that I realised that some of these people are terrible at their job and their managers. I am a lot better than these people. So why am I settling? Where am I going to sit at this table in this organization and keep pushing for them to recognize me? If someone does not value you, you walk out and go and do for somebody who values you. So that was for me what changed for me, and I thought, I can never sit here and

continue not to be valued and continue to feel frustrated for not challenging myself and not exploiting my full potential. Or I can get out there and go and work for somebody who might even value what I bring to the table (MM3)

The HR person told me, "Just be careful because this might destroy your career". I thought, Fine, and it looks like my time is up". I then saw a secondment opportunity at X. I applied for it. When this whole rubbish was going on, I remained silent and humble.

Furthermore, all I did was I kept praying, and I just kept doing my job. I said, not one day will I even bring in sick. If they think what they are doing to me will make me sick, go and start protesting as they expect me to. I am not going to do that. Because I have come this far in my studies, I have come this far to be where I am. Not out of luck but out of hard work. So I applied for the job, and there was a hospital. I went for the interview and got the job (SL3).

That is their perception of an angry black woman very much there. Moreover, they see that we shift [expressive gestures mainly with hands] when we talk. Sometimes we go in and out, even the tone, sometimes boom, to emphasise a point, there is a [a] pitch to our voices. That is so unfair [to be labelled for how one speaks], then you find somebody like me, with [dread] locks. We are seen as a criminal. If something was to be stolen, and I was sitting there with my locks, all eyes would be looking at me. They think she is the suspect. I am sure you know how things go. Your Blackness makes you a suspect of anything; crime, aggression, and things like that (MM8).

I thought, okay, I am having all these challenges here. Let me start applying to move. Furthermore, at that time, I was thinking to myself, move to anything more sideways, move up, move this move that fine, as it were, so many application forms, so many interviews, nothing coming through. Absolutely nothing (SL3).

How this shift happened differed depending on outlook and response to challenges. Some participants had levels of implicit reaction and ways of dealing with stereotypes that they felt were almost inevitable. For example, during some of the moments of discrimination, they saw it as 'accepting that they do not belong' in a way by wearing the outgroup insignia and focusing on mental health, self-preservation, self-care, self-love, self-empathy, and carefully picking battles and creating congenial familial networks and mentorship ties in their own communities.

We are very conscientious with our hands. We use our hands a lot to gesture when we speak. I hold on to something like a pen to stop myself from gesturing. I hold the pin with both hands. So obviously, I am trying to put them in place to stop myself from making many hand gestures, so I am conscientious of all these things in the way I look. If I interview my looks, I will try and style them [dreadlocked hair] so they are not loose. So,

I will try to look more acceptable probably. So, yes, I have tried to model myself in a way that will make me look probably accepted (MM8)

You act strong to their faces, but behind the scenes, it knocks your confidence. You have self-doubt and start to question, am I in the right place? You start to think you are stupid. You can do it. Even in meetings, I have the answer, but I tend to hold back. That is what it has done to me. My friends, we talk about it almost every month to say, come on, let us not allow this. Let us keep on going. However, I am conscious. When I speak, sometimes it is like nobody hears or tells me they do not understand you, MM9.

The participants all seemed quite aware of the disparity in cultures and the ways they expressed themselves, wary of being wrongly accused of being aggressive. The following excerpt shows examples of how women speaking less or muting themselves was seen as an antidote to being called aggressive, and a way of avoiding being labelled the 'angry Black woman' (Childs, 2005; Ashley, 2014; Motro *et al.*, 2021).

Muting oneself - Sometimes, they do not give you a chance to speak. Even we feel that if we say something, it will come against us as well, which means we end up being silent in the meetings, and they see us as people from different cultures. However, we have so much in our minds, we have good ideas of what needs to happen, but we cannot display them because they cannot see them coming from us. They only see themselves as capable, So sit there and watch them think you are not someone who deserves to be in that position (MM10).

So when I questioned some of the things my manager did, I think we became very, our relationship became very bruised somehow. She was not very happy with me. Furthermore, I did not feel supported at some point, you know, whereas sometimes, you know, she used to talk to me like she is talking to a child, you need to do this, you need to do that. Some of the things I think we are reports, you know, like spelling sometimes no and there is a small spelling and should pick on that instead of, you know, dealing with it differently should use it maybe to make you feel really small (SL3).

Where I work, one of the girls. She had worked in the ward for many years ... they had been in six positions. She applied and was not given the job. First, she kept quiet. More came up. She was not given the job. Furthermore, guess what? All the students she trained she mentored were the ones getting the positions. She was brave enough to take it further, and now she is left because they said she was in trouble for expressing that. They said she was causing trouble because she did not pass the interviews. [Reflecting on the girl's words] "How can I not pass the interview? I train you to be who you are, and you pass your nursing training. And then, when it goes to the interview, I am told no. You just qualified, and then you trained yesterday. I have been working for 20 years. Not so? I do not get jobs because of my different skin colour. You qualify and get a higher position after two years, but I trained you for the job. Does that make sense?" (MM19)

5.6. Co-construction of a future model

The last two themes focus on the co-construction of a model following the themes outlined below.



Figure 17: Themes six and seven

Throughout the preceding themes, I reported on the participants' lived experiences within the systems and in organisations. The exposure to different social and organisational contexts impacted the participants in varied ways and potentially altered expectations in ways that may not be consistent with their values and cultural norms. Some of the cited behaviours were high levels of discrimination and othering in the organisations they joined, and seeing their colleagues from other ethnic and racial backgrounds being promoted into leadership roles ahead of them. In some cases, intergroup dynamics, where managers treated those within their circle (ingroup or fellow white or Asian people) favourably rather than through meritocracy, resulted in cynicism, scepticism, and unfulfilled hopes. In certain scenarios, the participants had to choose between wanting a better career (higher position) and providing for their families in their home countries, thereby contributing to their country's economic growth. The latter often meant leaving substantive employment to return to work for an agency or as a self-employed individual, earning them more money but stagnating their career. Several participants said they could deal with the negative aspects by focusing on their reasons for migrating as the bigger picture. They felt that irrespective of the challenges and discrimination they faced, being in England meant they had good fortune compared with colleagues back home. This meant they had a duty to help

their country by educating orphans, helping elderly extended family members, and building property to raise more money (Rivera and Reyes, 2011; Munkejord, 2017).

Amidst the juxtapositions of good fortune and challenges, the participants maintained hope for the future, continuing to believe that the way things were going to improve in the system was, on the one hand, for employers to do more to ensure a more favourable environment for people like them to flourish. On the other hand, migrants themselves, especially Black African HQHSMs, must keep pushing and knocking down the metaphorical doors and glass ceilings. The participants saw a co-construction of a future where there would be an improved life and understanding of the system so they could be allowed to compete fairly and progress to leadership positions in which they could influence change for future generations of migrants. Theme six is reviewed next.

Theme six: Changes at organisational and policy levels

Theme six focussed on organisations' actions to ensure leadership positions are filled equitably, for which I asked the question, "what were the benefits to the organisation in employing migrant women into leadership positions?" The responses included finding ways of easing the labyrinth, providing migrant women with suitable qualifications, and obtaining Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) the space, proper work tools, and necessary support to make their lives easier. They believed these aspects were lacking in applying for higher positions. Once they reached the desired leadership positions, the participants believed they would flourish in those leadership roles (providing a non-discriminatory environment). They were also clear that they did not expect and were by no means were implying that they should be given positions without merit. Rather, they pointed out that they had all the educational qualifications and experience, whether or not it was gained in the UK.

Fairer policies

The participants highlighted needing a fairer playing field within the organisations they joined. One of the key examples here was the fact that if certain jobs wanted UK working experience, they were already excluded without even being offered a chance to show that

they were fully capable of performing better than the natives in the job (MM3, MM7, SL5, SL6, SL11).

Asked if the participants felt that they, as Black African HQHSM women, would perform in leadership positions if given the chance, the response was a resounding yes, with the caveat that the organisations and the people within them would need to see beyond colour and removed some of the entrenched biases that are held against Black people as not being intelligent or capable of leading in large organisations. The excerpts below reveal some of the responses.

Absolutely! Hundred per cent because we bring a different spin to several issues. In education, for example, I work in a very ethnically diverse institution. So it is quite a shame that we do not have an ethnically diverse middle or senior management because, on many occasions, decisions that are made do not reflect the people we serve, mainly because the managerial roles do not reflect the students' diversity. So decisions do not meet or suit the situations. We bring a lot from our backgrounds and quite a lot of things, especially with our educational qualifications, and we tend to work extremely hard, even harder than everybody else, to reach where we are. Unfortunately, our skills are not recognised, which is a shame (MM1).

Oh God, there are many benefits [of having migrant women in senior leadership roles]. If you look at it from a leadership perspective, you have the beauty of multiculturalism. So we are coming from a place where we can integrate into the system. The ability to understand and capture diversity in its rawest form. So I do not need a diversity tick sheet or policy framework to understand how to relate cross-culturally from a lens of everybody having to look sound and think like me. Once they do not, then I become agitated. I become stressed because I do not know what that person is saying. Furthermore, we have huge resilience, you know, pools within us, naturally as Africans, to persevere in situations which sometimes I always wonder, why are we still there? (SL2)

Yes, especially in areas with a high minority population, having people who understand the stories and can relate to those pupils will make better decisions. There should be a better understanding [working together] instead of leaving out minority women, especially in this community, where you have ethnic minority children, which is missing a trick. Just as you would not have a whole ethnic minority senior management team in an all-white school, it should not be the same in an ethnic minority institution (MM12).

The benefit is a highly skilled human being as part of their team because migrant women do not get their positions because they have worked in an organisation for more than ten years. They get their positions because they have put in the hard work and studied to be in that particular position. Most times, when you find somebody who is a migrant working in a senior position, it is not because they climbed the ladder. It is because they have

studied that particular business. It is not because she started working in the organisation and worked her way up for 20 years. So the benefits are that they get a highly-skilled, intelligent human being in that position (MM14).

I think migrants can be effective but are we allowed to be effective? Is the question, are you given a chance to be effective? And so pretty much, I think, looking at it from my team. Even though we are quite diverse, there is still that caveat. If we are allowed to get into a senior leadership role, we can thrive if we have the right people, I am not looking at race, but everyone from every race can be helpful and professional and help you thrive. So people that have the mindset of getting the job done, people that look beyond the colour of your skin. Yes. If you have them, we can be effective (MM20).

Yes, they can, but they are not given that opportunity. ...they can do it and even do it better, but they are not given that opportunity (MM19).

Of course, you are equipped with knowledge when you achieve higher education levels. Moreover, that knowledge helps you to implement your length theories into practice. Nevertheless, what is happening now, you have all the theories in your head. Furthermore, there is no acceptance because you are a migrant because of that division of being. Maybe it is because of what has been installed in people's minds that you cannot perform, even if they question your performance, and because they question your performance, everything you do is being watched. So you feel watched all the time because they do not believe you can perform, but in actual sense, you should be treated the same as anybody else. Anyone can perform to their best in the right environment (MM13).

For us to take back what people say, they need to shake up the policies. Current policies tend to be shaped from a white perspective, it does need to have all protected groups, which they are trying, but I do not think they yet, at the present moment, we are being sent for courses. I did my [name] programme. However, then at the end, what did you do with me? I am still here, struggling to go where I need to get to, I am still struggling. Nevertheless, I have all this knowledge, and you have spent over 10,000 on me, and I am here. However, it is not being utilised. I think they would get a vast wealth of knowledge, a different perspective, a different dynamic, and a different experience by employing migrant women (MM9).

Better education about migrant contributions

Another set of responses reflected that the women felt that one solution to the problems in organisations was to openly articulate migrants' contributions to allow those who needed the education to become more aware if they so wished. Three of the questions related to what participants believed organisations must do to increase access and opportunities for migrant women. One of the questions asked was what organisations

could do to ensure the inclusion of migrant women into leadership positions. Here are some of the responses:

It is about ensuring that we build in opposite communities within our leadership structures for us to utilize our natural lived experiences, the variations in education, and how we deal with different people because, coming from a cultural background or an international perspective, you have lived with people from different backgrounds, different life experiences, and that allows you to intuitively and connect with people on levels that you glean information just by that subtle, unspoken connection that you have with them. Again, we bring that knowledge to the table when we talk about growth. So I can share some of the nuances in the relationship with the boards and all responses from their black and ethnic minority staff. It has just been one of those things where they are saying, well, people are not responding to this. I can interrogate the issue from a different perspective to see that it is not that they are not responding. You [white leaders] have not offered anything that they consider relevant and valuable to their current situation. I would ask questions such as, what do you know about your staff as opposed to people who have not got the experience, designed policies, and designed leadership frameworks that do not consider cultural diversity (SL2)

People [out-groupers] have different views and a seat at the table. It enhances the conversations. When people make decisions about ... say, the civil service makes decisions about the country. Those decisions should reflect the views of the society that we serve. So that benefits the country as a whole and its citizens. However, also, it challenges the organization to think differently. You know, it challenges the people around the table to think differently and to see a different perspective. Britain has changed significantly over the last 10, 20 or 30 years.

Moreover, it is important for the generation that comes after us to see the positive trajectory or changes that the society or the country has made by looking at the people who are in the senior leadership. Nevertheless, I also think having different people at the table is the right thing to do. I mean, it is just Common Sense. You know, it is just equal opportunities. It is a human rights issue. It is a morality issue. Why would you want to deny people that opportunity? It is just so obvious. It is not rocket science (MM3)

I think it should be a fair and just system, and I think it is a lot and will take a long way before organisations in the United Kingdom be there where you give everybody a chance, regardless of where they come from. A fair and just system is what I think would give migrant women a chance in an organisation. I think they should live by their policies and not discriminate against women. I think British organisations need to become more open-minded and more accommodating, and they will find that their workforce is not just hardworking but highly intelligent and skilled workers. (MM14).

I think you should be on a level playing field. Moreover, I do not believe in having extra or special favours of special categories included in selection processes or whatever. However, it should be a level playing field. So the qualifications should count for

something. Furthermore, the experience should count for something. Furthermore, the more open the selection processes are, the more confidence I think ethnic minority women will have to apply for roles when they know that if they have the qualifications, they have experience, and they have skills needed, they can apply for roles, and they will get those roles rather than it being shrouded in secrecy. And basically, you see people going past you, and you are thinking, well, actually, I am sure I have got more skills than that person (MM12)

Another question was about what organisations ought to do to ensure the inclusion of migrant women into leadership positions, including what can be done to improve the lives of Black African HQHSM women concerning the role that organisations may play in promoting their self-inclusion into leadership positions, i.e., keeping the door fully open. The participants believed there was more that could be done differently; for example, providing targeted reverse mentorship and development initiatives, encouraging prospective migrants, leaders, and native executives to understand each other's subcultures (Trehan, 2007).

Now, that can be extremely challenging because apart from the fact that there is all that bias around your people, we all know that even with black people, even a person like myself, I will trust someone who looks like me to be on my side. So that unconscious bias exists within all of us. However, I think organisations need to do more in terms of having, I mean, we have done a lot of the learning ... we have had all this training, unconscious bias, whatever else, you know, but we are still not changed. The next step is a representation at the top regarding interview panels. Now, because we do not have as many black leaders at the top, and I will keep using Black and Asian, I still think sometimes Asian people have a better chance than Black [people]. However, because we do not have that representation at the top of the senior leadership, you find it very difficult to find people [like us] sitting on those interview panels. However, organisations must train people because you do not have to be a senior staff member to be part of the interview panel. They can pick people, train them in interview skills and all sorts like how to be on the interview panels. Create opportunities and encourage every interview panel to have black and ethnic minority people. That is what organisations need to do ...Obviously, that has to be driven very much by the government. What policies are there? How are they ensuring that this equality agenda is inclusive and that the inclusion agenda is there and we are living it? ...What are you doing to ensure what you are talking about is lived, not just fury on paper and in policies? We need to see that when I walk into an organisation, I can feel right. This is it. They are leaving the values of equality and diversity (SL3).

So I think initially, being open, I think being open and being inclusive, you cannot say that enough. Nevertheless, the question is, how do you do it? So it is good to say, yes, you need to be inclusive. How can they be inclusive? So I think that deliberately seeking out so, if you have a position, deliberately seek out a migrant for it. I do not think there is

anything wrong in putting out a job advert and saying it is for migrants only because, you know, that is why there is a purpose for it. It is not discriminating. Because, for example, I know some positions are out, they say, for men. For example, in nursing, they say men are encouraged to apply if you have a strategy in place, and that is true strategy indicates you need a migrant, and you need this unit. That is part of the strategy. It has been looked at, and it has been ratified that okay. I think that will be a good starting point (MM20).

Theme seven: Migrant women's role in self-inclusion into leadership positions

This theme pulled together narrations of the critical success factors the participants said migrants ought to have if they are to have a chance of progressing into senior leadership positions. It shares the proposals for Black African HQHSM women's successful career advancement and the proposed strategies to assist other women in closing the gap. Fully cognisant that leadership is not for everyone, the women responded to this research and wanted to participate because they were keen to share their experiences on various issues about self-inclusion into leadership. One of the questions asked was if they thought migrant women who have obtained indefinite leave to remain in the UK or citizenship and have the right experience could effectively participate in senior leadership positions in the organisation.

In addition to this broad question, they were also asked to share what they felt were the critical factors involved with achieving the ambition of getting into leadership positions. For the first part of the question, the most common response was a resounding yes, but this quickly moved to a discussion of the system issues discussed in the excerpts below. The additional question about the critical factors yielded the basis for a proposed self-inclusion into the leadership model outlined in the next chapter. Key factors were listed and often repeated, especially for those already in senior leadership positions. The eight recurring transferable skills and emotional intelligence-related keys were listed, yielding strategies for Black African HQHSM women aspiring to climb the public sector career ladder.

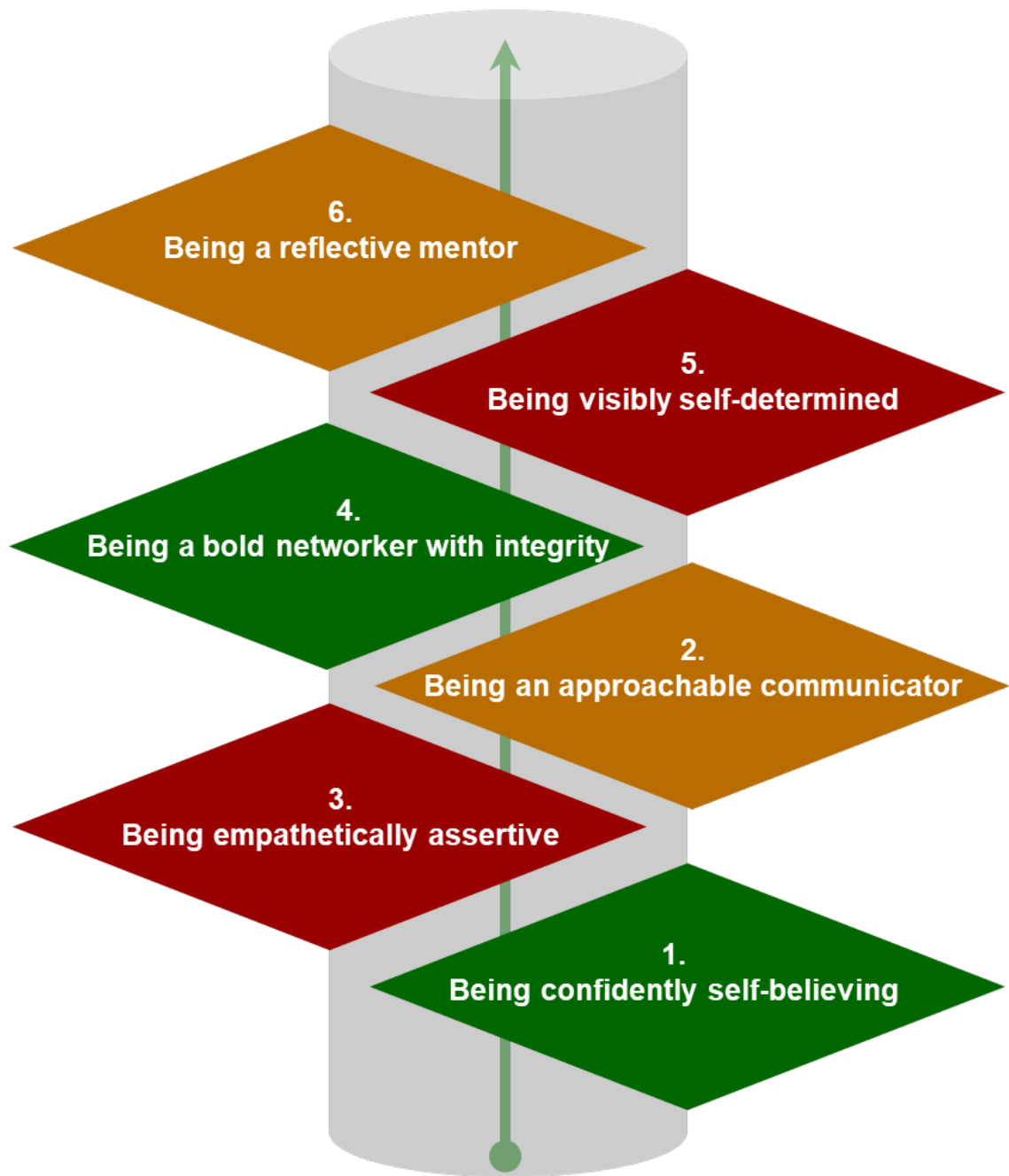


Figure 18: The six-step model for self-inclusion into leadership

Being confidently self-believing: Self-belief (or self-efficacy) refers to a person's confidence in his or her ability to carry out tasks and attain goals. A favourable self-perception increases one's likelihood of success (Bandura, 2002; Hartman and Barber, 2020). Self-belief is a positive, realistic evaluation of oneself and one's talents, faith, and self-confidence. Self-confidence is the degree to which a person believes in oneself; it involves confidence in one's values, talents, knowledge, and skills, and it motivates individuals to

explore their potential, which can result in the achievement of goals and ambitions (Johnson and Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Northouse, 2019). Both self-confidence and self-belief are vital since they affect an individual's lifestyle and choices. A lack of self-confidence drives individuals to consistently undervalue their abilities and settle for less than they deserve. People frequently take whatever life gives because they do not believe they deserve better.

In contrast, a confident individual recognises their worth and value. When individuals with low self-esteem encounter a job opening that corresponds to their credentials, they may decline to pursue it or submit a substandard application because they feel inadequate. Conversely, self-confident individuals are more likely to apply for the position because they believe they are competent. A person who lacks self-confidence may spend their entire life working for low wages and at the mercy of others. Those who believe in themselves will advance in their careers and eventually reach the summit of their respective areas. Consistent with Bandura *et al.* (2001), self-belief and self-confidence directly correlate with a person's career trajectory; people acquire these characteristics from a young age, impacted by factors such as upbringing and gender roles.

According to the existing research, self-confidence is necessary for effective leadership. It is vital for leaders and leads to various job benefits, including the capacity to handle meetings efficiently and confidently, more effective delegating, greater independence, and more frequent promotions and advancements (Sandler, 2014). Therefore, self-confidence is a person's presentation of the self to others, which originates from inside the identity chaos and othering experiences by highly skilled migrants on arrival in their new workplace, and which has the potential to affect both confidence and self-belief. Even if one is confident in their talents, one may lack confidence in themselves due to workplace treatment. Even if others admire their performance, they may have self-doubt. Expressions of confidence are acquired talents conveyed to others to hide insecurities. That is what was mentioned by several participants as the main ingredient for achieving self-inclusion into leadership. Acknowledging that they found themselves in challenging environments, the

women in senior leadership positions attributed some of their success to confidently believing in themselves. See a sample below:

I would say the major one everyone should have as a necessity is self-belief because the system can shatter you completely if you lack confidence. Furthermore, you feel like there is something [wrong you have done] and end up blaming yourself, even if it is not you. So if you have the self-belief and confidence to say I will do this. Where I came from, I was not a failure, so whatever barrier you put in front of me, I will jump over it and jump higher to prove that I can jump right to where you are and past you. Self-belief because it does not matter what somebody else says to you. If you have self-belief, they cannot break you, and you can sit at their table (SL11).

Believe in yourself to say, I can do this, and this is me, and this is how I can do it, not waiting to be invited. I think the culture of waiting to be invited to the table that we are used to backing home, you know, [hinders us]. We were taught that you would only speak when asked to speak and not jump in front of other people to take a position. It is a big barrier because we always think we must wait until people pat us on the back and say, "x, you are doing so well here. This is your next job or promotion. This system is altogether different (SL7).

It would help if you had a lot of self-belief and confidence to go where they think you will not. That I have created for myself Volunteer for things [projects] the migrant woman needs to believe that knowledge is power (SL8).

Being empathetically assertive: Empathy is entering another person's perceptual world without passing judgement and actively communicating this awareness of the other side. It is the capacity to comprehend what other people are thinking and experiencing (Rogers *et al.*, 2000; Rogers, 2003). On the other hand, assertiveness is being self-confident and secure without being aggressive. Without assertiveness, empathy weakens a person's position, while assertiveness without empathy leads to interpersonal conflict and damaged relationships. A prevalent perception of empathy is compassion and receptiveness, whereas assertiveness is viewed as harsh or confrontational as it is equated to speaking out. Empathetic listening is a difficult personal asset that may help you make connections, and calm assertiveness can help you resolve conflicts and encourage others to collaborate. To be a good leader, one must comprehend the other person's situation and converse with them in their language about matters of importance. Therefore, empathy does not require agreement.

Black women are typically seen as aggressive or outspoken; it is even more crucial to combat this stereotype by demonstrating compassion for colleagues when one wishes to be viewed as a leader. Being empathetically assertive does not imply liking or agreeing with the other party. Instead, it necessitates the manifestation of the individual's worldview. This is an example of empathy in action, and individuals who possess it have a greater chance of achieving leadership and other life goals. This dual skill is also crucial for effective communicators, regardless of whether they are traditional leaders.

In my job, for example, you have got to have empathy. As a manager, you have to have empathy and assertiveness as a human being. I think there should be a balance between being empathetic. ...Different situations call for a different kind of leadership, but empathy must still be there (SL10).

Yes, you can [be empathetic and assertive]. I think it depends on how you feel and how comfortable you are. Of course, limitations will be there. That is the energy around you. ... it is just that sometimes you must have that assertiveness to be in that position, especially in this country. Otherwise, you do not get it easy (MM15)

[Being empathetic and assertively making one point] ...My manager said, I know you are happy here, but I think your skills have grown. This job is not for you. It would be best if you started looking for a Band seven job. It is not that I am chasing you, but I want you to progress. So a job came up, a clinical lead, and I went for that job, but I was not given the job. ...my manager was not happy. She went and asked the person who did the interview and said, why didn't you give XX a job? They could not explain why they thought I was not good for that job. ...Then, one day, we had an incident on the unit, and we had a death. I was just about to go home to the ward where they had the dead. I ended up coordinating the whole thing. The clinical lead, who was supposed to be the clinical leader, was the person who was given the job they denied me. He went and hid; we could not find her. I did the debrief. I did everything. So the following day, we had to debrief all the managers.

Moreover, being assertive, I just said, " You know what? It is the same job you did not give me, but I was doing it without pay. So I think when I passed that comment, people started shifting. They started jittering. Where there is a manager's job, [now asking her] can you take that job? Furthermore, I would say, no, you will not give me a job just because I have said something. No, I am not taking a job on a silver plate. It has to be advertised. I refused. So this job came up, and I applied for it and got it (SL4).

Be assertive in what it is you want to achieve, but learn from criticism, take a step back to think maybe there is some element of something for me to learn from some of the criticism ...you also have to be very sure about yourself and the journey that you are taking (SL8)

Being an approachable communicator was seen as akin to possessing good communication skills and was mentioned as critical to building relationships. Being approachable and being able to communicate in the way that ‘they’ (white people) would accept was a part of how approachable the Black woman made themselves; for example, being able to join in office ‘banter’ and extra-curricular activities that the team organised, albeit achieved by picking word very carefully and letting some things go. This skill was one of the challenges that was perceived by the participants. It often made the difference between the women who were in more senior leadership positions, who referred to it as “losing a bit of yourself” (e.g., SL5, SL6, SL9), and those who chose to stay in their lower positions or leave to work for agencies, who instead termed the response as “they want me to go to the pub with them” (e.g., MM1, MM2, MM14”. Here are some of the excerpts related to this strategy.

We met at a virtual event conference, connected, and chatted. Furthermore, here we are, collaborating on something that would not have been possible were it not for us wanting to keep the relationship going without knowing what would come out of it. So approachability is one of those key things that have driven me and showed me that I must keep pushing. It is not the end of the journey (SL2).

Being open about things you want. I think the rapport I have with my superiors is quite frank and open, and I tell them what it is and what is not, and it is, so they tell me things too. Be open to your employers or whoever is managing you say. This is what I am looking at. This is what I am aspiring to achieve (SL7).

The ability to establish a good rapport with the people around you, be a team player and avoid always pulling out the race card thinking this is what it is. It is the reason why I am not getting further. [it is not always the reason] (SL8).

I think that you need to have great communication skills that are important for you to be able to approach and be approachable to people on different levels, those above you, those below you, and those on your side. Yeah, you have those good communication skills (SL10).

Being a bold networker with integrity: Networking was a key to opening up opportunities for the participants, especially if it was done with integrity, and more so for those in leadership positions. The social environment's most significant resource is social support, which is broadly characterised as a complex and multidimensional notion constituted of constructive interactions, perceptions of receiving support, and experiences of being

supported (Hideg and Shen, 2019). Previous research suggests that career assistance is especially important for women to attain top leadership positions because they face greater barriers than men (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Carrim and Nkomo, 2016). Furthermore, women are less likely than men to receive the quality mentoring they require, especially at the highest levels, which limits their ability to be picked for top leadership positions. In addition, evidence suggests that women are much less likely than men to obtain executive sponsorship, a crucial form of mentorship in which mentors go beyond providing feedback and use their influence with senior executives to advocate for the mentee. That said, women with formal mentors were less satisfied with their mentoring and less committed to their jobs than their male counterparts and non-mentored men and women (Showunmi, Atewologun and Bebbington, 2016). It is through social networks that one grows professionally. These could be a mixture of professional networks with fellow migrants and outside one's migrant community (Giulietti, Schluter and Wahba, 2013). The participants recounted the cultural differences in how they, as Black African women, were brought up and taught that education was the key to career progression. However, educational qualifications would only take one so far in England before one has to leverage connections and sponsors. Being a bold networker was one of the key strategies cited as potentially helping someone progress in their career. These networks may or may not be with people from their community, i.e., those Black men and women who have prior experience, or within those other communities; i.e., white people. So, building those networks and being outward venturing was not perceived as being only for personal gain, but also to help others, as most saw networking with integrity as a give-and-take exercise, and keeping one's side of bargains and being sincerely willing to help as crucial to building long term professional relationships, which would be helpful should one need references:

Sincerity in networking is key. That is something that I found critical. As black people, our integrity is questioned every single day. ... Many of my contacts were facilitated by people, you know, from the white British community. So they were lending me their names and reputations. When people say, I will put you in contact with [that person], they say, I am going to be speaking as a sponsor on your behalf to this person of influence. Because I am saying, I can vouch for you. Thus, once somebody does that, I must behave following the expectation that I will deliver whatever it is, I go on to be asked to deliver, or I go on to say I can deliver. Furthermore, if I cannot, I need to make sure that people know why I could not deliver and when I will be able to deliver (SL2).

Be outward-venturing. Perhaps one has to support systems. When I came over here, I think some of the other things that I like to remain current and relevant. So studying networks, ...things like that professional networks, I think, through the different professional networks, in terms of the support structure to be up to date in your profession. Venture out and be bold enough to see what is out there can bring value to what we already have. I have found that sometimes, as migrants, and perhaps not in my case, we can sometimes shy away from venturing out (SL5).

At the CCG where I once worked, I have got one guy who has managed to get me these contracts. Even though I do not work for him anymore, he puts in words for me. He puts it out there even up to now. He sends me a text message [when an opportunity arises], and he says consider this job, or are you looking for an NHS job? I think you should put in an application. So there are a few who will stand by you when they know your integrity (MM9)

You need to have the ability to network and coach others; I think these skills are crucial, especially in terms of delegation, you need. Because the higher you go, the much more demanding the job becomes. However, when you have great coaching skills, it makes your delegation easier, and it makes the workload a little bit easier. As there are so many deadlines, when you can coach others who can take off that load from yourself (SL10).

Being visibly self-determined: Invisibility and hypervisibility have been conceptualised as new sorts of the identity-based labyrinth that undermine positive visibility for marginalised people (Dickens, Womack and Dimes, 2019). The degree to which an individual is regarded and recognised by others is called visibility, which is widely seen as a desirable attribute, particularly when it is under one's own control, such as when obtaining recognition for one's contributions to a successful project (Buchanan and Settles, 2019). Workplace visibility, or being entirely and authentically viewed by others, is critical for individual self-determination, authenticity, and organisational outcomes like devotion and a sense of belonging (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2019). Despite the rising focus in the organisational literature on underrepresented groups' workplace experiences of harassment, discrimination, and identity-based microaggressions, issues about invisibility and hypervisibility have attracted little attention. The relationship between power and visibility is difficult since power is not only dependent on visibility or invisibility. In the moral realm, a fundamental tension between perception and control has emerged (Buchanan and Settles, 2019). Identity shifting also allows highly visible Black women in the workplace to better manage their behaviour in the face of unfavourable colleague evaluation. One example of such shifting includes changing one's appearance, vocabulary, and mannerisms

to undermine the culturally-based expectations associated with their gendered racial identity groupings. Consequently, in primarily white and male-dominated organisations, Black women's leadership aspirations and traditional expectations are predominantly at conflict (Dickens, Womack and Dimes, 2019).

Almost all the participants in this research alluded to the fact that in many African cultures, one has to wait to be invited or given the opportunity, especially women and girls who had to show a level of humility and avoid conflict and visibility as the acceptable state. One of the ways of doing this was giving in, letting things go, and avoiding taking individual credit for successful projects. Coming to a culture where people were so forthright about what they wanted and spoke up against their superiors was challenging; for example, in the workplace, the Black woman would wait to be allocated a project and give in if someone challenged them (not pushing further) or do as they were told, even if they did not like it. Conversely, white counterparts would put themselves forward for the best project without much regard for who else was interested, while equally being very upfront in refusing to take on work they did not want. In a way, because their superiors are used to the latter (white cultures), they would see the Black women as lacking interest and determination to take on more challenging roles. The women in leadership positions saw being daringly determined as a strategy to challenge some of the cultural mindsets:

You have to be daring. You have to decide to do what you want and aim high with the I can attitude. We do not always have good days every day. Some days I feel like pulling my hair out because it has not just gone the way I planned. Nevertheless, it is about pushing, you know, persistently and consistently. Stay focused on what it is we want to achieve. I am just an extremely determined person. I love to achieve, so I push myself. It is my driving force. I know where I want to get. Thus, I think it is self-motivation, and I urge others to do the same (SL10).

Dare to disagree if you must and embrace conflict. You know most of us do not like conflict, but let me explain, if a situation is going to end up in a conflict, we tend to draw back and retreat, leading to frustration. ...Be daring and determined. If you know that what you are fighting for is right, I think you need to be able to fight for it, no matter the consequences. Because I think sometimes, we are very scared about the consequences. We retreat from conflict. However, people should be able to say this is what I want, and I will fight for it. So maybe one example I can give is that Africans, we always work in communities where we were born in large families, so when you eat, you will not eat the

whole food because you have a young sister and whatever, we do not think with individualistic culture tendencies. Ask questions, be out there, and show interest (SL8).

Being a reflective mentor: The challenges Black women face in organisations are well documented in research. These can make one react in a way that will prove certain stereotypes or cause them to fall into the trap of being the one who is seen as aggressive (Kilgore, Kraus and Littleford, 2020). Therefore, developing a reflective mind can assist in making the experiences work to their advantage. Reflection is a metacognitive process that includes intentionally reflecting on even reflective practice (Gardner, 2014; Bassot, 2017). The most important aspect of reflection is diving into an event or experience to learn from it. It is also necessary to be open-minded and to challenge one's attitudes and beliefs. It is good to inquire why and learn via reflection; one must not only think and analyse, but also make judgments about how to enhance one's practices and skills or use new information in the future. For example, identifying an event to reflect on ensures that reflection occurs efficiently. This may be an unpleasant meeting or a rebuke from someone, and the natural impulse is to confront immediately. They then evaluate and observe the problem, imagine a different situation, and alter behaviour to see whether the new way works better. A reflective mindset may help in the interpretation of experiences as well as the creation and reconstruction of one's identity (Winker and Degele, 2011), beginning with exploratory reflection, which examines the experience through the lens of one's thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes. The next step is dialectic reflection, in which the individual seeks evidence from outside sources to help them understand and grasp the experience. Finally, the experience constructs new conceptions and understandings via critical reflection. One of the aims of developing a reflective mindset is to become a reflective leader who uses their experiences to strengthen relationships and widen their approaches to solving new problems. A reflective mentality can help one develop a culture of reflection and reconcile prior unpleasant circumstances, so they do not negatively affect the future (Rubin and Hewstone, 1998). This will help the individual to analyse their current practice in light of new data, potentially relate differently to superiors and subordinates, and learn without getting defensive by reflecting on their behaviour. One may keep control of their career development by reflecting regularly.

Having a positive mindset. I always had my faith, but I never pushed that faith on anybody else. My faith changed my mindset that I could sit and ask whether the glass was half empty or half full. I have always been brought up to fight my history. ... I have always been told that I did not belong in spaces. Thus, my life has always been about fighting for space and saying I belong. You know, I am good enough to be in space.

Moreover, because I was always like that, my mindset was always, I can do it, rather than all the stories of how many people had been turned down and how many people had failed, and my mindset was always if this is my job, and this job has got my name on it. I have got to do it. I never shied away from so the first ever roll that I did (SL5)

[Mindset] It has helped me build confidence and think through different ways of thinking through reflection. I think it is building people; we need to build each other to that level where we can deal with things. So that, for example, the thing about being selfish, I think that came from my coaching to say, you know, it is about not selfish in a bad way, but it is about thinking about what is best for you and getting it without thinking about everyone else (SL4).

Mentoring Junior members of staff. ...sometimes mentoring, there are all these soft things that we do not think about, you know, things around reporting to work, being on time, you know, or the sickness and all sorts and ensuring that whatever it is you do, always you do things to the best of your ability, it helps you grow (SL3)

Mentor others. I think you have to lead by example. So it would help if you were the mentor to your team members people you work with. I think I probably consistently mentor others. (SL10).

Another thing that has been very important to my progression, and I could not emphasise this enough: is that I mentor young people and tell them this all the time. Mentorship, oh my goodness, mentorship has worked wonders for me ... the reason I like different perspectives [on mentoring] is that I can benefit myself because it has benefited me and will continue to benefit me. Nevertheless, I proactively mentor young people, exclusively black people and immigrants, on how to think differently. Because a lot of what happens is our young people come from, you know, to this country, and they find people who tell them it is so hard, it is so difficult. You will never make it. ...But I feel like I aim to give a different perspective of that, not to make young people already afraid of the system, you know, we want to bring them a different personality, I want to show them a different way that you can do it. Nevertheless, you have got to think differently. Furthermore, this is what I have learned [about mentoring others and being mentored] (MM3).

5.7. Chapter Summary

According to the findings in this chapter, the participants prioritised their family's well-being before their own. This is connected to the level of living and feeling of community as reported by interviewees; i.e., access to appropriate housing, electricity, water, education,

and transportation, as well as the ability to financially support the family (nuclear and extended) in their place of origin. Providing for one's family and ensuring their well-being by improving their social conditions' was considered important in the Black African HQHSM women, who voiced that they are here to serve their immediate family and are deeply rooted in the socio-economic context of cultural values. The desire and need to give to one's family, clan, and others motivated the urge to excel in school and work and earn more money, even at the expense of official leadership duties.

The necessity to provide for one's family is a strong motivator for job progress. Thus, earning a living and obtaining many degrees are seen as needs, but achieving status in a highly hierarchical organisation is crucial. Professional and personal achievement is often viewed as a method to gain respect, provide a "better life" for one's family, and contribute to the national or communal progress of one's country. The participants believed knowledge, technical and linguistic abilities, network exposure, senior leadership teams, and white male mentors were necessary for organisational progression. Narratives also stated that foreign living experiences (for education or employment) should be considered relevant. For some individuals, living in the UK was imposed as part of a wider family move and for the sake of their children's future; for others, it was a compelling chance for a better life.

This chapter has comprised the findings from the interviews; it began with an introduction and an outline of the themes that comprise the focus of the women's experiences. Before moving to a more specific focus, I discussed how I represented participants' voices and my reflexivity, and I then proceeded into the demographics in 5.3. I covered the social identity and self-categorisation theories, breaking them down into Theme one: Social identity and Theme two: Self-categorisation. In 5.4., I detailed the findings around Theme three: Identity meaning making and reconstruction, Theme four: Intersecting identities, and Theme five: Identity reconstruction. The chapter concluded with the identification of an overarching theme. It addressed the changes that the participants thought needed to happen at organisational and policy levels (Theme six) and the role of migrant women in self-inclusion into leadership roles in 5.5, which also identified Theme seven and the co-construction of

a recommended future model. The discussion and details of the proposed model are presented in the following chapter.

6. Discussion

6.1. Chapter overview

The purpose of this chapter is to present the conceptual interpretation of the study's findings. It analyses and reflects on the key findings outlined in the thematic analysis linked to the social identity and self-categorisation theories (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Turner *et al.*, 1987; Hogg, 2021), often referred to as the Social Identity Approach (SIA). SIA was applied together with **Personal Identity Theory (PIT)**, which posits that identity and identification are the fundamental constructs of the psychological self and focus on individual values and ambitions over group belongingness, which is SIA's emphasis (Stets and Burke, 2000; Hitlin, 2003; Burke, 2007). In addition to the theories above, **intersectionality** was applied as the fusing concept. Integrating SIT, SCT, and PIT, fused with intersectionality, offers a detailed discussion of the relevant literature and the semi-structured interviews. This analysis provided a more holistic view of how Black African HQHSM women at the intersection of multiple identities narrate their lived experiences, navigate their early years in England and professional relationships in the organisations in which they work, and integrating within the communities in which they found themselves upon arrival. The analysis also reveals how they navigated the challenges in reconstructing their identities, describing the impact these had on their career mobility aspirations and eventual career trajectories.

The research aims to contribute to the understanding of experiences of Black African HQHSM women in Leadership and Organisation Studies (LOS), thereby mainstreaming and raising the salience of a group that is seldom discussed in LOS (Nkomo, 1992; Nkomo and Al Ariss, 2014; Opara, Sealy and Ryan, 2020). Such topics are often consigned to feminist and racial domains and this research aims to underscore the voices of the Black African HQHSM women who contribute immensely to the organisations to which they are recruited, yet whose career progression is seldom encouraged in organisational leadership, business management, and human resources research (Moradi and Grzanka, 2017; Jones, Martinez Dy and Vershinina, 2019; Nash, 2019). It also calls for further research that could compare the longer-term impact of the experiences of highly skilled migrant staff, which is

highly dependent on in the UK taking steps to solve the retention and attrition crisis in some public sector organisations (Buchan *et al.*, 2019; Palmer *et al.*, 2021; Oliver, 2022; UK Migration Advisory Committee, 2022). In addition, it sheds light on how researchers and practitioners could pay better attention to the HQHSM women they recruit if they are to reduce the attrition of international staff in public sector organisations, an area often overlooked in research. This research study, in some part, draws attention to issues of culture, power relations, and personal acceptance, which are examined through the identity theory lens fused with intersectionality. The literature review in chapter two revealed several themes, including the following:

It highlighted and provided evidence that the UK and other OECD countries, through their immigration systems, explicitly open up their borders for highly skilled professionals from other countries, especially the Global South. Still, they fall short of ensuring that the right policies are in place to protect the migrants once they arrive in the host countries (Iredale, 2005; Home Office Research and Analysis, 2014; OECD, 2014; O'neil, Fleury and Foresti, 2016; Buchan *et al.*, 2019). The research reveals the participants' experience of being deskilled, which is supported by the findings of various researchers (e.g., Demireva, 2011; Aure, 2013; Demireva and Fellini, 2018; Zwysen and Demireva, 2018a; Niraula and Valentin, 2019; Ricci, Crivellaro and Bolzani, 2021) The deskilling of highly skilled migrants signifies the failure to adequately recognise their qualifications and work experience. The study found that there was no visibly available way of monitoring the well-being or trajectories of HQHSMs in the UK. Furthermore, there were no proper systems for assimilation and integration, which often left the HQHSMs at the mercy of their recruiters, potentially leaving the migrants, especially women, vulnerable to exploitation (Aure, 2013; Leslie, Flaherty and Dahm, 2017; Khattab, Johnston and Manley, 2018).

LOS research explores the salient broader, pan-ethnic, single, or even dual communities, avoiding hidden microcosmic identities altogether. As Ashforth and colleagues contended, LOS researchers who faced the challenge of studying marginalised communities often "sensed the conceptual and empirical confusion between their commitment and identification. They thus tended to opt for the tidier and safer path of wearing disciplinary blinkers" (Ashforth, Harrison and Corley, 2008, p. 334). In other words, researchers have

found it easier to group minorities into the more salient pan-ethnic, BAME or BME labels than to dig deeper into the minorities within these minority communities.

This study goes beyond the salient communities in this research and examines Black African HQHSM women. It aims to amplify the encounters of the Black African HQHSM women interviewed, delving into how they challenge the structures and ideologies within the systems where they found themselves as obscure, yet critical members of staff in public sector organisations in England. This level of depth required combining multiple theories; i.e., identity theories (SIA and PIT), then considering the multiple complexities in the experiences and identities rather than considering the theories in silos. Intersectionality was employed as a fusing concept to offer a holistic examination and exploration of their lived experiences. Ultimately, a gap in understanding the trajectories of a migrant's career aspirations was identified. This was narrowed down for this PhD to focus on this group, often found at the bottom of ethnic hierarchies despite having high qualifications (Hagendoorn, 1993b; Snellman and Ekehammar, 2005; Zwysen and Demireva, 2018a). A recap of the research question follows.

Research question

How do Black African Highly Skilled, Highly Qualified Migrant women's lived experiences shape their identities and the likelihood of seeking leadership positions in public sector organisations in England?

This chapter is structured similarly to the theoretical framework and the findings chapter. It begins with the Social Identity Approach themes (one and two), and is then followed by the Personal Identity Theory (PIT) themes (three, four and five). Intersectionality, which has been critical to understanding the complex lives of the participants, is discussed within this theme, although a cautious approach is taken to view these themes not as a linear process, but as intersecting in some respects. Therefore, conscious of its centrality to this research, intersectionality is also discussed in most other themes where the discussion required that it be mentioned or applied to strengthen the analysis. The final part of this chapter takes the format of the co-construction of the ideal future state, encompassing themes six and seven. It offers an analysis of changes at the organisational and policy levels,

and the role these migrant women could play to push themselves and engage in self-inclusion into leadership positions. To best illustrate the journey as narrated by the participant and to aid the discussion, an analytical model is introduced to illustrate the three pivotal place-based spheres of post-migration identities and career trajectories from the recollections and reckonings after arrival in England, as discussed below.

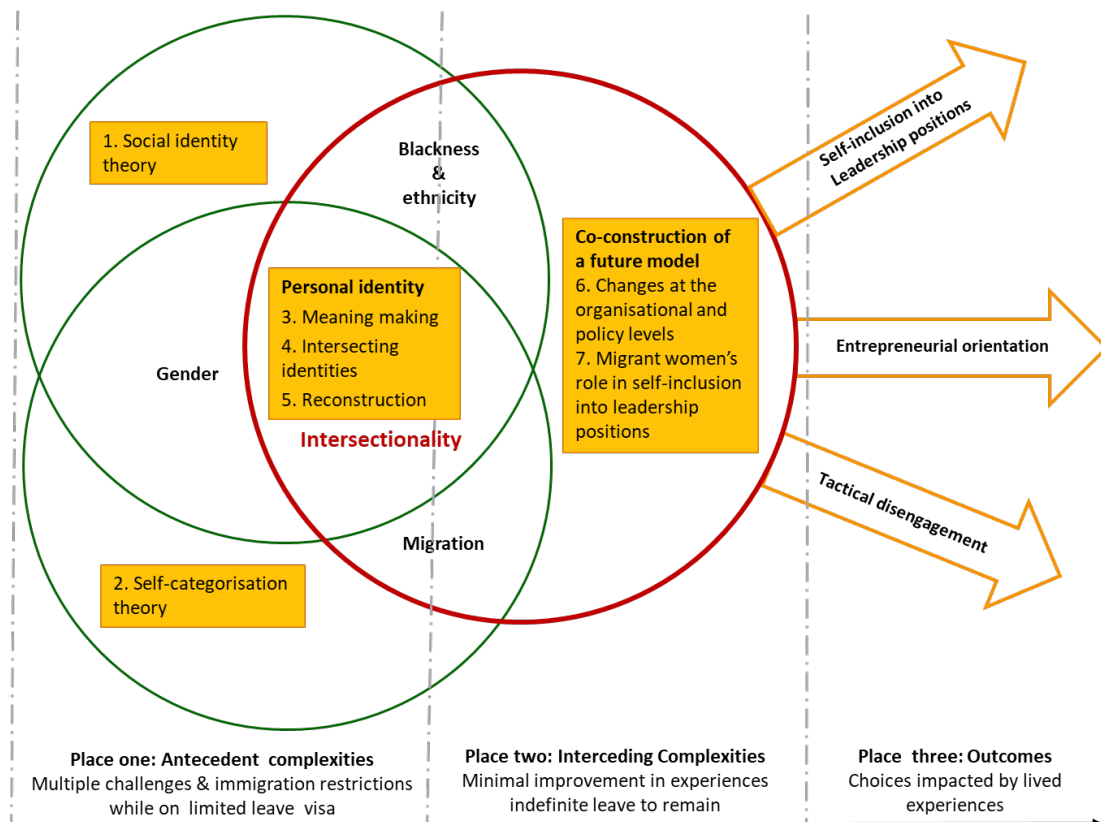


Figure 19: The three ingress intersecting spheres model of post-migration career trajectories

The participants’ narrations of their journeys through time and place were somewhat similar to those described in Atewologun (2011) and Atewologun, Sealy and Vinnicombe (2016). It proves that there the participants experienced struggles in terms of to the messy meaning-making processes involved in activating the provisional self/selves that were made salient in spaces, juxtaposed with the level of privilege and disadvantage present in having a job and the legal right to be in the country, compared with other types of migrants;

e.g., asylum seekers and dependants. The disadvantage, in this case, is the discrimination and othering, over which they had no control.

It is worth reiterating the leanings of interpretivist epistemological and constructivist ontological standpoints in this analysis, centring around how the participants constructed their realities in the practices that kept them acting in certain ways in order to navigate their way through the challenges (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2018; Dean, 2018). Furthermore, the study allows for the exploration of a co-constructed future; one that would work better for them and the organisations in which they were employed at the time of interview. The observation and arguments in this study in previous research; for example, Vershinina and Cruz (2021), argue that being a migrant, gendered subject, or part of a complicated diaspora can reveal confusing knowledge and reality crossings. To hear respondents' perspectives, researchers must recognise and reflect on their subjectivities concerning migration and marginalisation. Another angle is that of belonging to the superdiversity group, which brings opportunities and, at the same time, challenges which research struggles to uncover or understand (Blackledge and Trehan, 2018). The researchers challenge and stress the importance of those who investigated members of the same migratory group to consider personal, relational, and institutional risks and duties. These and other researchers continue pushing for more ethnic minority researchers to remain authentic to their routes and subjectivities. Here, reflexivity and reflections have helped me to remain objective In order to help unearth some of the hidden microcosmic idiosyncrasies which serve to hinder the detailed understanding of subjects who are often obscured by layers of pan-ethnic and super-diversity inclinations (Aspinall, 2002; Blackledge and Trehan, 2018; Trehan, 2022). This research is a small but important contribution towards amplifying the voices of Black African HQHSM women as valuable contributors the UK public sector workforce. The aim is to use their personal experiences as a starting point for future academic work and a growing body of research that criticises studies that dismiss their lived experiences as not portraying the multi-dimensional complexity that comes with researching migrant communities in the global north (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011; Okpokiri, 2017b; Atewologun, 2018).

Vershinina and Cruz (2021) add that respecting migrant populations before, during, and after research initiatives builds trust between the researcher and respondent, again asserting that without our reflexivity and understanding of our subjectivities and positionality as migrants, men, women and scholars, the perceived role of migrants may have gone unchallenged, and changing our methodological posture is vital. Considering these arguments, the chosen paradigm allowed me to be a reflexive researcher, aware of and often questioning my subjectivities as a way of respecting the participants' voices and sometimes challenging cultural norms, with a central focus on uncovering knowledge in their personal and social practices (Denzin and Lincoln, 2007, 2018; Creswell, 2009; Bryman and Bell, 2015; Creswell and Poth, 2017; Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Silverman, 2017). This stance ensured that the interviews brought forward their views on ways to act towards mutuality between the respondents and the employers. Aligning the applications in this research tradition, it was critical through this study to seek a deeper understanding of the process of identity meaning-making based on individual participant's self-concept, as well as being members of the social groups ascribed to them and how they categorised themselves with the roles they played as group members. The analysis of SIA follows.

6.2. Social Identity Approach (SIT and SCT)

As discussed in chapter two, **identity theory** was employed as the theoretical lens in this research. This section focus on the **Social Identity Approach (SIA)**, which incorporates **Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT)**, two distinct theories that complement each other in illustrating the identity and intergroup and intragroup relationships (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Turner *et al.*, 1987). The illustration in 6.1 shows three intersecting spheres (two green circles in the first instance, representing the early stages after arrival). These demonstrate the interconnectedness and messiness of the intersectionality inhabited by the participants.

Furthermore, there was more strength in unifying the theories in this research to fully cover the complexities and juxtapositions that the participants in this study faced. Examining one without the other would risk providing only part of the picture. Similarly, using only the overarching term (identity theory) would miss the chance to examine the nuances found in

each theory. The aim here is to bring to the readers' attention to another angle from which to view the journeys of HQHSMs, with some clarity, as a group whose experiences seem obscure to the service users who only saw (in the participants' words) them as people who came to steal their jobs and people who, from the onset, were grouped by the systems they joined. These theories have been widely used in research into outgroup-ingroup relations in organisations, and the power relations at play when researching women with intersecting identities.

This research explores what happens as Black African HQHSM women form new identities and networks once they have moved to the UK (for this study, England). The participants in this study all worked in public sector organisations in England at the time of the interviews. Most participants were actively recruited to help fill the gaps in key services faced. They joined public sector organisations, mostly in healthcare and social care. This research focusses on how their identity was tested, and explores their journeys and career trajectories, specifically in these public sector organisations, which are bureaucracies with varying cultures and structures (UK Department for Business, 2010; Stokes, 2011). This supports Hogg and Terry's (2000, p. 121) declaration that "organisations are internally structured groups located in complex networks of intergroup relations. They are characterised by power, status, and prestige differentials. ...People derive parts of their identity and sense of self from the organisations or workgroups to which they belonged". The newly arrived women brought their own cultures to find themselves assuming identities that were different from the norm in their countries of origin. Thus, they derived their descriptive characteristics from others who were experiencing similar treatment through likening themselves to those in their group as identification.

Identity and identification have been viewed as root constructs of organisational behaviour (Brewer, 1991; Buchanan and Settles, 2019). **Identity** has generally been defined as "the self-referential description that provides contextually appropriate necessary answers to the question 'who are we?' (Group membership and one's role therein), or 'who am I?' (personal) and "how should I act?" [based on the environment and how people should see me in SIA and 'personal ambition' in PIT, which is discussed separately] (Alvesson, Ashcraft and Thomas, 2008; Ashforth, Harrison and Corley, 2008). **Identification**,

meanwhile, has been broadly defined as associating something or someone with a perception of belongingness. For example, Ashforth and Mael (1989, p. 21) defined identification as “viewing a collective or role as defining essence as self-defining; thus, the perception of one is some human aggregate”. The critical components to identification are, cognitively, the sense of awareness and membership or individuality, and evaluative; i.e., the understanding of the undertones and emotional investment in the attention and application of these components (Turner, Brown and Tajfel, 1979; Platow, McClintock and Liebrand, 1990; Stryker and Burke, 2000; Ashforth, Harrison and Corley, 2008). In addition, these scholars argue that identification is a critical construct in organisational studies in terms of understanding group memberships and intergroup congruity, loyalty, and commitment.

As discussed at various points in this thesis, the inescapable overlap in these two theories has ultimately led to them being labelled the social identity approach. SIT and SCT scholars contended that “Stereotypes have a social function, in the sense that they help explain the social world and legitimise the past and current actions of the ingroup. In other words, stereotyping is a meaning-seeking process wrapped up in the sociohistorical context and argues that the content of stereotypes is dependent on the structural relationships between groups concerning status and competition” (Hornsey, 2008, p. 209). Proponents assert that people often evaluate their group using acceptable outgroups. Thus, a positive self-concept may promote intergroup competition, and people liken themselves to intragroup members, to present a favourable self-image. However, comparing groups potentially creates psychological realities underpinned by intergroup differentiation, which could lessen and weaken outgroup power and opportunities. While the research found that the participants formed their groups based on the origins, there were more complex, interlacing factors that kept certain groups together and not others. For example, several participants narrated their experience of clicking with certain people based on attitude, country of origin and native language. At the same time, these attributes served for some as a reason to move themselves away from the communities and build new ties, which they found more helpful for learning the ‘way things work in England’ and leveraging opportunities.

The research also found that to some extent, the assertions based on SIA were problematic because of the expectation that people in a socially ascribed low-status group have to like their groups, suggesting a level of choice to being part of the group when the reality is the opposite. The participants, in many cases, said they had no choice because the identities ascribed to them often meant they were pushed towards the group by external forces and circumstances, rather than by active choice. Regarding social identity, gender was the most prominent construct the participants carried from their countries of origin, and probably the only salient construct growing up. However, upon arrival, Blackness, ethnicity, and migration became prominent labels. These were ascribed, strictly speaking, by the authorities in the UK. The participants argued that had no say or choice in being socially identified as Black and migrants. Therefore, whether or not they agreed, it was not a choice they had. The women moved to the UK to join organisations and cultures about which they knew little, but they soon realised they were different. Some participants alluded to having left their origin country as individuals, but quickly learning that other people grouped with them and faced similar predicaments once they entered the country and the employing organisations. They entered the system having already been ascribed labels and groups (e.g., international staff, ethnic minority, Black, or any other names used to separate them from the natives). They realised they were viewed as different and inferior from the onset, thus being out-grouped and marking the beginning of the group formations. This supports the underpinning notion of social identity theory introduced in chapter two, which declares that group membership and the role one plays occur regardless of whether the group is assumed or socially ascribed. It also demonstrates that people come together or are grouped by others because they hold common attributes ('us', 'we', 'ingroup') and exist psychologically, compared with other relatable groups ('them', 'they,' 'outgroup'). It corroborates the assertion that people within their groups are more likely to place the group's interests more highly than those with similar interests, and their identified group's status and power levels. It also found that intergroup behaviour is regulated by people's abilities to criticise and recognise alternatives to the status quo. In this case, the participants found themselves initially powerless as the system was now calling the shots.

All these experiences have a significant influence on group formations and social identities. At moments in this environment, the participants' self-identity was triggered, prompting them to evaluate their identity and pose questions such as "who are we?" and "who am I"? These mental moments of identification push individual identities to become more salient, for example, in the early years. The antecedent complexities include multiple challenges, mainly determined by external factors such as immigration restrictions. At the same time, on limited leave visas, the institutional racism and othering within the broader system in the organisations and groupings in which they found themselves, resulted in a feeling of being pushed out of the ingroups by whites and other colleagues who viewed them differently (Wilcock, 2019). The longer the person lived in this place (England, but also the mental space in the identity process), the more they began reconstructing their intermediate selves over varying lengths of time, before beginning to test various aspects of their professional identities. For instance, the respondents highlighted their work experience and proved their doubters wrong by acquiring additional UK qualifications to compensate for the lack of recognition of their credentials in England, yet the ingroup favouritism and segregation of power relations and intergroup conflict within organisations did not cease. Instead, the participants learned how to navigate them.

The experiences recounted by the participants further support the assertions by social identity theorists that group members must to work to regain social standing, implying an essentialist ideology of forced fairness (Platow, McClintock and Liebrand, 1990). Hogg (2001) states that the options that group members include if group congruence is no longer representative for them, include leaving the group (physically or psychologically), creating flattering downward intergroup comparisons, focusing on ingroup-positive qualities, discounting ingroup-negative dimensions, and societal transformation to reverse the status hierarchy. The inequality differentials varied in the reporting in the interviews, but the general themes suggested that the women found themselves allocated to groups based on perceived group borders in the places where they were employed or had settled, whereas the white people did not seem to have the same predicament.

SIA's intergroup and intragroup dynamics could be argued as being discriminatory, as some white people in the organisations felt their jobs, cultures and space were threatened when

migrants joined the organisation, as reported by Perreault and Bourhis (1998), who reason that high levels of diversity could potentially mean increased groupings, leading to high levels of disunity amongst colleagues and some superiors who refuse to see the benefits that the migrants bring to the country, and the local communities. Therefore, the difference (race, skin colour, gender, and migrant status) as a minority becomes juxtaposed as discernible by the broader communities, heightening the competitiveness of the more salient ingroup members, leading to social closure (e.g., Weeden, 2002; Schulz, 2019; Naylor, 2021). Social closure has been referred to as the 'politics' of drawing boundaries, which is often implicit in the modern organisation as people construct and maintain monopolies of scarce resources and positions in the higher echelons of the organisation (or ingroup), consequently hampering the potential benefits in participation in leadership and remuneration for the outgroups (Naylor, 2021).

The first two themes relate to social identity and categorisation (social and self) in the early stages after migration, and the impact that these attributions and experiences have on the way the participants saw themselves and how they coped with the challenges they experienced in the new environments. The participants' experiences were in part exacerbated as, being Black Africans who were also migrants, they found themselves at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchies despite having higher qualifications and coming with the expectations of being headhunted by recruiters from the UK, a situation which came with prestige in their countries of origin (Duncan and Waldorf, 2010). The negative press related to migrants was reported as being challenging for the HQHSM women who, before migrating, viewed themselves as sought-after professionals only to be caught up in the unanticipated negative and hostile intergroup wars (Rubin and Hewstone, 2004).

This research found that the participants' lived experiences were fraught with multiple, often intersecting challenges. These challenges often began on arrival in the country on were processed through the immigration system at the airport. Some participants described their treatment as being viewed with suspicion. They described being asked to choose their ethnicity and being pulled aside for questioning as the first time they had been made to realise they were different. This continued when they arrived in their new workplace or agency to look for employment and, notably, this treatment did not differ for

those who arrived on the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP) or those who joined family members who were already in England. Some participants described feelings of disheartenment and humiliation at being told they did not qualify for jobs that were deemed lower than those they had had in the country of origin, based on not having UK working experience. They argued that the reasons were discriminatory and dehumanising considering their qualifications, and that they felt they could perform in the jobs 'with their eyes closed'. All participants recalled being looked down on by white colleagues within their organisations and being questioned about their understanding of English. However, they all said they had spoken English since childhood and went through the Cambridge English curriculum in their countries, referring to the curriculum that the white people left in their countries (post-colonial) which, in many cases, is still in use in the educational curricula. They also made jokes about these experiences which, in their minds, were misplaced as they spoke better English than some of the natives (alluding to the "Queen's or Cambridge standard English" based on the 'colonial masters' curriculum).

These experiences can be viewed as the colleagues in the organisations either implicitly or explicitly being engaged in social comparison, as per Tajfel and colleagues' assertions of intergroup bias and ingroup favouritism (Tajfel, 1974, 1979; Turner, Brown and Tajfel, 1979), as they viewed the newly arrived migrants as having lower status and being inferior to themselves. Tajfel, Brown and Turner described the following:

Ingroup favouritism is the propensity to favour the ingroup over the outgroup in terms of behaviour, attitudes, or perception, and ingroup prejudice is favouritism that exceeds objective requirements or evidence and is unjust or unjustified. The latter word requires a value evaluation and is contingent on a consensus (or an experimenter's) perception of objective needs or proof. It refers to a differential or discriminating intergroup behaviour that is neither immediately beneficial to ingroup members nor instrumental to the desired result and to differential intergroup perceptions and assessments that lack a veridical foundation (Turner, Brown and Tajfel, 1979, pp. 187–8).

For these participants, much as they had found themselves in the outgroup compared to their white colleagues, they accentuated the positive attributes of their group against the other groups (e.g., white people, men) by categorising those groups' weaknesses as 'lazy', 'they would not do without us' and, in some cases, 'racist'. My interpretation of the white group's behaviours and actions is that they are mainly fuelled by prejudices derived from

the negative press surrounding migrants in the media and politics, along with favouritism of their kind, derived from long-standing remnants of colonialism and self-interest (Kessler, 2001; Smith and Nkomo, 2003; Nkomo and Al Ariss, 2014; Gerber *et al.*, 2017). In so doing, they assume untested superiority over these new arrivals.

In the accounts shared by the participants in their interviews, it can be concluded that they built their professional identities over time, supported by education and location. Once they moved from their country of origin and 'culture', aspects of these identities potentially evolved, depending on factors and experiences in those environments, the roles they performed in the groups to which they belonged, and the salience of the organisations in which they worked (Platow, Grace and Smithson, 2012; Trepte and Loy, 2017). Depending on the situations they found themselves in, and how they were treated, some refused to view themselves as victims; for example, MM17, who shared these emotional, reflective sentiments:

Um, I think I have been somewhat naive. I have grown up in a place whereby, you know, if you work hard, you get there. Furthermore, regardless of colour, race, or immigration status, in a sense, I have never thought about, like, myself being an immigrant. I always thought to try and at least give it a try and apply for even posts where everybody within my immigration demographic will tell me, like, you will not get it. Moreover, I will be like. I can get it, you know, watch me. ...And yeah, they will watch me.

Furthermore, I will say, no, I did not get it. ...they say there was a better candidate or somebody performed better. [Reflecting] Um, because I refused to bring myself to be a victim, to acknowledge the fact that actually sort of kind of this institutional [could not utter the word racism], or that glass ceiling is there, I kind of refuse that because I feel I deserve to be there (MM17).

These feelings of uncertainty, discomfort and difference coupled with the challenges, support Rigg and Trehan (1999), who shared the experiences of several Black women on critical management programmes, which left some feeling disempowered as they experienced the effects of habitus. They contend that in spaces where Black women do not predominate, their presence and efforts may be perceived negatively, as unsatisfactory or deficient. Stereotypes of Black women in England, along with the pressure on women to conform or reject these categorically, leaves little room for identity congruity bargaining. While all the participants felt they were treated negatively institutionally, the extent to

which these experiences affected their career progression in England seemed to differ between those who progressed into leadership positions or who are still pushing themselves to climb the ladder, and those who decided at some point to re-strategise and focus on making money as described above. Often, this resulted in them leaving their permanent job and going back to agency or bank work (entrepreneur mindset); or staying within the organisation but mentally deciding to stop putting themselves through the emotional stress of being turned down for higher banded positions; in other words, emotionally checking out and disconnecting from the organisation:

...I was working for a health organisation [full-time permanent]. Nevertheless, because I had paid my way through, it was like my qualifications were not recognised, and I got tired. I applied for so many jobs, but there was always a but... I got to the point where I thought I had applied for these jobs, and I have done ABCD, and it is like it always ends up being the same thing, rejection (MM15).

MM15 stopped trying to get a higher position; instead, she resigned and became self-employed, contracted through agencies to work in the same organisation, earning a higher income at the same lower position. For her and others who chose this route, they decided they did not fit into the organisations because of their race and other intersecting identities. They narrated that there were more people to compete against, who had higher chances of promotion, citing their skin colour, accents, and the fact they were migrants as major reasons they felt they were being rejected or not being seen as leadership material, but it was difficult to pinpoint one or the other. This supported Crenshaw (1989, 1991)'s argument that, frequently, Black women feel prejudice as Black women, not as a combination of discrimination based on race and gender, as the lives of Black women are far more complex than the broad categories supplied by discriminatory expressions. However, the persistent insistence that Black women's challenges be sifted through categorical classifications that hide actual realities ensured that their needs are seldom met. This research found that despite facing discrimination and challenges, the participants found a way of gaining the upper hand, even if that meant their careers stagnated, and they took a route that helped them. This group decided they did not need to keep pushing a system that did not see them or their worth. Instead, they took another way to gain their

competitive advantage (Demireva, 2011, 2019; Vershinina and Rodgers, 2020; Vershinina and Cruz, 2021).

In a way, those who progressed to leadership positions seemed to have expected the negative treatment and were more mentally prepared to start at the bottom and work their way up without losing their sense of direction. For instance, SL5 narrated how she anticipated that her experience gained in her country of origin might account for nothing in England. As such, she was willing to take a lower job and soon proved herself as recounted here:

Moving over here was a very difficult decision to make from a career perspective. ...I had told myself that no matter what happened, I would try and get an office job. Because I had heard so many stories of people moving over here and changing their career paths. ... it was a very junior role. So here I was, as head of a function head of a unit in the financial services sector, quite well established [in the country of origin] ...the role that I was being put forward for [in England] was an administrative role. I have over 15 years of work experience in various industries in various [senior roles] operational positions. I felt, perhaps, ...that part of my career did not account for anything. Because insofar as the UK standard is concerned, coming into this environment, I did not know to what extent people would go to validate your employment history from another country. That is why I decided to take the opportunity because I felt that if I did not take it, I would be forced to move in a different direction. Within a year, I was promoted to a manager position. Again, I was promoted to a senior manager position, putting their risk and governance structure in place. ...I felt that I would prove myself because I took a chance to dip down with my experience. (SL5).

Accordingly, two very different accounts of the approach led to different outcomes, but they seemed to have paid dividends for both groups, depending on what was important to them. The notion in various literature that there is no 'one size fits all' in how groups form, and how people behave and their outcomes, was exemplified in this research. The participants defined themselves in many ways; for example, as professionals where they came from, as employees of the organisations they joined, and as outsiders compared with their other colleagues (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). It could be argued that they acted in a way that is comparable to symbolic interactionism, which feeds into identity theory (Stryker, 1968; Stryker and Serpe, 1982). This theme demonstrates that these Black African HQHSM women face multiple jeopardies; they carry further complexity as first-generation migrants who arrived in the country as adults (King, 2014; Nash, 2019). Therefore, the

outcome was that they learned to navigate various racialised and gendered aspects of their personal and professional lives. According to the participants, these challenges (e.g., racism and discrimination) were not prevalent in their countries of birth. Therefore, they learned to deal with them by joining forces with those who have equally relegated the outgroups and tried to make the best of the place they now occupy.

This research explores what happens as Black African HQHSM women form new identities and networks once they move to the UK. The SCT part of SIA goes a long way towards exploring the intragroup processes (Turner and Oakes, 1986a); in other words, SCT is more focussed on the group dynamic within the groups (intragroup). In the second theme, the women recounted their experiences as they lived in the new environment for longer, started learning about the life there, and became more familiar with their new place. In this mental place, they started seeing a clear route for themselves as individuals, even though they still identified as part of the migrant population. The sentiments shared by the women here related to comparing themselves to the others in their population, highlighting how they gravitated toward those with a similar mindset; in many cases, a mindset of growth.

The participants demonstrated a clear awareness of their position and resilience and narrated how their identities and self-identification shifted and was reconstructed as they engaged in meaning-making. Their mindset shifted at different stages and revealed itself in three significant ways, as follows:

1. Response to their new and changing environment, denoting their originally built identities as highly skilled professionals in their home countries.
2. Constructing and re-constructing new identities that made their race, ethnicity, gender, and migrant status salient categories by which they were both explicitly and implicitly judged within the public sector organisations.
3. Juxtaposing the 'external work' and 'internal meaning-making' through the process. Ultimately, the struggle between group congruence and self-concept influenced how they affirmatively responded and categorised themselves professionally.

The participants found themselves assuming contradictory transient identities in the face of the challenges posed by their new environment and shifting immigration status (Leung, 2017). There was an emphasis on the terms re-constructing, re-socialisation, and re-categorisation, as the participants evidently referred to how the ascribed social identities, which began on arrival at the point of entry, forced the women into accepting their difference and adopting the work of meaning-making and reconstruction as they found familiarity within their new environments.

Cinoğlu and Arikan (2012), citing (McCall and Simmons, 1978), proposed differentiating the different hierarchical aspects of identity based on “(1) The degree of support that self is receiving from others to shape their identity, (2) the degree of self’s commitments to the identity that they accept and is given by the structure, and (3) the degree of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards that the structure gives them and other identities submitting to their norms and accepting their supremacy over their ‘internal’ identity formation process” (Cinoğlu and Arikan, 2012, p. 1119). The challenge for this research was the lack of support for discourse concerning how identity was explained in much of the pre-existing research. There appeared to be a gap in considering the lack of understanding of the process by which Black African HQHSM women and (men) dealt with the intergroup relations they find themselves in, the lack of sponsorship and affiliation in the identity reconstruction process, and the messiness of the process itself. Ultimately, this impacted the women’s career trajectories as they grew within or exited the organisations.

Intersectionality

Regarding intersectionality and race-related outgroup othering patterns, the participants described the native populations in the workplace (the ingroup) as being different and favouring members of their race. Several participants expressed these narrations and declared it disheartening that they did not get fair treatment in the workplace because of their colour. For example, some participants narrated that they found that when new staff (whites) graduated and joined their organisation, they (Black women) trained them, but within a short time, those white employees progressed to higher positions in the organisation while the Black women were given excuses as to why they could not be

promoted. These experiences potentially occurred with other minorities, but the difference, as narrated by the participants, was that if there was a job advertised, there were higher chances that the white British candidate would get it, followed by other whites, Asians, Arabs, and other lighter skinned people before they would be considered; and, additionally those Black people who had lived in the UK for longer, or lighter skinned people who spoke 'straight' or local English (alluding to pronunciation and accents) would be considered before them, meaning that their own chances were very small. As argued in previous chapters, it has been shown that Black HQHSM women facing discrimination could be likened to a traffic accident at an intersection (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Wilkins-Yel, Hyman and Zounlome, 2019). It could result from race, gender, deskilling, ethnic hierarchies, or migrant identity. In England's public sector organisations, though, the women in this research narrated the challenges they faced in reporting their experiences involved a mixture of racism and other factors. However, many studies around this topic have tended to have their roots in women's and race studies, especially in North America, which has potentially caused challenges of applicability in Europe.

North American scholars often made it explicit that their research is rooted and situated in the American context (Washington and Harris, 2001; Childs, 2005; Nash, 2017). Therefore, drawing inferences from this context potentially challenges those who argue that the UK does not have a similar level of discontent with racism and discrimination in the workplace (CRED, 2021). The research found that part of the problem was that strict laws protect against discrimination in the U.K., so much so that most of the issues the participants encountered were at best clandestine, and proving them was nearly enough impossible. Moreover, some participants described how they felt at the realisation that some problems were so normalised that they may even present themselves in the name of equality and diversity (Ahmed, 2009; Miller, 2018; Khan and Trust, 2019; Parker *et al.*, 2020). They felt that part of their discrimination stemmed from the fact that organisations used tick-box exercises; for example, being 'nice' or having Asian or eastern European people in some leadership positions ticked the diversity and inclusion box, so the rest could be forgotten. The emphasis here is the understanding of the identity reconstruction that Black African HQHSM women undergo as they meet the issues that other ethnic minority women do not

experience and, in addition, facing microaggressions and negative stereotypes from said ethnic minority colleagues in the competition to be liked (Settles, Buchanan and Dotson, 2019).

Whether the occurrences of discrimination and othering were implicit or explicit, they signified the social closure, prototypicality, and ingroup favouritisms that social identity theorists have highlighted. For example, two participants highlighted the implicit leadership prototypical categorisation that Lord, Foti and De Vader (1984) and Rast, Hogg and Giessner (2013) found in their studies of how people are seen as the leadership prototypes in their ingroup. The behaviours of the ingroup members potentially meant that the outgroup members stood very little, if any, chance of being promoted to leadership positions. Two scenarios were narrated regarding some tactics the participants saw as closure and othering.

The participants (e.g., MM6, MM9, SL1) narrated how a senior job role was advertised in a so-called inclusive manner within their organisation, and they were made to believe they would be treated fairly. Then, on the days the job was live (advertised), the overarching comments were, “[X] person would do well in that position” (name of a white/ingroup colleague). The reality was that as names were suggested in an innocent manner, they were being planted in the interviewer’s mind, making the person whose name was being mentioned the prototypical person for that position due to their familiarity and social ties in the organisation or team. The Black women would apply, however, to their disadvantage. The other person’s name would already be consciously front and centre in the minds of the interviewers, to the point where at interview, the Black migrant woman, who had no social ties because of being new, would be told they had done very well (e.g., the copy and paste answer, as mentioned in the previous chapter), but they could not be offered the job because one person had performed better. That person would, in many cases, be the name that had previously been mentioned. On examination, this scenario demonstrates that the person who is offered promotion to the role is seen as the prototype for the job by their team members because they have the privilege of colour and being a member of the ingroup, as suggested by Lord, Hogg, and other inter-group theorists.

Another example given by participants was when a job is advertised internally, and the participant expresses their intentions of applying, people (white) in the team would start highlighting issues that would make the Black woman seem as though they would not perform well in that role. Again, these comments are fed into the interviewer's consciousness such that, when the Black woman goes for the interview, she is turned down based on a past mishap or comments which may have been slipped into their record to taint their chances of progressing. Several participants shared their experiences of finding themselves in these situations (e.g., MM2, MM6, MM11, SL4).

In the above scenarios, the challenge for the Black African women was knowing whether they were not getting the positions they tried to apply for because they were not good enough for a promotion. Nonetheless, they challenged that assertion as they were good enough to train the newer white staff, who later became their superiors. One would question, therefore, whether it could be because of their other intersecting identities.

For example, it could be because they were women. After all, research has shown that women are more likely to be passed over for promotion in organisations than men (Eagly and Mladinic, 1989; Acker, 1990; Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010). Equally, it could be because of their race and ethnicity, as argued by many researchers who have found that ethnic minorities experience less favourable treatment in the workplace, raising multiple questions about inequalities in the workplace (Phillips, 2011; Nkomo and Rodriguez, 2019; Nkomo, 2021). Thirdly, it could be due to their intersecting identities of gender, race, and being migrants (Crenshaw, 1991; Acker, 2006; Love, Booyesen and Essed, 2018; Nash, 2020; Chitembo *et al.*, 2021; Nkomo, 2021). These biases could be difficult to challenge as the Black African HQHSM women would find it almost impossible to prove which of these reasons resulted in them being overlooked for promotions or certain jobs.

Similarly, some of the biases of the white and even Asian counterparts would not always be aimed at the outgroup members, but more at looking out for those within their ingroup or those who are similar to them, because they would probably be seen as the 'easier person to work with' as highlighted in some of the findings in the previous chapter. One example is SL4, whose manager put in her appraisal that some colleagues had said she

appeared passive-aggressive, and went on to make the excuse that people would, occasion, think she would not be as easy to work with (SL4 in 5.4). These group dynamics affected the participants who struggled mentally within the 'messy' space in which they had found themselves by migrating to a foreign land.

In chapter two, I discussed the differences and challenges in the UK regarding calling out racist tendencies, due to the strict laws prohibiting racism. Therefore, the racist tendencies that do exist are extremely difficult to pinpoint due to their subtle nature. Thus, these groups or the allocation of the new migrants to outgroups were, at best, subtle and implicit (Block *et al.*, 2019). They could only be viewed by critically examining the makeup of the senior leadership in organisations to show the snow-white peaks and social closure effects. These findings have been supported by researchers such as Muskwe (2011) in his research investigating the existence of white leadership prototypicality in a UK public sector organisation. The participants sometimes found it uncomfortable to call their experiences 'discrimination' or 'racism'. They often implied the terms, but when probed further, some said that they did not like using those words or 'pulling the race card,' even when the situations were clearly racist (MM8, MM16, MM17).

With time, the women started self-categorising those they saw as 'them' and those they saw as similar to 'us'. As the women continued in these groups, they started to make sense of the process of adapting to their new environment, intragroup relations began being questioned, and their identity emerged again, as discussed next.

6.3. Personal identity and the identification of self

Hitlin (2003, pp. 118–9) defined personal identity as the "critical sense of self which developed over time and place when the person embarks on and pursues individual objectives or ambitions that are not seen of as belonging to a group". Thus, personal identity underscores individual autonomy rather than collective commitment. Individuals see it as fundamental or unique to themselves and their values, as opposed to the ways that group membership and the role one plays in the group do not; it is frequently discussed as a set of idiosyncratic characteristics that distinguish the person from others.

Stets and Burke (2000) contend that social identity theorists (including identity theorists) cite the person's identity. However, many do not move past the analysis of how these fit within the broader identity discourse. They urge identity researchers to combine the person's social role and values if they are to understand the whole picture of their participants. As found in this research, the individual autonomy of thought in self-construction was a key aspect of participants moving towards their chosen trajectory over the period from limited live to remain to after attaining indefinite leave remain status. During the interviews, I observed that people often spoke about their early days as a collective, focussing on "we" when recounting their experience soon after arrival. It was clear that over time, they moved on to speaking in terms of "I", focusing on 'experimenting' with numerous identities or 'provisional selves' while reconstructing their professional identity to match their environment (Ibarra, 1999; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010).

The values and faith they held were prominent in their language. For example, many alluded to God being at the centre of what they did, and whatever was happening to them being God's plan. Some even said they survived some of the experiences by God's grace. The implicit identity goals in PIT are homogeneity and putting one's values before the groups. In this space, while personal fears and external identities were involved in the identifying process, most of the women were making those decisions consciously, calling on their inner values and recalling their upbringing. All these experiences simultaneously occurred nonlinearly to the women at different times and with different jolt sensations (the point of awareness that began the process of building the provisional self). Almost all the women had thought about the future when they obtained their indefinite leave to remain. Some marked this moment in time as an emancipation, as they narrated how they handed in resignation letters to their employers as soon as they got their papers from the Home Office. While they tried to retain the respective identities they had brought professionally from their countries of origin and their upbringing, some of them learned 'politics' along the way and leveraged opportunities to kickstart their career progression.

My view, upon further probing the women on what led to them taking certain routes and not others, was that values drove a lot of the individual meaning-making process. They went through what Alvesson and colleagues defined as the mental work that they once

experienced in trying to reconstruct and re-categorise themselves to fit into what they see as their ideal place - one where they could take advantage of the opportunities and be seen as capable (Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman, 2016). In constructionist and interpretivist fit, which is concerned with reconstructed meaning and knowledge, the findings go beyond the premise that social environment impacts personal experiences and questions reality's categories and ideas of the right way to progress. As members of groups, do they bring everyone along with them, or forefront their individual values? Hence, this places great importance on examining personal meanings.

These descriptions are essential aspects of this study because the nature of the participants was multi-dimensional. For instance, the participants moved from place one (see illustration), where external forces drew them to be part of groups. With time, they transformed and reconstructed their identities as they discovered and understood their new environment, supporting Stets and Burke (2003)'s assertion that humans develop self-awareness through time. Self-concept was crucial in this study as it referred to the stage at which an individual realised their personality in contrast to others within a group, spawning the social being. Here, 'social' can be understood as the implicit collective categorization of a group associated with a society or organisation. Personal identity played a role in whether the participants in this study sought leadership positions within the organisations or left to work for the organisations as self-employed or through personal companies. The women experienced jolt sensations, moments when one realises the salience of the intragroup conditioning. This identity work that the women individually experience can be a time of discomfort, agency, and a level of finding the provisional self (Ibarra, 1999).

I believe that the women who progressed into leadership positions did not do so with ease. They faced similar challenges to those who remained in their lower positions and those who focused on making money off the systems that mistreated them. However, the line was drawn regarding the tolerance levels of the negative aspects of their journeys. This was driven by personal values and faith, in many cases. While the women who had progressed to senior leadership experienced adverse treatment, they were more likely to turn a blind eye to it and focus on proving themselves. They also were more likely to separate

themselves from the outgroups, although not necessarily to move into the accepted or ingroups, thereby losing a small amount of themselves to fit in.

As one put it, “my mother [who is back in the country of origin] said that she does not recognise me. To some extent, I agree with her, but what can I say? That is part of the price I must pay to be in this position. I have to speak their language and play their politics. Sometimes, these habits have become me; I cannot easily leave them at the door or the airport when I go home” (SL5). On the opposing side, another participant talked about working extra hard to prove herself because she was not going to ‘join them’: “I am not going to go to their children’s birthday parties or play golf with them for them to humanise me, but I can make sure my work is undeniable” (SL6). These were clear examples of the acting and activation of different selves to which identity theorists allude when discussing how people present themselves; the discomfort of living a different professional life to the values expected of them had a large effect on even the friends they kept around them. They had to go through a mindset shift, and the personal identity mindset came at a cost, including losing themselves and some friends and family in the process.

6.4. Co-construction of a future model

This research introduces and conceptualises the expression ‘**self-inclusion into leadership**’ for HQHSM women. A definition of self-inclusion when used to refer to leadership was lacking at the time of this research. However, it is a term that has been used by some scholars to discuss governmentality. The governmentality approach to power emphasises positive behaviour change over authoritative law-making (Demrovic, 2009) and involves the consent of the governed, unlike authoritarianism. Governmentality expands the definition of government from the organised exercise of political power by the state to include the active consent and willingness of individuals to participate in their own governance. It claims that state and government are different and that the state cannot achieve its goals on its own (Barnett, 2003; Dean, 2009). Michel Foucault’s term ‘governmentality’ combines government and rationality. Government, in this context, means behaviour or activity that shapes, directs, or influences people. Conduct matters beyond leadership, and self-governance guides the conduct of

oneself to be self- inclusive, as opposed to rationality, which requires definition before management or control (Aspinall, 2020). Aspinall (2002, 2021) argues that the government defines populations to make them visible; they include management and administration (work processes, procedures, and rules) and classification (by income, race, professional, and personnel categories) to identify, classify, order, and control people. This potentially leads to classifications which can have set connotation and expectations (Demrovic, 2009). In relation this study, Barnett (2003) applies the term 'self-inclusion' several times concerning local governance's complexities and fragmentation, forcing individuals and organisations through 'the new localism'. He writes:

Self-inclusion offers a means by which the advantages of complexity and diversity can be achieved and y *et also* directed in a 'hands-off fashion, consistent with Third Way views of the state's role. Using the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, it can be argued that this governance style can be identified as 'advanced liberal' citing (Rose, 1993), ...involving self-discipline, self-responsibilities, and self-inclusion. ...there has been a move towards the use of exhortation and more subtle persuasion toward self-inclusion (Barnett, 2003, pp. 27, 29, 31, 33).

While this use seems to align with extortion and the exertion of control, I argue that it flipped on its head. It can encourage people to make themselves available for opportunities by infiltrating the groups that hold power. In this research, I deliberately employed the expression '**self-inclusion into leadership**' to encourage HQHSM women to be more proactive about seeking opportunities.

Much of the usage of the term 'inclusion' seemed to focus on minorities being included by the majority, making the minority a passive recipient of the 'privilege' of being called to the party and waiting to be seated at the table; i.e., leadership or positions of influence (Showunmi, Atewologun and Bebbington, 2016; Turner, 2019). Moreover, while many of the inclusion initiatives such as affirmative action, diversity and inclusion policies and training tend to be highly appraised and appear to work if they are measured in the short term, very little has been done to follow up on the passive recipients of the initiatives (Brewis, 2019; Gündemir, Martin and Homan, 2019; Adamson *et al.*, 2020; Nkomo, 2020). Gündemir, Martin and Homan (2019, pp. 282–3) argued that "diversity and inclusion programmes often bombard those in leadership positions (managers, for example, via

affirmative action and policy) or the majority groups. Contributing to disfranchisement are members of the target's perspective (White men). The psychological response of underrepresented groups to these policies has received very little consideration". I urge scholars to move from viewing minorities as 'the led', to considering them as highly capable individuals capable of leading. Until this happens, though, Black African HQHSMs must bring their seats to the table through self-inclusion into leadership.

In addition to the above application, the term 'self-inclusion' has also been applied in chemistry (discipline), referring to a character that attaches itself to some stimulus in a guest-host relationship to unlock or develop into a positive complex state (Ogoshi *et al.*, 2018; Zhang *et al.*, 2019). This usage is consistent with my views on how HQHSMs must take a proactive approach to better recognise themselves in terms of their capabilities. A third usage has been in studies on social media self-presentation, indicating the active role one has to play in a given situation (Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2014; Kaiser *et al.*, 2020).

In the same vein, I agree with several researchers who argue that the UK system needs to be fairer and less discriminatory to its migrant population. However, I also believe that there is a role for those seeking 'inclusion' to play in speeding up or forcing the process to notice and recognise their effort. While waiting for this to change, which may take many years, we must seek to force, push, and move our way into the places we want to be. If no one is inviting you, or if they have not actively said that you cannot go in, do so and see what happens. Research demonstrates that to get to a certain position, one needs sponsors and mentors to help them (Muskwe, 2011). As a migrant, it is imperative to be proactive in reaching out and finding mentors, possibly outside the ingroup that is from your country and community. If that is what it takes, there is no reason why we cannot follow the few that have broken down the barriers and proceeded into leadership positions.

After examining all of the above and considering the responses of my research participants, I reiterate and reaffirm my definition of '**self-inclusion into leadership**' as:

The process of infiltrating the professional hierarchies, making oneself visibly hard working and ambitious through volunteering for complex projects, influencing policy, and calculatedly engaging in activities with a view of learning the ropes of the host country

and organisation to leverage the opportunities that may seem unreachable to outgroup members (Chitembo, 2022).

Alongside the above definition and the purpose of the study, the third overarching theme in the findings was the forward-looking co-constructed future model, '**self-inclusion into leadership**' for HQHSM women, presented next.

Changes at organisational and policy levels

Zwysen and Demireva (2018) reviewed data from 'Understanding Society, 2009-2017' and found substantial evidence of ethnic hierarchies, with the Black Caribbean and Black African minorities generally being the most disadvantaged, while other white UK-born individuals had the best outcomes relative to white British people. Migrants from developed countries generally prospered with modest returns on their qualifications, while the other whites from Eastern Europe, for instance, experienced lower returns, relatively speaking. The highest levels of overqualification were mainly found among Black employees, and employers typically ignored some Asian communities and the foreign credentials of migrants. Arguably, despite being recruited from their countries for their qualifications and experience, once they arrived in the UK, those qualifications, no matter how high, did not help these migrants get jobs at levels that matched their qualifications (Erdsiek, 2021). This research found that employment in the public sector is a significant factor in bringing migrants to the UK. However, regardless of qualifications and experience, the placements of those migrants were mainly in entry-level jobs. There is an argument for research into the economic placement of migrants and minorities in England's public sector organisations. Still, some concerning patterns were highlighted in the narration around ethical issues relating to misinformation and the over-inflation of prospects in England, which are not fulfilled by recruiters. Highly skilled migrants, particularly Black African migrants, are highly likely to migrate with high qualifications due to the high immigration threshold for the work permit visa, only to be deskilled in jobs that do not match their skills.

This acceptance of imposed differences and, in some cases, the moving of the goalposts by the UK Government (and recruiters), as outlined in the literature review, has led to discontent among participants. Being seen as 'other' has appeared to give rise to the 'them

and us' relations as the migrants collectively saw themselves as being in the outgroups, and the native population in the ingroups. This awareness made the differences in treatment apparent in the workplace by managers, colleagues, and subordinates of different races (white and Asian). These observations and experiences made the ethnic hierarchies even more stark, which led to the participants being forced into alliances with those who looked similar to them, especially in the early days after arriving in their new locations.

In those early days, they depended greatly on camaraderie with those experiencing similar predicaments, and stood with them, forming support alliances in the group. One of the strong emergent narratives from this research was how the women within their groups used their strength to maintain their morale by assuring one another that their situation would improve once they obtained their indefinite leave to remain. Additionally, they focussed on their purpose for migrating; e.g., "we knew what we wanted was to make money to send back home", "we focussed on doing our work and getting paid", or "we worked very hard, way harder than them" (MM2, MM7, SL11). These positive affirmations about their ingroups were accompanied by the safety net effect, where those who had been in the country longer and had struggled to progress in their careers would talk about how "people like them never got anywhere in these organisations", meaning that the glass ceiling was present for migrants, who were conceding that they would not be given a chance to progress further than where they were.

Migrant women's role in self-inclusion into leadership positions

After gaining their indefinite leave to remain, the migrants in this mental place sometimes encountered interceding obstacles and minimal improvement in their experiences of acceptance when they applied for jobs to improve their careers to a level that was close to what they had in their countries of origin, or gained additional qualifications. Instead, the deskilling continued (Demireva and Fellini, 2018; Zwysen and Demireva, 2018a; Ogbemudia, 2021) and their reconstructed identities appeared to substantially impact their pathways and career mobility, leading to one of three trajectories.

Trajectory one: Advancement to senior leadership roles

Some of the women were driven by self-inclusion into leadership, employing a mixture of “self-inclusion into leadership strategies”, some of which are described in the six-step descriptive model in chapter five (theme seven), and the receptivity of the organisations they joined in the early stages. These organisations offered them the opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities and worth, and granted them the ‘rite of passage into the ingroups’ (Chitembo *et al.*, 2021). The relation of the primary space in the communities in which they found themselves on arrival overlapped with all parts of their identity. However, to a greater extent, their identity was reconstructed by how they perceived their race/ethnicity and migrant status, both related to their gender and social identities (thriving or surviving moving forward). In the red circle was where the paths diverged.

Trajectory two: Entrepreneurial orientation

This path entailed responding to discrimination, othering and a lack of opportunities in the labour market by choosing an entrepreneurial mindset (Carter *et al.*, 2015; Blackledge and Trehan, 2018; Chitembo *et al.*, 2021; Trehan, 2022). Many people have tried to climb the career ladder but have not succeeded for various reasons. Some participants saw these reasons as having to do with their skin colour and migrant status, which they could not change. They believed to an extent that they would never be seen as worthy of the higher positions, despite being used to train those white colleagues who had come behind them and eventually been promoted over and above them. Thus, they saw a way out in leaving, thus benefiting the system. They resigned from their permanent employment to return as self-employed contractors, sometimes through intermediary agencies. This option offers immediate gains in terms of higher pay without the bureaucracy of permanent employment, although the downside to this choice is a lack of security in times of illness, as they were only paid for hours worked. In addition, Trehan and colleagues argue that for migrant entrepreneurs, the desire for self-employment can be viewed as a response to job frustration and setbacks, which affects them more severely than other employees in a discriminatory workforce (Blackledge and Trehan, 2018; Trehan, 2022). In addition, it is crucial to acknowledge the obstacles that migrants face on their broader career trajectories, which may lead them to self-employment.

Little is known regarding the entrepreneurial experiences of new migrants. The dynamics of self-employment as an economic activity for migrants is illustrative of broader research findings, indicating that migrants who choose the entrepreneurial path do so frequently with determination, a strong work ethic, and fortitude. For these participants, self-motivation meant escaping the drudge and autocracy, leaving a secure but unfulfilling job to become self-employed, and capitalising on opportunities for higher pay. These findings corroborated Brynin, Karim and Zwysen (2019), who argued that while a substantial body of research suggests that ethnic minorities bear a cultural propensity toward self-employment, it is typically not the choice they prioritise. In deciding between employment and self-employment, ethnic minorities generally suffer a twofold risk. They added that while minorities face more risk in employment than most of the British population, self-employment, which is intrinsically problematic for all workers, increases their exposure to risk and discrimination. They demonstrated how minority groups earn less in self-employment than the white British majority, work longer hours, and experience less job satisfaction. This makes them more likely to leave self-employment sooner to become employees again, and utilise higher education to gain an advantage and improve their career prospects. The interviewed women described the challenge of being pushed toward risky jobs during the pandemic, having to choose between their health and wealth; in other words, some continued to work in these risky environments because they were more likely to be those environments in which the cover was needed. Even though it was not apparent in what the women said, people could work as many hours as they wanted without any employer oversight, potentially leading to exhaustion and burnout in the long term (Dall’Ora *et al.*, 2020).

Trajectory three: Tactical disengagement

Some participants decided to stay in the organisations in lower positions, calling it ‘emotionally checking out’, ultimately positioning themselves in what I have interpret as ‘owning the outgroup’. They chose to disengage and only offer the minimum effort in their jobs (Settles, Buchanan and Dotson, 2019). That meant stopping attempting to apply for more senior positions. While this seems like an active choice, further probing unearthed the frustration and, in some cases, discontent and dissonance at the system and the

organisation, which resulted in going to work half-hearted with poor job satisfaction and homesickness. This led to comparisons with how things were in their country of origin, which did not help them or their employers (Robbins and Judge, 2016; Hack-Polay, 2020). This finding was consistent with Adamovic *et al.* (2022), who utilised research on ethnicity and the JDR model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti *et al.*, 2001) to develop and test research examining the influence of ethnic minority status on well-being in terms of job demands, job self-efficacy, and depression symptoms. They found that ethnic minority and migrant workers reported lower levels of job self-efficacy than ethnic majority workers when they felt a low climate of inclusion. However, when ethnic minority employees felt a high climate for inclusion, they reported more job self-efficacy and fewer depression symptoms. They argue that ethnic minority status and the atmosphere for inclusion influence employee occupational outcomes and personal well-being. Prior studies have mostly focused on job performance and job satisfaction as a result of ethnic minority status, and this depends significantly on the employee's perceptions of the atmosphere for inclusion inside the organisation.

The unfortunate situation is that there is a three-way loss; first, to the organisation, losing committed staff who brought them a world of experience, and the cost to the organisation who recruited them. The second loss is to the person who, in opting to leave the career ladder or emotionally check out, lost the career progression that they had trained so hard to gain, though it can be argued that they were still able to use their skills; however, they probably missed out on the continuous professional development. The third, potentially most unfortunate loss is to the service users, especially in health and social care, where clients lost that critical continuity of care from highly trained professionals who had a good understanding of their conditions, rather than someone who was sent in to cover a shift. The participants noted that they were often sent to the worst cases or given unreasonably high workloads, leaving little time to understand the needs of the patient or person living with a disability in their care. Through the illustrated model above, the seven themes highlighted in the findings (chapter five) were analysed in detail.

6.5. Chapter summary

SIT and SCT are commonly referred to as the SIA due to their many similarities in assumptions and methodologies, and having emerged from the same principles; this dual theory explores the intergroup and intragroup processes. In other words, SIA focuses on the group dynamic as a whole entity, even though the groups are made of individuals (Hornsey, 2008; Steffens *et al.*, 2017). I underscored the latter (migrant) as a predominant identity for this research because it is often silenced due to the perceived privilege of being employed, which is juxtaposed with the underprivileged or disadvantaged situation of being new, or a minority in the workplace (Atewologun, Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2016). Featuring HQHSM women's intersecting identities in this research was deemed the best way of interpreting their positioning around the intergroup dynamics of collectivism and, at the time, as sources of division and power play the Black women's experience, while furthermore, concurrently acknowledging the continued messiness of individual meaning-making and identity reconstruction experienced in their new environments.

This research highlights that there everyone in the organisation, from leaders to colleagues, could play a role in improving the conditions of this population, and those similar to them. Awareness of ethnic hierarchies could help those with the privilege of being at the top provide help to those at the bottom. Hagendoorn (1993) states that humans build ethnic hierarchies, with the dominant group at the top. Second, regardless of gender or ethnic origin, people's ethnic hierarchy ranking appears to follow those who look most similar to the dominant group. Differences in people's inclination to establish ethnic hierarchies are significantly related to ethnic prejudice and social dominance orientation. Thus, on a practical note, understanding the pattern of the ethnic hierarchies could be used in workforce planning concerning issues of integration and affirmative action for vulnerable migrant groups.

7. Conclusion

The conclusion to this thesis revisits the key arguments outlined the study. It begins with an overview, the original contributions to knowledge, limitations, concluding reflections, and recommendations for further research.

7.1. Overview and research recap

The thesis commenced with the business case, the rationale for conducting this research, and curiosity about Black African HQHSM women's lived experiences, identity, and career mobility in England's public sector organisations. It also detailed the research question:

How do Black African Highly Skilled, Highly Qualified Migrant women's lived experiences shape their identities and the likelihood of seeking leadership positions in public sector organisations in England?

Thereafter, the objectives to help answer the research question were set, followed by the definitions of the key words. The chapter ended with the thesis outline.

In chapter two, I provided a literature review of research into race, ethnicity, and gender diversity in HRM and LOS. I also reviewed the UK government's research and policies relating to HQHSMs before presenting the two aspects of identity theory as a lens through which I conducted the research. In respecting the complex nature of the participants, I fused the intersectionality concept to offer a more holistic understanding; I ended the chapter with a theoretical framework.

Chapter three briefly examined migrants' responsibilities and why I chose to focus on Black African HQHSM women for this research. It also provided an evaluation of the public sector as the context for this research to provide a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding the public sector as an employer, and as the context of choice for this research. It then briefly examined public sector leadership and the handling of job insecurity.

The fourth chapter discussed the research paradigm and philosophical perspectives, research design, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations. The

findings were presented in chapter five, which included detailed narrations of the women's experiences broken down into seven themes, which were classified into three overarching themes based on the theories addressed in chapter two. These overarching themes were the theories of social identity, self-categorisation (social identity approach), and personal identity.

I presented the discussion and analysis in the following chapter (six), in which I discussed my views of the findings around the sensitivities and complexities of key navigating intersecting identities, and the impact these may have on meaning-making and the reconstruction of a future professional life in the UK. I foregrounded the Black African women's experiences in particular, and in England as a context for many reasons, with the key reason being that the review of various literature challenges ethnic hierarchies (Hagendoorn *et al.*, 1998; Snellman and Ekehammar, 2005) and the intersectionality of the Black African women's marginalisation (Crenshaw, 1991), as discussed in the literature review.

This study represents marginalised opinions, which could stimulate research as well as debates about the career progression of Black African HQHSM women as another group that contributes considerably to the public sector workforce, yet is rarely discussed due to various factors, including being on the margins of race, gender, and migration status. The latter often evokes hostility and negativity, which is heightened by the depiction of migrants in the media (Theorin, 2019). The participants' voices indicated structural and institutional obstacles and personal values, which sometimes served as drivers and barriers to self-inclusion into leadership. I applied Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflective thematic analysis as a data analysis framework (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2021b), which allowed me to reflexively offer my interpretation of their stories and critical reflections from the social identity approach and personal identity theory on the representation of lived experiences of the participants. My interpretation of the findings highlighted three career trajectories; namely, (1) Self-inclusion into Leadership positions, (2) Entrepreneurial orientation, and (3) Tactical disengagement.

The findings highlighted the social construction need for practices that promote social, political, and cultural institutions that impact participants' career mobility and the opportunity to confront, dissent and improve these issues through co-construction between the organisations' policymakers and the Black African HQHSM women, which has potential applicability to comparable migrant populations (Stead, 2013). The next section outlines the study's theoretical and empirical contributions.

7.2. Contributions to knowledge and implications

The key contribution of this thesis is its empirical, holistic application of the identity theories in documenting the experiences of the career mobility journeys of Black African HQHSM women from their arrival in the United Kingdom with restricted leave to remain (visa duration), to their acquisition of indefinite leave to remain and citizenship (Home Office Statistics, 2019; UK Home Office, 2020). The study articulates and documents the nuances of participants from their perspectives, and their trajectories in England's public sector organisations at the time of the interviews in 2020 to 2021. It focuses on navigating ascribed social identities, social categorisation, self-categorisation, and the personal identity meaning-making, self-concept, and reconstruction processes in significant mental moments along their journeys (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Hitlin, 2003). This research study contributes to a hitherto understudied and under-theorised topic in the following ways:

1. The extension of the social identity approach and personal identity theory to foreground how Black African migrant women navigate challenges and intersecting identities. This empirical contribution focusses on the differentiation of the identities they were assigned upon arrival, and their experiences in organisations in which prior research indicated they were more likely to be deskilled, despite their high qualifications and skills. The research study extends the application of social identity approach (SIT and SCT) and personal identity theory to foreground the discourse and insights. While some studies have examined siloed aspects of identity; e.g., identity work (Atewologun, 2011) examined the juxtaposition of privilege and disadvantage in senior BME men and women through intersectional identity work, they did so through examining social networks outside the UK. From

my knowledge, while I could never claim that this is the only study to address these complex factors (identity theory applied in this manner to Black African HQHSM women within LOS scholarship), I could argue that the research revealed rich insights into some of the most problematic and controversial discriminatory and othering tendencies the participants encountered, thereby highlighting how using the identity theory holistically would help researchers to address the deeper nuances of their participants' perceptions of the host country's welcome and the interpretations of their place, values, and expertise. Notably, but not exclusively, this challenges the assumptions within leadership and organisational research that seldom addresses how these experiences affect psychological contract and safety. Researchers could consider combining the identity approach's theoretical and methodological insights with intersectionality. Micro-aggression experiences that drive internal responses to identity salience, work, and reconstruction, and the effort and agency of international or highly skilled migrant staff meaning-making, are also highlighted by this approach. Therefore, this work has both theoretical and practical implications. Integrating identity work's theoretical and methodological insights and using the approach in this way highlights the previously missed impact of microaggressions in addressing organisational culture change.

2. The research contributes to scholarship on the impact of international recruitment on the Global South employees' careers. It encourages more LOS researchers to examine this group's career progression and self-inclusion into leadership positions. This contribution extends to the understanding of the upward mobility of highly skilled migrants in public sector organisations and highlights the need for more research on the topic within leadership, management, and organisational studies. In particular, it contributes significantly to the context of Black African women who came to the United Kingdom as first-generation economic migrants from diverse parts of Africa, which is a highly heterogeneous continent, and who ultimately had to manage their identities as collectives of outgroups in order to survive, then thrive (Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2011; Anderson, 2013; Waters and Pineau, 2016). Thus, it highlights the messiness of identity meaning-making and reconstruction amidst navigating

their intersecting identities in the face of the juxtaposition of the privilege of being in employment, alongside the disadvantage of deskilling and being at the bottom of ethnic hierarchies (Zwysen and Longhi, 2016; Khan and Trust, 2019). The social identity approach and personal identity theory provide a different perspective on a subject that has received little attention from LOS researchers, policymakers, and employers, and attempts to address the challenges posed by the recruitment, retention, and attrition of public sector workers. It also contributes to scholarship efforts to comprehend the effects of international recruitment on the career advancement of personnel recruited primarily from the Global South, an area that has appears unattractive to western (white) scholars within LOS, international human resource management and organisational research (Atewologun and Sealy, 2011; Opara, Sealy and Ryan, 2020). This lack of research into the career mobility experiences of Black African HQHSM women has potentially led to their viewpoints remaining undocumented. Over the course of this research, there has arguably appeared to be a rising interest in the study of migrants' entrepreneurial endeavours and entry into the labour market; however, there remains a scarcity of research focussing on HQHSMs' ascent to leadership positions within the context of public sector organisations in England and, indeed, further afield.

3. Considering the exploratory nature of the study, the "three ingress intersecting spheres model of post-migration identities and career trajectories" presented in chapter 6.1. demonstrate the centrality of intersectionality salience in the changing of the identity meaning-making process, especially in the early days, prior to obtaining permanent residency. Contributing to this complex visual representation of the intersection of gender, ethnicity and migrant status revealed how identities provide additional insight into intersectional identity re-formation and reconstruction for the participants. Presenting the conceptualisation in this manner broadened the depiction of intersectionality's centrality to individual identity and meaning-making, despite people being viewed as part of the collective identities by colleagues and superiors (Turner *et al.*, 1994; Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010; Fraga and Rocha-De-Oliveira, 2020).

7.3. Contribution to practice

This research makes an important contribution to ongoing discourse within UK public sector organisations around the treatment of internationally recruited staff. One of the main motivations for this research was to raise awareness and humanise the journeys of economic migrants to the UK and other OECD countries, as discussed in chapters one and two. Because of the small-scale nature of the PhD research, I selected a small group of migrants whose careers and employing organisations may be impacted, albeit in a minor way. Indeed, the research began to make an impact even before completion. For example, I was on several occasions invited to share my research with two health organisation boards. I presented at four international conferences, and two within the UK. In addition, the aim of this research was determined in March 2022 with the help of the doctoral fund, my research supervisors, the university faculty senior leadership team, and fellow students (from postgraduate researchers to first-year undergraduate students). I organised the International Conference on Highly Skilled Migrant Women and Leadership, a one-day online event with over 200 registrants and over sixty live participants. The event brought together four keynote speakers from Germany, the USA, and the UK and 20 session speakers, all of whom brought their expertise and knowledge to the discourse on this research topic (see appendices 11 and 12). I have also been invited to share my research at the International Federation of African Nurses, the University of Texas, USA. In addition to these events, I was the first author of two academic peer-reviewed integrative review papers. They were presented as conference papers, one at the British Academy of Management conference and another at the British Sociological Association Conference. All these contributions to practice speak to the topicality and the contribution to this research.

Lastly, I have taken on a role in the health service which allows me to apply both the theoretical and practical knowledge I have gained through this PhD journey. In this role, my main assignments are to develop culture transformation educational materials. The knowledge gained through this research and the findings will contribute to this critical

workforce area and the transformation of international staff retention (highly skilled healthcare professionals), and a growing, diverse workforce planning pool.

7.4. Recommendations for further research

The findings of this research will be valuable to public sector leaders, recruiters, and policymakers. To help develop and eventually retain the highly skilled migrants that organisations recruit and invest in internationally, a deeper understanding of the factors that impact individual career decisions will be required. The research findings do suggest that organisational leaders' efforts are not seen and appreciated; nonetheless, I contend that many programmes would be more successful if individuals were actively incorporated rather than implicit tick boxes being applied. Practitioners must be more selective regarding how and when initiatives are implemented, in consultation with the intended beneficiaries. Greater adaptability and comprehension of the complexities of obstacles and circumstances and their impact on individual perceptions, experiences, and aspirations ought to be forefronted. It is crucial to realise, however, that there are limitations derived from any research; these are outlined next.

7.5. Concluding summary and reflections

In this research, I conducted thirty-one qualitative, semi-structured interviews with first-generation Black African HQHSM women employed in public sector organisations in England, exploring how their lived experiences influenced their identities and the likelihood of attaining leadership roles. Through an interpretivist epistemology and constructivist ontology, Social Identity Approach (Social identity and self-categorisation) and personal identity theories, fused with intersectionality, were employed as lenses for the exploratory study.

Applying these lenses holistically expanded contextual views of multiple identities interplaying in the participants' journeys. The research considered participants' experiences of the juxtapositions of supposed privilege (having a job, unlike other migrant groups) and disadvantage (career progression challenges), paying attention to social group re-socialisation, identity meaning-making and reconstruction as drivers for career

trajectories. It focuses on illuminating the participants' journeys, from being restricted stay visa holders to British citizens (acquiring similar rights and freedoms as natives). One participant withdrew consent in the late stages. Therefore, I conducted a reflexive thematic analysis on thirty transcripts, a rigorous six-phase process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2019), which includes familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing, defining, and naming themes, and producing a report. Reflexive TA emphasises flexibility and its ability to produce rich and nuanced insights into people's experiences and perspectives. It helped me maintain rigour and transparency, increasing the reliability and validity of the findings. The process revealed seven themes, which I grouped into three overarching themes that were relevant to the theoretical framework around the identity theories. The data analysis and discussion revealed three career trajectories that resulted from how the women responded to their challenges. These are:

1. **Self-inclusion into leadership in advancing to more senior roles** – Adjusting themselves to fit into the 'inner groups', meaning losing some of their cultural identity and turning a blind eye to discrimination.
2. **Entrepreneurial orientation** – Leaving their substantive roles and returning to work in public organisations as cover (self-employed), which pays more and means that they are not held to the bureaucratic contract (in it for the money).
3. **Tactical disengagement** - Giving up and doing the minimum in terms of productivity; getting a salary and not seeking any development or growth within the organisation.

The research found that though the precarious conditions in the early days became the source of camaraderie and strength, and their sense of self and personal identity reconstruction eventually influenced their trajectory.

This research contributes to the following:

4. The extension of the social identity approach and personal identity theory to foreground how Black African migrant women navigate the challenges and intersecting identities, both those they were assigned upon arrival, and their

experiences in organisations in which prior research indicates they are more likely to be deskilled despite their high qualifications and skills.

5. **The scholarship on the impact of international recruitment on Global South employees' careers.** This study encourages more LOS researchers to examine this group's career progression and self-inclusion into leadership positions.
6. The insight into the three possible career trajectories provides employers and policymakers with something **that warrants serious consideration**. This can potentially influence a culture change in the receiving organisations to humanise the staff, leading to better retention.
7. The **six-step model for self-inclusion into leadership** is a key tool that can be utilised by coaches and mentors helping the HQHSM women, and which could be adapted for similar groups. The model is currently helping to develop a training programme that will help newly recruited staff understand some of the expectations to help their journey as they navigate the three intersecting spheres model of post-migration career trajectories.

Exploring the experiences of Black African HQHSM women in England through the identity lens and seeing the intersectionality salience led to several insights. First, none of the women interviewed believed their gender hindered their professional advancement. There were very few instances in which gender was mentioned, and when it was, it was to emphasise that they grew up with the same opportunities as the men and boys in their lives. Others mentioned that they came from families with strong women whom they viewed as role models; for instance, some mentioned that their decision to move to the United Kingdom was influenced by their aunts, sisters, or mothers who had travelled before them and held professions such as doctors, judges, and directors. It made me consider how entrenched the belief is that women, especially non-Western women, are oppressed and have no value. For many highly educated African women, this belief is mostly motivated by patriarchal beliefs. It has helped me realise that to humanise and decolonise minds, the fundamental concerns presented in this study require a co-constructed strategy. Understanding and embracing the perspectives of migrant and majority host populations

is necessary for establishing policies, structures, and practices that function best for Black African HQHSM women and the organisations in which they work. It requires the recognition and respectful intertwining of local and global values, ideas, and experiences. As noted by several participants in chapter five, Black African HQHSM women who were active participants in British citizenship may enjoy the "best of both worlds"; conversely, non-migrant English individuals may derive some valuable insights from the experiences of these participants and this research. Equally, constructing knowledge of migrant cultures, policymaking, and organisational practices can personify and disseminate the mutual benefit and acknowledgement necessary to ensure that the Black African HQHSM women's experiences are not obscure.

Touching on preconceptions, such as the 'angry Black woman' stereotype, reflects misunderstanding and serves as an anchor for societal representations of a hierarchy of group roles (ethnic hierarchy). There is a practical justification for fostering cross-cultural understanding through increased communication and collaboration. Exploring the intersecting identity reconstruction, social identities, socialisation, and self-re-categorisation presented a lens into the participant's journeys and meaning-making through the migration and career mobility journey, which helped me understand what I did not previously know. As a researcher who has had to navigate similar labyrinths, I came away from this research a different person. In putting aside preconceived ideas about the issues and taking the time to hear the participants sharing their lived experiences, I was initially overwhelmed by the thematic analysis, before eventually being filled with hope for a brighter future.

Reflecting on the positionality of the participants, I was able to observe their articulation of how their journey instantly put them at a disadvantage as members of a minority group within the organisations they joined, and how they eventually moved on from those identities to where they lived on their terms (the three resulting trajectories, see figure 18). Concurrently, it could be argued that they had an advantage over other migrants or ethnic minorities who experienced the issues of unemployment and other challenges that have been proven to exist in England's disadvantaged communities (Demireva and Kesler, 2011;

Khan and Trust, 2019). This juxtaposition of disadvantage and presumed privilege, in a way, gave them an upper hand. To that end, none of the women I interviewed was weak or lost; they made the system work for them, and they made suggestions which will inform future research and practice while simultaneously helping Black African HQHSMs who are at the beginning of their journeys, as public sector organisations indeed continue to depend on international recruitment.

This research fittingly contributes to knowledge by (1) locating, re-centring, and demarginalising Black African HQHSM women within LOS and (2) underscoring how their intersecting identities shape their career trajectories and decisions about self-inclusion into leadership positions. I believe there is power in combining social identity (group and role) and personal identity as a theoretical lens with intersectionality, joining a growing number of scholars advocating for amalgamating the various variations of identity theory. Doing so will potentially provide a reimagined analysis whose value comes through its interpretative ability to capture subjects' experiences, locations, and multiple identities, thus enabling more profound, meaningful, and open enquiry into Black African HQHSM women's experiences and placement within HRM and LOS. This could potentially interest more researchers within the discipline to further examine this group's career progression and self-inclusion into leadership positions.

7.6. Research limitations

As I approached the completion of the thesis, it was necessary to evaluate the challenges encountered during the research process and the study's limitations. Reflection allowed me to evaluate what I could have done differently and explain my decisions in response to prevailing conditions, some of which were inescapable. In addition, it provided context in terms of the extent to which assertions, recommendations, and inferences regarding the research findings may be considered. Despite these issues, the findings were consistent enough to justify the PhD research's dynamic nature and time constraints.

The primary limitations of this study were its limited sample size and its singular emphasis on a specific group of HQHSMs. However, the importance of this study derives from the depth of narratives collected and the great effort made to remain faithful to the participants' views and accounts. This research was not generalisable to broader contexts but rather intended to highlight the experiences and perceptions of a small group, from which insight could be gained to enhance existing future theorisation and discourse, such as by expanding the empirical scope of LOS research to include an increasingly diverse range of cultural situations and spheres. Eventually, a more comprehensive cross-analysis of how individuals reconstruct their career in a broader context around family and other responsibilities could be conducted.

The complexities and difficulties encountered in recruiting participants amid the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown forced me to concentrate on locating individuals online and forgoing face-to-face interviews and focus groups, for which I had planned and sought ethical approval. The lockdown meant the ethics for the face-to-face part of the research were inapplicable, leaving me to rely on online participant recruitment. Correspondingly, the timing of the PhD data collection timetable falling shortly after the beginning of the lockdown, and its new means of data collection, made it extremely challenging to locate Asian migrant women to participate in the research as initially intended. This prompted me to reduce my research focus from comparing the two groups of women to focusing on Black African women in England. This drew concerns about the representativeness of the findings to other highly skilled migrants in England, and Black African migrant women in other

nations of the United Kingdom. As the empirical source for this research was limited to a small, select purposive sample, I would never assert that the findings were representative of the experiences of all first-generation migrant women. However, the accuracy and depth of the interviewees' recollections provided profound interpretations and inferences, which may resonate with people with similar demographic characteristics.

The limitations are listed in this paragraph as they all relate to the interview participation. Using a semi-structured interview has inherent methodological flaws, as the interviewer may display bias in conducting the interview or interpreting the results (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). This was exacerbated by the interviews being conducted during the lockdown and via teleconferencing, which made it challenging as it did not allow for much rapport with the participants and in some cases, some interviews seemed regimented (Cameron and Trope, 2004). In addition, some people expressed disagreement with the study, with one prospect who was a director in a public sector organisation calling the study 'combative' as she declined to participate. Such responses signify the challenging nature of researching 'uncomfortable' topics, and, in my opinion, further highlight its importance. The more of us that move to raise the salience of issues that marginalised communities face in organisations, the easier it will become to have conversations. Some expressed interest in the study but could not participate due to being key workers, who were busy saving lives during the pandemic. Despite these limitations, however, a considerable number came forward, and the interviews were conducted until saturation was reached and there was no new information (Marshall *et al.*, 2013; Flick, 2021).

Another general limitation impeded the transferability of the findings to other settings. HQHSM women's awareness or sensitivity to their racial, gender and migrant status may have been key motivators of the study. However, it was important to acknowledge that the time and place in which the research took place were influenced by the heightened salience of disproportionately higher death rates of ethnic minority key staff in the first wave, and the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Concurrently, there were also demonstrations around the world in the immediate aftermath of the callous murders of several Black people in the USA, including Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, at the hands of white law

enforcement officers. On reflection, this could have influenced some of the responses by the participants. Nonetheless, as described in the preceding chapter, the perspective of this thesis is about the participants' recounting of their lived experiences and the identity meaning-making and reconstruction at the time of the interviews. Therefore, prevailing circumstances could be viewed as contributing to the depth of the findings of this research.

Other limitations could relate to the use of purposive snowball sampling. Some could argue that the participants who are nominated by others were predisposed to homogeneity. Nevertheless, I attempted to mitigate this potential bias by utilising a variety of outreach channels, including social media.

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9. Appendices

9.1. Appendix 1: Ethics approval

From: [Sarah Plowman](#)
To: [Amina Chitembo](#)
Cc: [Research Students](#); [Dave Walsh](#); [Henry Mumbi](#); [BAL Research Ethics](#)
Subject: Ethics application - authorised
Date: 10 February 2020 16:38:47
Attachments: [1-Amina-Chitembo-bal-ethics-application-pgr-staff-form-06-02-2020 \(1\).doc](#)

Dear Amina

On behalf of the Head of Faculty Research Ethics, Professor Dave Walsh, I am pleased to inform you that your ethics application attached and entitled '**MIGRANT WOMEN'S SELF-INCLUSION INTO LEADERSHIP: A Study Exploring Self-Imposed Barriers Stopping Migrant Women from Accessing Leadership Opportunities**', has been reviewed and approved by the Head of Faculty Research Ethics on 7 February 2020. Please see section 16 on the form.

Please keep a copy of this email and the attachments for your records and to include in your thesis at the end of your studies. Please allow ten working days for My Research to be updated through the Doctoral College, which has been copied into this email.

If any research is taking place off the DMU campus, please send in a copy of your risk assessment as soon as it is processed.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact BAL Research Ethics at BALResearchEthics@dmu.ac.uk

We wish you every success with your research.

Kind Regards,

Sarah Plowman

Research and Innovation Administrator
Faculty of Business and Law

DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY T: +44 (0) 116 257 7446

E: splowman@dmu.ac.uk

SECTION 16. Chair of Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Chair of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Approval /Rejection/Referral (please delete which does not apply)

*This is the final approval from the Chair of the BAL Faculty Research Ethics Committee that this Ethical Approval application has been approved as outlined in the application.

Chair's Comments (if applicable)



BAL FREC Chair's Name:.....

BAL FREC Chair's Signature:.....Prof Dave Walsh Date: 7th Feb

2020

SECTION 17. HEALTH AND SAFETY – FOR THE APPLICANT AFTER ETHICS AUTHORISATION!

Are you planning to undertake your research off-campus? Yes/No
(please delete as appropriate)

If yes, if you are planning to undertake research off-campus, then you must contact Tracey Lee- Adams by sending her a copy of this AUTHORISED ethics application form, explaining to her that you propose to undertake research off-campus and, as such, you recognise that a risk assessment is required

(Tracey's email address is TLee-Adams@dmu.ac.uk).

In most cases, it is anticipated that Tracey will send you a signed risk assessment form advising you on how to remain safe and well while undertaking your research. In exceptional cases, Tracey will meet with you to assess particular risks.

Once you have received your authorised risk assessment from Tracey, please attach it to your authorised ethics application.

From: [Dave Walsh](#)
To: [Dave Walsh](#)
Cc: [BAL Research Ethics; Jo Richardson](#)
Subject: Embargo on face-to-face data gathering
Date: 01 April 2020 15:54:30

Dear PGR Researchers and Colleagues

You are receiving this email because you have, over the last year or so, applied for research ethics clearance in connection with either your doctoral studies or research project

If you have now completed the data-gathering element of your research project/ doctoral studies, you need read no further

If you still need to gather further data, please continue to read this email.

As you may know, the University has rightly placed an immediate suspension upon face-to-face data gathering in whatever form it takes until further notice. If you were unaware, please discontinue immediately such data gathering, regardless of whether you (for example) have interviews arranged.

You should seek to gather data by other means that do not involve face-to-face activity (such as Skype, Zoom or even the phone). You may already have enough data, so PGR researchers should consult with your supervisor(s). Deferrals have been granted for two months for PGR researchers.

The university will announce when the embargo is lifted. Best

wishes

Dave

Professor Dave Walsh

Professor in Criminal Investigation

Business and Law Faculty Research Ethics Chair

5 Castle Buildings, School of Law

De Montfort University, Leicester,
UK Hugh Aston Building

The Newarke, Leicester, LE2 7BY

Tel: 0116 207 8047

9.2. Appendix 2: Adverts and pre-interview stage

Text for adverts



Long version for emails, letters, handouts

Invitation to participate in research

Are you a woman from an African background who came to the UK as an adult? Do you have a bachelor's degree level of education or higher?

My name is Amina Chitembo. I am a doctoral researcher pursuing a PhD in Inclusion in Leadership at De Montfort University, Leicester.

Research project title: An Exploration of Self-Inclusion in Public Sector Organisations Leadership: Drivers and Barriers Affecting Highly Qualified Highly Skilled Migrant (HQHSM) Women Seeking Senior Management Positions.

I am seeking to answer the following research question:

How do Black African HQHSM women's lived experiences shape their identities and the likeliness of seeking leadership positions in public sector organisations in England?

The research focuses on understanding the barriers from the migrant woman's point of view.

Can I interview you or someone you know?

Contact me for information on the study via email at amina.chitembo@dmu.ac.uk

Mobile or WhatsApp: +44 (0)748 664 0858

Share your views, and let your voice be heard.



Short version for poster, social media

Invitation to participate in research

Are you a woman from an African background who came to the UK as an adult?

Do you have a bachelor's degree level of education or higher?

Can you participate in research to understand the barriers migrant women face when applying for leadership positions?

I would like to hear from you.

Contact me for more info at email: amina.chitembo@dmu.ac.uk

Mobile or WhatsApp: +44 (0)748 664 0858

Pre-interview questionnaire

Highly Skilled Migrant Women's Pre-interview Questionnaire

Hello, my name is Amina Chitembo, I am a PhD student at De Montfort University. I am seeking to interview Asian and African women to help understand the drivers and barriers affecting Highly Skilled Migrant Women applying for senior leadership positions. I would greatly appreciate your participation in this short pre-interview questionnaire to find those who meet the criteria. It is under three minutes. Thanking you in advance for your time.

amina.chitembo@gmail.com [Switch accounts](#)



*Required

Email *

Your email address

Introduction (please skip if you have already seen the invitation).



Are you a woman who comes to live in the UK as an adult (18 years old or over)? *

Yes

No

Where do you currently reside? *

- England
- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland

What is the highest level of education you have completed? *

- Bachelor's degree
- Postgraduate certificate
- Postgraduate diploma
- Master's degree
- Option 5
- Option 6
- Other:

Do you work in the public sector? *

- Yes
- No
- Not sure



Following your answer above, what type of organisation is it? (e.g. education, police, health service, etc) *

- Education
- Healthcare
- Local Authority
- Local Government
- Police
- Armed Forces
- Fire Service
- Social Care
- Social Work
- Probation Service
- Other Government agencies
- Other Law Enforcement and Security
- Other:

Thinking about your level of responsibility in your current job, which of the following best describes your current job level? *

- Administrative or professional with no management responsibility
- Lower Manager or first-line manager, team leader (or equivalent)
- Middle to Senior Manager but not HOD or director role (or equivalent)
- Deputy Director, Head of Department (or equivalent)
- Chief Executive/ Director/ Principal (or equivalent)



To understand my participants, I need to ask; which continent or region did you migrate from? *

- Asia
- Africa
- America (North and South)
- Antarctica
- Australia
- Europe

First and Last Names *

For me to send you the participant information sheet and consent form (participation is voluntary, confidential, not linked to your organisation. You also have the right to withdraw).

Your answer

Phone Number *

For me to call you on to arrange the best time for the interview

Your answer

When is it best to contact you?

	Weekdays	Weekends	Any day
Between 9am and 6pm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Between 6pm and 9pm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anytime	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



How did you first hear about this research?

- Word of mouth
- Social Media
- Newspaper
- TV
- Blog post
- Email

Submit

Clear form

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

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Google Forms



9.3. Appendix 4: Post screening

Participant Information Sheet

Highly Skilled and Highly Qualified Migrant Women in Professional Non-Management, Lower, Middle and Senior Manager Roles

(This form is NOT for **HOD, Director or CEO level roles**, if you are on this level, kindly let me know, and I will send a different form).

Title of Project: A Critical Exploration of Self-Inclusion in Public Sector Organisations
Leadership: Drivers and Barriers Affecting Highly Skilled and Highly Qualified Migrant Women Seeking Senior Management Positions.

Name of Researcher: Amina Chitembo, PhD Researcher.

Invitation

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether to take part, it is essential that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish to. Ask us if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part or not. Thank you for reading this.

About the Researcher and the Research

I am a PhD student aiming for the PhD – Inclusion in Leadership award, and I am based in the Faculty of Business and Law at De Montfort University. **My research explores the movement of highly qualified and skilled migrant women who have settled in the United Kingdom (UK) and how their settlement affects their career progression. It focuses on women currently in middle and lower management with a desire for advancement into leadership positions in the public sector in England only. However, they do not apply for a promotion or seek leadership opportunities, despite having a postgraduate degree or above. It examines self-perceived barriers to seeking top leadership positions from the woman's lens, thus offering a voice to migrant professionals.**

I seek to conduct a one-to-one interview via zoom or skype, whichever is easier for you. The interviews run for 30 to 60 minutes, and the aim is to help respond to the following research question:

How do Black African highly skilled, highly qualified migrant women's lived experiences shape their identities and the likelihood of seeking leadership positions in public sector organisations in England?

Note: Without ignoring the systemic and structural barriers that may exist and persist within the UK system and public sector organisation, this study focuses on personal barriers (woman's lens).

Involvement

Depending on your availability and what you want to share, I would like to interview you for 30 to 60 minutes. Your participation will involve you sharing your experiences as a migrant woman; The interview will be semi-structured in that I will ask you a few questions to lead the discussion, and you will do most of the talking because your detailed views are fundamental to this research. Where I need you to elaborate further, I will ask further questions. The whole interview will be digitally recorded (audio only) with your permission; I will use the recordings to write up (transcribe) the responses of all interviewees to draw out the themes which will be reported in my thesis. You will receive a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy and to keep for your record if you so wish. I will contact you within 14 days to answer any questions you may have about your interview or the research. You can also contact me if you have any burning points. You do not need to wait. A list of interview questions is available for participants to read before the interview. The interviews will take place on Zoom or Skype, and I will endeavour to allow interviewee flexibility in terms of time.

Confidentiality

All personal data collected will be kept strictly confidential. Your name and contact details will not be recorded. Still, your mobile number or email address will require me to use it only concerning this study. In addition, your name will be anonymised, and any details that could identify you will be altered or removed. I will be the only person with access to your original recordings of the focus groups, and my two academic supervisors (listed in section 9) will have access to the anonymised transcripts of your interviews. All recordings will be destroyed after the data has been transcribed by the researcher (me).

The only exceptions to confidentiality would be if you disclosed information indicating that you or someone else was at risk of harm. If such information was disclosed, I should have to do all I can to minimise the risk of harm to you or anybody else

Participation and Rights

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you are asked to consent to participate in the focus group. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep, and I will provide a consent form separately for you to sign. Additionally, you have the right to withdraw your consent before the focus group. Please note that this withdrawal will not be possible after the focus group. This is to protect the time for all the participants.

Next Steps

If you are interested in participating, please contact me using the contact details below.

Study Review

This study has been reviewed and approved by De Montfort University, Faculty of Business and Law Research Ethics Committee.

About Me (Researcher)

My name is Amina Chitembo. I am a leadership development and inclusion coach and educator. I hold an MSc. Management and Leadership from the University of Southampton. I founded and ran a charitable organisation bridging the gap between Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and mainstream organisations for ten years. I have also worked in senior management in community services commissioning in the NHS.

I currently run my consultancy business, helping managers perform at their best. Through this work, I saw the need to make the voices of migrant women heard and contribute to academic research on this subject.

My PhD study is self-funded and is not affiliated with any external body.

Your contribution and the research results will impact me because they will be presented for my educational assessment to receive the PhD award.

It will also be used in some or all of the following ways; Publications, to inform policy, conference presentations and to help develop training and support models for migrant women based on their voices and needs.

Your contribution will also make an impact in that I work with the United Nations on Sustainable Development Goals, and this research will be submitted towards the targets for SDG 5, Gender Equality and SDG 10, Reducing Inequality.

Further information or Complaints

If you require any further information about the research, you can contact me at the following details:

Amina Chitembo, PhD Researcher

Faculty of Business and Law, Leicester Castle Business School, The Gateway, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK, LE1 9BH. Email – amina.chitembo@dmu.ac.uk

To learn more about De Montfort University, visit the website: www.DMU.ac.uk

If, for any reason, you need to chat with someone other than me, or you have a complaint regarding this research, contact the first academic supervisor of this research on the following details

First Academic supervisor

Dr Henry Mumbi, Senior Lecturer in HRM and Organisational Behaviour, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH. T: +44 (0)116 250 6111.
E: henry.mumbi@dmu.ac.uk

Second Academic Supervisor

Dr Never Muskwe DBA SFHEA, Associate Professor in HRM, Head of HRM Undergraduate Studies

Faculty of Business and Law, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH

T: +44 (0)116 207 8229. E: never.muskwe@dmu.ac.uk

If this achieves no satisfactory outcome, you should then contact the Administrator for the Faculty Research Ethics Committee, Research & Innovation Office, Faculty of Business and Law, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH or BALResearchEthics@dmu.ac.uk

Emotional Support

Here is a list of some organisations that may offer emotional and well-being support should you require it.

Samaritans

Samaritans are a free and confidential service that aims to benefit society by improving people's emotional health to create a greater sense of well-being. They offer 24-hour support on the telephone, by email, by letter or face-to-face to anyone. Their website states, "People contact us with all sorts of concerns and what might be a small issue to you may be huge to someone else. You could be going through something new or have been struggling to cope for some time. Either way, we are here if you need extra support. If what is getting to you is not on this list, please still get in touch. If you want advice, we may be able to give you [contact details for organisations that specialise in helping with specific problems and situations.](#)"

Website: <http://www.samaritans.org/>. Email: jo@samaritans.org. Tel: 08457 90 90 90
or 116 123

You can also write to the, here is the address: Chris, Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK, PO Box 9090, STIRLING. FK8 2SA.

Support Line

According to their website, the Support line offers confidential emotional support to children, young adults and adults by telephone, email and post. They work with callers to develop healthy, positive coping strategies, an inner feeling of strength and increased self-esteem to encourage healing, recovery and moving forward with life.

They also keep details of counsellors, agencies and support groups throughout the UK. They offer confidential emotional support to children, young adults and adults by telephone, email or post.

Website: <http://www.supportline.org.uk>. Email: info@supportline.org.uk. Tel: 01708 765200

Thank you once again for taking the time to read this information sheet. Suppose you would like to take part in the research. I will greatly appreciate your contribution. Contact me using the details in the section below.

Participant Information Sheet



Highly qualified, highly skilled migrant (HQHSM) women who are in senior leadership positions

(This form is for HOD, Director or CEO level roles, if you are on this level, kindly let me know, and I will send a different form).

Title of Project: A Critical Exploration of Self-Inclusion in Public Sector Organisations Leadership: Drivers and Barriers Affecting Highly Skilled and Highly Qualified Migrant Women Seeking Senior Management Positions.

Name of Researcher: Amina Chitembo, PhD Researcher.

Invitation

You have been invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish to. Ask us if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part or not. Thank you for reading this.

About the Research

I am a PhD Student aiming for the PhD – Inclusion in Leadership award. I am based in the Faculty of Business and Law at De Montfort University. **My research explores the movement of highly qualified and skilled migrant women who have settled in the United Kingdom (UK) and how their settlement affects their career progression. It focuses on women currently in middle and lower management with a desire for advancement into leadership positions but does not apply for a promotion or seek out leadership opportunities, despite having a master's degree or above. It examines self-perceived barriers to seeking top leadership positions from the woman's lens, thus giving a voice to migrant women professionals in academic research.**

During this study, I seek to interview women who meet the above criteria and those who have reached leadership positions. The discussions in the focus groups aim to help me answer the research question:

How do Black African highly skilled, highly qualified migrant women's lived experiences shape their identities and the likelihood of seeking leadership positions in public sector organisations in England?

Note: Without ignoring the systemic and structural barriers that may exist and persist within the UK system and public sector organisation, this study focuses on personal barriers (woman's lens).

Involvement

Depending on your availability and what you want to share, I want to interview you for 30 to 45 minutes. Your participation will involve you sharing your experiences as a migrant woman; The interview will be semi-structured in that I will ask you a few questions to lead the discussion, and you will do most of the talking because your detailed views are fundamental to this research. Where I need you to elaborate further, I will ask further questions. The whole interview will be digitally recorded (audio only) with your permission so that I can write up (transcribe) the interviewees' responses to draw out the themes that will be reported in my thesis. You will receive a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy and to keep for your record if you so wish. I will contact you within 14 days to answer any questions you may have about your interview or the research. You can also contact me if you have any burning points. You do not need to wait.

A list of interview questions is available for participants to read before the interview.

The interviews take place via Zoom or Skype, depending on the interviewee's preference.

Confidentiality

All personal data collected during the interviews will be kept strictly confidential. Your name and contact details will not be recorded on the interview transcripts, but your mobile number or email address will be required for me to use only concerning this study. In addition, your name will be anonymised, and any details that could identify you will be altered or removed. I will be the only person with access to your original interview recordings, and my two academic supervisors (listed in section 9) will have access to the anonymised transcripts of your interviews. All interview recordings will be destroyed after the researcher has transcribed the data.

The only exceptions to confidentiality would be if you disclosed information indicating that you or someone else was at risk of harm. If such information was disclosed, I should have to do all I can to minimise the risk of harm to you or anybody else

Participation and Rights

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you are asked to consent to be interviewed. It is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you decide to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep, and I will provide a consent form separately for you to sign. Additionally, you have the right to withdraw your consent from the study even after you have been interviewed. In this case, all your records and data collected will be destroyed and excluded from the study. Please note that this withdrawal will not be possible once the data has been analysed.

Next Steps

If you are interested in participating, please contact me using the contact details below.

Study Review

This study has been reviewed and approved by De Montfort University, Faculty of Business and Law Research Ethics Committee.

About Me (Researcher)

My name is Amina Chitembo. I am a leadership development and inclusion coach and educator. I hold an MSc. Management and Leadership from the University of Southampton. I founded and ran a charitable organisation bridging the gap between Black Asian and

Minority Ethnic (BAME) and mainstream organisations for ten years. I have also worked in senior management in community services commissioning in the NHS.

I currently run my consultancy business, helping managers perform at their best. Through this work, I saw the need to make the voices of migrant women heard and contribute to academic research on this subject.

My PhD study is self-funded and is not affiliated with any external body.

Your contribution and the research results will make an impact by presenting for my educational assessment to receive the PhD award.

It will also be used in some or all of the following ways; Publications, to inform policy, conference presentations and to help develop training and support models for migrant women based on their voices and needs.

Your contribution will also make an impact in that I work with the United Nations on Sustainable Development Goals, and this research will be submitted towards the targets for SDG 5, Gender Equality and SDG 10, Reducing Inequality.

Further information or Complaints

If you require any further information about the research, you can contact me at the following details:

Amina Chitembo, PhD Researcher, Faculty of Business and Law, Leicester Castle Business School, The Gateway, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK, LE1 9BH. Email – amina.chitembo@dmu.ac.uk

To learn more about De Montfort University, visit the website: www.dmu.ac.uk

If, for any reason, you need to chat with someone other than me, or you have a complaint regarding this research, contact the first academic supervisor of this research on the following details

First Academic supervisor

Dr Henry Mumbi, Senior Lecturer in HRM and Organisational Behaviour, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH. T: +44 (0)116 250 6111. E: henry.mumbi@dmu.ac.uk

Second Academic Supervisor

Dr Never Muskwe DBA SFHEA, Associate Professor in HRM, Head of HRM Undergraduate Studies, Faculty of Business and Law, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH T: +44 (0)116 207 8229. E: never.muskwe@dmu.ac.uk.

If this achieves no satisfactory outcome, you should then contact the Administrator for the Faculty Research Ethics Committee, Research & Innovation Office, Faculty of Business and Law, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH or BALResearchEthics@dmu.ac.uk

Emotional Support

If you feel you cannot continue with the interview, we can discontinue the interview at no obligation to you. If you need extra support, here is a list of some organisations that may offer emotional and well-being support should you require it.

Samaritans

Samaritans are a free and confidential service aiming to benefit society by improving people's emotional health to create a greater sense of well-being. They offer 24-hour support on the telephone, by email, by letter or face-to-face to anyone. Their website states, "People contact us with all sorts of concerns and what might be a small issue to you may be huge to someone else. Either way, you could be going through something new or have been struggling to cope for some time. We are here if you feel you need some extra support. If what is getting to you is not on this list, please still get in touch. If you want advice, we may be able to give you [contact details for organisations that specialise in helping with specific problems and situations.](#)"

Website: <http://www.samaritans.org/>. Email: jo@samaritans.org. Tel: 08457 90 90 90
or 116 123

You can also write to the, here is the address: Chris, Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK, PO Box 9090, STIRLING. FK8 2SA.

Support Line

According to their website, the Support line offers confidential emotional support to children, young adults and adults by telephone, email and post. They work with callers to develop healthy, positive coping strategies, an inner feeling of strength and increased self-esteem to encourage healing, recovery and moving forward with life.

They also keep details of counsellors, agencies and support groups throughout the UK. They offer confidential emotional support to children, young adults and adults by telephone, email or post.

Website: <http://www.supportline.org.uk>. Email: info@supportline.org.uk. Tel: 01708 765200

Thank you once again for taking the time to read this information sheet. Suppose you would like to take part in the research. I will greatly appreciate your contribution. Contact me using the details in the section below.

Research participant consent form (interviews)



Title of Project: A Critical Exploration of Self-Inclusion in Public Sector Organisations Leadership: Drivers and Barriers Affecting Highly Skilled and Highly Qualified Migrant Women Seeking Senior Management Positions.

Name of Researcher: Amina Chitembo, PhD Researcher

Please answer the following and sign, then email it back to me.	Please tick and initial all boxes if you agree
1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet [date ___/___/___ and version number _____] for the study above. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have these answered satisfactorily.	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason or negative consequences. I can decline to answer any specific questions in the interview.	
3. I agree with the interview being digitally recorded	
4. I agree to my data being anonymised and stored, and sharing it in a relevant archive in this form.	
5. I agree that anonymised and non-identifiable quotes may be published in articles, conference presentations, or for standard academic purposes such as assessment.	
6. I understand that a supervisor from De Montfort University may inspect the data collected during the study, and I permit the supervisor to access my data.	
7. I also acknowledge that the focus group data may be transcribed by a third party authorised by the university to undertake such duty.	
8. I agree to take part in the above research project.	

Print name of participant

Date

Signature

Amina Chitembo

Print the name of the person taking consent

Date

Signature

9.4. Appendix 3: Interview questions

Questions for semi-structured interviews for the mm group



Research Question: How do Black African highly skilled, highly qualified migrant women’s lived experiences shape their identities and the likelihood of seeking leadership positions in public sector organisations in England?

Target: Migrant women with at least a postgraduate level of education and in middle or lower management positions in public sector organisations (whether directly employed or working through an intermediary agency).

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. Before we start the interview, we need to confirm that you meet the criteria. You have obtained a postgraduate level of education (beyond a bachelor's, i.e., PG Certificate, PG Diploma, Masters' degree, or PhD), and you are in middle management or a lower position. We are assuming that you have considered being in a leadership position. Please note that this interview is about self-reflection on your position as a migrant woman in the public sector and your 'personal drivers and 'internal' issues that affect you. NOT inequalities in the system, which we know exist and will do so for many years to come; nonetheless, we must push on.

Part 1: Building Rapport

1. Tell me a bit about yourself. (Where you were born, how long you have been in the UK, your family situation, whether they are here in the UK as well, and any other information you want to share)
2. Which year did you obtain your postgraduate qualification? If more than one (number as well)
3. Where did you obtain your highest qualification? Birth country or the UK (Note: this will be used later to check the impact of not applying)
4. When did you obtain your indefinite leave to remain in the UK?
5. What kind of job did you have in your country of birth? (if any)
6. Are you employed directly by the public sector organisation you work for, or do you work through an agency?

Part two: Detailed open discussion (Leading Questions)

(Note: I will ask further questions to elicit details and the meaning of the initial responses. Also, I will use silent pause techniques to allow the participant time to think deeper).

1. The immigration system defines you as falling into the category of Highly Skilled Migrant (HSM). By nature of your being above a bachelor's degree, you are considered highly qualified. You invested in your education and travelled to the UK to work. Can you tell me your expectations regarding your qualifications and the work you do now?
2. Thinking back to your life before arriving in the UK, where did you see your career today?
3. Thinking back to when you obtained your indefinite leave to remain, what kind of assimilation/integration support or advice did you receive from the home office or your employer?
4. To what extent have the following affected your self-perception about applying for leadership positions?
 - a. Immigration policies, the negative press on migrants and your prior immigration status, and how has this affected your mindset and ambition?
 - b. Upbringing your gender-related roles and home country or familial community and their advice
 - c. The fear of discrimination hence not believing that you would be accepted if you applied for a senior position
5. Do you think migrant women who have obtained indefinite leave to remain in the UK or citizenship and have the right experience can effectively participate in senior leadership positions in the organisation?
6. What are the benefits to the organisation of employing migrant women in leadership positions?
7. What can organisations do to ensure the inclusion of migrant women into leadership positions?

Questions for semi-structured interview for sl group



Title of Project: A Critical Exploration of Self-Inclusion in Public Sector Organisations
Leadership: Drivers and Barriers Affecting Highly Skilled and Highly Qualified Migrant Women Seeking Senior Management Positions.

Name of Researcher: Amina Chitembo, PhD Researcher – Inclusion in Leadership.

Research Question:

How do Black African highly skilled, highly qualified migrant women's lived experiences shape their identities and the likelihood of seeking leadership positions in public sector organisations in England?

Migrant women who hold a position of assistant or associate director and above.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. Before we start the interview, we need to confirm that you meet the criteria. You have a minimum assistant or associate director job in an organisation with at least 30 people or sit on a company board where you are remunerated appropriately. Please note that this interview is about your strategies despite the inequalities in the system, which we know exist and will do so for many years to come; nonetheless, we must push on.

Part 1: Building Rapport

1. Tell me a bit about yourself.
2. Tell me about your family situation.
3. How long after obtaining your indefinite leave to remain, did you get into your first senior leadership role?

Part two: Detailed open discussion (Leading Questions)

(Note: I will ask further questions to elicit details and the meaning of the initial responses. Also, I will use silent pause techniques to allow the participant time to think deeper).

Statistics and research have shown that ethnic minorities and women are disproportionately underrepresented in leadership and board-level positions. These barriers are even more significant when you are an ethnic minority woman and have the added complexity of being a migrant arriving in the UK as an adult. Please answer the following questions:

1. How did you manage to reach your current position?
2. What support system did you have on your journey?
3. What barriers did you overcome to get to this position?
4. How did your community help or hinder you in getting to this position?
5. What do you think are the main attributes migrant women need to have if they are to reach this level?
6. What support systems do you wish you had on your way up to your current position?
7. What benefits do organisations have for migrant women in decision-making positions?
8. What can organisations do to ensure the inclusion of migrant women in leadership positions?

9.5. Appendix 4: Anonymised verbatim sample transcript

ID Redacted

Sun, 10 October 2020, 9:27 AM • 46:33

Interviewer 00:02

Good afternoon. My name is XX. Thank you very much for joining me for this interview. I am a PhD student at De Montfort University, and my PhD is in inclusion in leadership. My research looks at migrant women in England who work in the public sector, which are drivers and barriers to getting into leadership positions or seeking to get into leadership positions. Can I start by confirming that you are happy to proceed with the interview? Have you read the participant information sheet that I sent and the consent form?

Interviewee 00:46

Yes, I am happy to continue.

Interviewer 00:48

Can I also confirm that you are above a bachelor's degree, i.e., postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma, or master's degree? And above?

Interviewee 01:01

Yes, I have a postgraduate certificate in leadership, and I am studying for a master's degree in healthcare leadership and commissioning.

Interviewer 01:13

Great! Okay. So, tell me a bit about yourself, where you were born, how long you have been in the UK, your family situation, where they are right now, whether they are in the UK or from your home country, and any other information that you want to share with me.

Interviewee 01:38

So, I was born on the xx of xx. I think I was told that I was born in xx. I went to school in different areas. So, I went to school in xx. My mother got married, so I went to school in xx. My primary school was in xx. Then I came back. I went to xx, did my part of my primary school, then went back to xx and then to secondary school and boarding school. When I finished, I did; everyone else was going for; I think it was untrained teaching, but I got a job as an accounts clerk in the cooperatives, where I worked for about two years. And then I went and did my nursing. I did xx at XX nursing school, which I finished in xx. In 19xx, I got a job. I was supposed to xx General Hospital, where I worked; to xx, I went and did midwifery at nursing school again, returned in xx, and worked at xx Regional Hospital as a midwife. Until xx. That is when I moved to the UK. So, I was employed as a senior health care assistant with xx. So, xx, I met my husband and married in xx. moved from XX to XX.

I was working in a learning disability home. I rose to deputy home manager. When I became the deputy manager, many things were going on with the manager. We had one of the healthcare assistants who was going out with the manager. The company's policy said that if you went out with a junior, you needed to declare, but the manager did not. I think there was also some practice, which I felt was not right. So, I reported that practice, which brought many conflicts. I was bullied, you know, whenever I went to work, everything was being picked on. I put in a complaint. That complaint was investigated. They said it was offensive. It was dismissed. So, I wrote to them when they said if they wanted to appeal, I wrote to them and said, well, I am not going to appeal through you.

I think I am just going to go and seek legal advice. So that is when I think one of their regional managers stood up and realised that whoever did the discussion did not do it well, so they went back to that home and investigated, and that manager was fired, and I was moved from there and worked in another home. So that experience impacted my family and me greatly because, you know, it just felt like I could not leave because I needed the money, but the environment was uncomfortable. When I noticed that I did not even have a job, I put in my notice because I did not know what to do. So, I went and spoke to someone from ACAS.

The person from ACAS said that if you are working on your notice, it is not that bad. But that was maybe due to not knowing processes and all that. So, when I met with this regional manager, he said, I am going to get you out of there. If you want, I will give you another home where you can go and work. That is how he moved me to another home. However, at home I moved to, the manager used to explain everything that would happen to me. You know, I did this because of this. So it became uncomfortable because she felt like I was someone who just reported people. So I had to sit down and tell her I did not report the other manager without talking to them. I sat him down. And I said I was not happy with what was going on. She did not acknowledge it until I went ahead and reported it. I would not report you for anything. If I am unhappy, I will come and speak to you; I will say I do not feel this is the right thing to do, how you do things, or the processes are being overlooked.

So in xx, I went to go and do my degree in mental health nursing, which I completed in xx, I think xx the year xx, and I got a job in a secure law unit for learning disabilities, where I worked for a year, and then I joined the Organisation B in xx.

Nevertheless, having worked in a hospital in XXXXX means I had a lot of other skills. Despite mental health, things like no physical health were kind, and I could do it with my eyes shut. So I became the nurse lead on the ward for physical health. I developed clinics. We used to do clinics, like every week. We used to have a physical clinic with the doctor and pharmacist. I developed quite a few things.

Furthermore, each time I went for my supervision, my manager said, " Oh, you are so brilliant, you do well, everything was fine. So I said, seeking to apply for maybe a band higher, I applied for a deputy ward manager, and I did not get the job. So it just felt like a kick in the teeth. Because if in your presence, they say your supervision or you are working well, you are working above your competence, but I did not get the job. So, I applied for another band six in the crisis team. Again, I did not get the job. So I got frustrated and moved on. I went and got a job in continuing healthcare, which was band six

When I got a job in continuing healthcare worked there for a year; my manager there, I think, worked in continuing healthcare for a long time. She was rusty in some of the mental health processes. So when I questioned some of the things, I think our relationship became very bruised somehow. She was not very happy with me. Moreover, I did not feel supported at some point, you know, whereas sometimes she used to talk to me like she was talking to a child, saying you need to do this, you need to do that. Furthermore, some of the things I think when you write reports, like spelling sometimes, you know, if there is a small spelling error and she would pick on that instead of, you know, dealing with it differently, should use it maybe to make me feel small.

Interviewee 09:06

So that is how I decided to get to apply for another job. I applied for a job as a deputy manager in one of the wards in xx. So I got the job, and the manager there was a breath of fresh air and rich ready she used my skills to an extent whereby everyone could not believe it, and people were even saying now, oh, well, you know, your manager uses you, your managers you do the job of a manager, but for me, I think because she was able to kind of capture my skills and use them effectively. She supported me in the Mary Seacole course; she was very good at supervision and showed that I did not find what I needed. She also encouraged me to apply for the MSc. when I applied for the master's degree. I think that year when I was accepted, I was not ready to start, so I did not start, but she encouraged me in my professional development. It was identified in my appraisal. She is the one who encouraged me to do to look at that. I think that the other thing was, you know,

We [with her manager] tried to think about the differences of cultures as well, you know, we used to talk a lot about differences of cultures, in our shoes to say, sometimes you Africans, you like going to school too much. It is not about going to school; sometimes, it is about developing your skills; you do not have to have all these degrees to progress. Furthermore, I would tell her, look, that is the difference. Because if I went for an interview [as a black woman/African], I needed something that would make me stand out from everyone else. Furthermore, for me, it is a qualification if anything else. If I am at that level, we have the same skill as a white person; they will give it to the white person and will not

give it to me. But if I have something extra, they will give me the job. That is why you find us black people going for more education. So, we used to have very open conversations (SL4).

So then after that, I applied for a job, she encouraged me, you know, most managers, if you are really good, they will do everything to keep you, and she also said to me, xx, I think you need to move on the unit you need to do to start looking for a band seven. Moreover, I was like, Oh, no, I am happy here. She said, No, I know you are happy. I think your skills have grown so much. This job is not for you. It would be best if you started looking for a job. It is not that I am chasing you. However, I want you to progress. So a job came up, a clinical lead, and I went for that job and was not given the job. So, my manager, I think, was not happy with it. She went and asked the person who did the interview and said, Why didn't you give XX a job? So they could not explain why they thought I was not that good. They could not give a concrete answer. So she was like, You know what? It is your loss and my gain.

Nevertheless, I do not want to sit on XX because XX can do much more than a band six. So one day, we had an incident on the unit, and we had a death. Moreover, I was about to return to the ward where they had the dead. I ended up coordinating the whole thing. The clinical lead, who was supposed to be the clinical leader, the person who was given the job, went and hid. We could not find her. I did the debrief. I did everything. So the following day, we had to debrief all the managers.

Furthermore, I being me, you know, I just said, " You know what, this is the same job you did not give me, but I was doing it without pay. So I think when I passed that comment, people now started shifting. They started jittering. Where there is a job, or there is a manager's job, can you take that job? Furthermore, I said, No, you are not going to give me a job. Because just because I have said something, No, I am not taking a job on a silver plate. It has to be advertised. No, I want you to cover it. No, I refused. So this job came up, and I applied for the job and got the job.

Moreover, when my manager was about to retire last year. So I said to have, well, if you are retiring, can I shadow you to see what you do? Because I am interested in applying for the job. She said, oh, well, this job is very strategic. So I said, what do you mean by that? It is very strategic. Are you saying I cannot do strategic? Oh, no, that is not what I said. I said, Okay. So I did not get any support to say, Okay, this, this person wants the job, oh, giving me some way to be able to do or anything like that. So before she left, they advertised for a secondment, and I am the only person who went for it. Then after that. I went on leave, I went to xx, and they put the job out in the advert while I was on leave.

Moreover, the day I returned, the job was closed. Before I went to xx, they already gave me the secondment; the substantive job was advertised before I could even start the secondment. So when I came back, I said to my manager, well, the job was out, and all she said was, well, I thought maybe you would have applied for the job. However, I said to her you knew that I was on leave. Moreover, for me to go for the secondment, I am interested in the job. The job was closed. It was advertised when I was away. She was, oh well, I did not realise that.

Okay, we are going to open the job. So they opened the job for 24 hours or 48 hours for me to apply. I think I felt that I was probably being pushed out. By the time I was going to the interview. Have you known I was not in the best place to perform well at the interview? I did what I could, but I do not think I did very well. So the job was given to someone who did not have the experience because the job itself was they wanted someone who had experience in patient flow. However, the person employed did not have any experience because she was a good manager. So, while we were before the job, that job went out. So before that job went out, they brought out some clinical lead jobs. So I told my manager I wanted to apply for the clinical lead job. So she said, no, you do not have to apply because it is the same team.

Moreover, you have already been saving. So we can move you across if that is what you want. I said, Yeah, I want to move to the clinical lead. So she said, no, I will leave you a post when I recruit. So I went to the Head of Service and said, you know, I discussed with XX.

Moreover, XX said she would leave a post for me because I want to move from where I am to the clinical lead. After all, they clinically do four to midnight. Thus, I said I wanted to move to the clinical lead role. So the Head of Service was like, oh, do not worry about it, we will see what we can do when the service is up and running, we will put you in, in one of the posts. So XX retired, and the new manager came in. We had a new senior manager. I told them I was offered to move to the clinical lead. They were like, XX is not here to confirm that she offered you to go to the clinical lead.

They said you have to apply for the job, and the jobs will be going out to these two jobs going to have to apply for the job I applied for the job, and I never got that job. I still am being asked to do overtime. When there was no one to cover, I was asked to do the job. I was not given thousand hours and given. So at that point, I think I felt like, do I leave? However, I thought if I left, it would look like I was going into a stop. So I stayed, I stayed in the job, but I had a conversation with the Assistant Director of Operations in our management line. So I had a very honest conversation with him.

Moreover, I told him, at the end of the day, after all that has gone on, I am still here, but I am not going to be here for long. Moreover, he told me that jobs are coming up and we can support you, and we can support you too, maybe apply for those jobs. Apart from that, when my manager came in. They said we would not give you the study days because you have taken too many study days. You know, In our Trust, everyone, when they are doing a master's, they are given a date one day a week.

Moreover, I was taking like not even one day a week; I think I was taking less than that. However, mine was taken in blocks. So for the whole year, I only took 17 days. So the called 17 days is too much, and you have taken too much leave. Moreover, they took that away.

Moreover, I said so when I spoke to the director, you know, at the end of the day, because what I am doing is relevant to my job. My study days have been removed from the trust or not even paid for me. So what is there for me? So he could not answer by saying, " Okay, I am going to go. I am going to speak to your manager so that she can reinstate your study days.

Moreover, that is how they reinstated the study days and the payment. They said it because I did not go to their nominated university. That is why they did not pay; they would choose the same course. However, even though I did not fight it. I just thought you know what, it is my education. I think I just needed to pay for it. So then, after that, they brought this psychologist job, which was for secondment in the view of maybe making it permanent. So we went for the interview. Many of us went for interviews for that secondment, and I got this secondment. However, my manager then, I think, probably because maybe I have more experience than she has. She told my senior manager that I do not think this job needs two people because we supervise the clinical in the afternoon. She was supervising the patient for team leaders during the day. So, I do not think the job is for two people I can manage independently.

Moreover, that is how that secondment ended. Moreover, those are the difficulties I have gone through until I applied. Yeah, I applied for the metro, another matron's job.

Moreover, that matron's job is where I went for the interview, and they appointed someone else. I did not think the interview was unfair; it was fair, but because the person they appointed had more experience in order persons, and she was already a band-8. So, I think she was probably the right candidate in terms of experience. It just depends on whom they wanted, whether they wanted someone fresh to develop or already established, so they chose her. However, then I went for my appraisal.

Furthermore, my manager said to me, how did the interview go? I said, well, I thought I did my best, but my best was not good enough. Did you get feedback? Yeah, I got feedback. They laid the person who gave me feedback, and she gave me very good feedback.

Moreover, we have written, actually, some of it. The manager wrote some of the feedback. So I went on face-to-face, and she gave me feedback. So she said, oh, you know, there is another thing I said, what thing says all you remember, you know, because it was a time when we did interviews with her. Moreover, we talked about three candidates, oh, you are the one who will work with them. You have to choose which one I said. I need to

choose the person who has done well in the interview. So she said, oh, I remember that day what I was talking about, you know, sometimes you can feel that this person, you can work with them. There is just something that he said. What do you mean by that something? So jokingly, I said, you mean being too African?

Furthermore, she did not say yes or no. She just laughed. Oh, you know, sometimes, you know, when you know, when you can feel that this person you cannot work for limo, they cannot fit in the team. Okay, so she did not say it, per se. Nevertheless, when she went and typed up the appraisal, that is what she wrote to say. She sometimes can come across as passive-aggressive. So I went; it was raised with one of my coaches saying I needed to visit with the diversity manager. So I raised it with her.

Moreover, she advised me to say; you know what, I think, go back, and let her tell you exactly what she means. So I went back and spoke to her. She could not pin it down. she is like, oh, no, I was talking to XX, the director of operations; I was talking to xx; I think that came from xx, and they said it came from the interview. So I said you know, I feel like I was already judged. Whatever behaviour I may have outside the interview, that is what was interpreted in the interview. I do not see how someone can be passive-aggressive in an interview. So I said to her, well, if it is not you who said it, then can you take it out of my appraisal? So she took it out of my appraisal? I told her; I would speak to the person who did the interview. Are you happy with that?

Moreover, she said yes. So I went to see the person who did the interview. The one who did the interview just said to me, look, I gave you the feedback, the feedback that I give us honest feedback. If there is anything else, I have said it, and you are so anxious that I do not think you came out. You come across as passive-aggressive, and I would not call you that. So I do not know where that is coming from.

So I think I just felt my confidence went down at that point. Because I was scared of opening my mouth, just in case my African accent was good to come out as passive-aggressive. So when I had my supervision with my senior manager, and I said to her, you know what, at the moment, they were not feeling, it just feels like I have to watch how I

talk whether I should change how I speak for me to be accepted. Furthermore, my manager was like, no, there is no way you can do that, you cannot do that, you cannot change your personality. I know there was a white girl that I used to mentor. I was saying to her, " Now it is your turn. You have to teach me how to be English.

Furthermore, she was laughing. She said there is nothing to teach about being English xx; you are direct but always direct in a good way. I have benefited from you, being direct without your problems and going to be where I am.

I do not think I would ever describe you as passive-aggressive or aggressive. Direct, yes, but not aggressive. So, my senior manager referred me to the lead manager, who has been coaching me to try and look at different ways I perceive things. I think she gave me more ways to look at, you know, when something bad happens, you tend to relate every situation to that bad thing. So what she was trying to talk about was about breaking that cycle. So, I think she was trying to say that, as Africans, we have bad experiences. Everything else that comes it, we build on it and build on it. We find it very difficult to break from that because we have already built up that number of headers, and it is very difficult to come out of that cycle. It shows that you need to find a way of breaking that and maybe reflect on some of the situations and positively look at them.

Like, you know, for example, if you went ahead and complained about something, the outcome of it if you always look at it because now I have complained about something, everyone else is not going to be talking to me, or they are going so you are going to be perceiving whatever everyone says it is because of that complaint. However, it is about looking at the positive, I have sorted it out, and it needs to move on. The other things should not be built on the same thing. So now they put out a job, which was a band 8B, and my senior manager said, well, you have you who have been seconded twice in eight, eight, if you want to apply for the job, you can apply for the job, will look at your CV, and if you meet the criteria, then we are going to shortlist you. That is what I did; I applied for the job, managed to smash it, and got the job. So now looking forward to more headers of working through the job, but I am sure I am reaching that stage where I feel more confident dealing with some of the headers. When you are still a Junior, you just let go of some things. You

do not want to deal with them or some things—you just run away from them. Instead of maybe staying, you decided to move on, and that is why you find people, mostly immigrants, who will go and do agency because it just has not got all this aggro of thinking about climbing up. They will come and make their money and go. They do not have any responsibility. So but it is, I think it is building people. We need to build each other to that level where we can do things.

Interviewer 27:45

Wow, thank you very much for that. Moreover, I have to mention. I think we had a conversation before in terms of which questions I was going to ask you. Furthermore, based on what you have explained, I know you have not yet started working in your senior role, and I think you people will benefit greatly. Another report will benefit you a lot in terms of your journey. You now have a senior role in reaching this, but it has not come as easy. There is a lot that people can learn from all the explanations you have given. There is a lot that we can build into the model that will be built based on this research. So I am going to jump on to a few questions.

Moreover, that is a link to the sort of like where you are currently. So how did you mention it? You may have already mentioned quite a several barriers you had to overcome to get to this position where you are right now. What were the three key barriers you had to overcome to keep your resilience to keep moving until you got this position?

Um, I think someone or one of them is the confidence, you know, most of the time I think, as I said from the beginning, I had many experiences, you know, most of the things clinical things I can do with my eyes shut, but how to interpret that in and explain it, I think it was as Africans we are doers. So if you look at the system back home, you are given promotions based on your performance. You are not given a promotion because you have gone to an interview with Andy and a good interview. So I think it is one of the things I had to overcome too, to be confident enough and speak for myself and to be able to sell myself, and I also think the culture of being waiting to be invited, you know, we were brought up in in a way that you will only speak when you are asked to speak. So that is also a big barrier

because we always think we have to wait until people Pat us on the back and say, XXXX, you are doing so well. This is your next job, which is the different system or together here, we need to be able to say I can do this, and this is me, and this is how I can do it.

Interviewer 30:29

blends. Um, in terms of just one of the main points you have mentioned about being African, being black being but one of the things that you may not one of the issues you may not have if somebody looked at your interview is the name situation because your name does not tell somebody until they see you that you are black. How did that all impact or affect you?

Interviewee 30:58

I think that one has somehow worked in my favour because I am most interested in shortlisting. I am never rarely doing I apply for a job or not get shortlisted. I am always shortlisted when I get to the interview, which is when things go wrong. So I am always shortlisted, maybe because of my name.

Interviewer 31:18

Can you explain a bit about when you say that is how things go wrong? What do you mean by that?

Probably in my trust because they know who I am. Nevertheless, if I had gone outside the trust, I would have gone to other places where I had gone for interviews. Sometimes I think people will look very surprised to see XXX, who is black. So an example is no, he is not in a job situation. When I was working for continuing care, I was going to go and do an assessment. And they were all waiting. And when I walked in, I said, Oh, I am sorry, I am late. They were like, Oh, no, you are not late. We are still waiting for the assessor. I said, um, then the assessor. Oh, so I see you. So you can see that. People were surprised to see they were expecting a white person and were surprised to see a black person that it was.

Interviewer 32:23

Okay. So what do you think are the main attributes of migrant women? What do you think are the main attributes migrant women need to have? If they want to reach a level like yourself, like a leadership position?

Interviewee 32:45

Um, I will do not want to say resilience. I do not think resilience is the right word. I think probably being consistent. I am not giving up. I think it is not that we do not resist resilience. I think we like to give up. One other thing is that most of us do not like conflict. So if a situation ends in a conflict, we tend to draw back and retreat. So it is about knowing that what you are fighting for is right. I think you need to be able to fight for it, no matter the consequences. Because I think sometimes, we are very scared about the consequences, and then we retreat so that people can say, this is what I want, and I am going to fight for it. So maybe one example I can give is that. Africans, we work in the community. We always work in the community. We are born into big families. So when you are eating, you will not eat the whole food because you have a young sister. We do not think as individuals. But in job situations, sometimes you have to be selfish and think about yourself without thinking about what everyone else will think. So sometimes we feel well, we have a lot of we loyal. So because of that loyalty, when we are in a job, we feel that, oh, I cannot go because I *get along* with my manager. Well, I am going to disappoint the team. So I am not saying people should not be loyal, but I think there are times when you need to be selfish and focus on what you want and get it.

Interviewer 34:21

Very good. Okay, and what support systems do you wish you had on your way up to your current position? Coaching,

Interviewee 34:42

I think coaching would be good to be coached by another black person because they will know exactly what you are going through at that point. It would help if you were helped to get out of that cycle when you need to be. So They would understand what you are going

through to entangle you, which if you are being coached by what pistol sometimes I think they do not understand what you are going through. So I think, since I have had some coaching, it has given me much confidence or not a lot, but yeah, it has helped me build up some confidence and think through different ways of thinking about things differently than the way I have always thought. So that, for example, the thing about being selfish came from my coaching to say, you know, it is about not being selfish in a bad way. However, it is about thinking about what is best for you and getting it without thinking about everyone else. If I left the job, my coach told me they would still replace me if I died. They might proceed with them, the person as good as you are, but they are still going to replace you. So why can't you move on to be replaced? So coaching is, I think, one of the lacking things. We do not tend to get coaching or

Interviewer 36:10

Anything else?

Interviewee 36:14

I think just a level playing field where people should be able to be judged for their skills and competencies, not because they are black or white. So the other thing that you know, even with the courses that are for BIM, like the NHS courses, to me, in a way, sometimes they are negative, because then why should I have a course just for me? Alternatively, there could be a positive because at least you know you are talking to people you are sharing the same experiences, and it is easier to understand each other. My lecturer at university was saying, you know, she is one of them that one of the people who do the NHS Academy, so she was saying, you know, sometimes I think people get very, they get these courses from NHS, and the only thing they go through is maybe the diversity way, they do not go through other ways, because that is the only way that they are coached into. So despite, you know, having all these systems in place, it probably is better to have the same systems that everyone else is having than to have something for black people and something for white people.

Interviewer 37:39

Okay, what are the benefits to the organisation, in your opinion, of having migrant women in decision-making leadership positions?

Interviewee 37:55

Organisation B is a very diverse institution regarding when the patients are the patients themselves. So when you have leaders from this, from different diversity, it will help to structure the care itself. An older Indian woman might want to eat curry, while a white person will eat stooed toad in the hole. So having people decide will help make those processes inclusive. I think there are a lot of immigrant women who may be capable of being at the top. We also hope maybe to grow other people and as an inspiration people be able to be inspired than to be left behind all the time.

Interviewer 38:56

In your opinion, what do you think is your perception of the beam as in black, Asian minority ethnic posts, a person all concerning black woman in terms of being looked up by looked on for positions or looked or missed out on positions? Because there is the bundling of the beam as one. So if organisations are taking boxes, then as long as they have got somebody who is considered an ethnic minority, that box is ticked, as opposed to you being a black woman and going to for a job with maybe a Filipino person or Asian patient and other Asian person and you as a black person. What do you think are the

Interviewee 39:59

I think, to be honest, the rest is in categories. So probably, the black people are at the bottom, and these other races are maybe next to the white. So even in terms of jobs, it is perceived that way you find that maybe other races are easier for them to get in. lack people are also discriminated more from the other BAME from the other, the other races, more than maybe more than we discriminate more than black people discriminate others. So you find that maybe this is just maybe my opinion, but you will find that even in the General Hospital, there are more Indians who are sisters than black people.

Interviewer 40:45

So hierarchies, and then the black people being at the bottom of the hierarchy

Interviewee 40:50

at the bottom of the hierarchy. So the lighter you are, I think, the more you are closer to

Interviewer 41:00

the easier it is for you to get into too likely to get into a leadership position. Okay, several women have talked about when they want to go up. I think you mentioned a bit about this, as well. In your introduction, you mentioned that when they have had difficulties in their organisation, their refuge has been returning to education to move on to another position. What is your opinion of that?

Interviewee 41:36

Yeah, like I said, from the beginning, you know, I think the thought is that you have to have something extra to be able to be recognised. Suppose you have the same, the same excuse. In terms of skills, skills are subjective. You can say I have all these clinical skills, and I have got this. I have got that. But it is not. It does not give you a stamp to say yes. Those skills are there. However, education gives you a stamp and says, yes, you have a degree in this. So that stumps you. So I think most people would run to go and do a qualification in the hope of saying, if I have this, then I can say, well, I have got a degree in this, or I have got the Masters in this that will help me to move further. However, in my opinion, probably even sometimes, it does not work. Okay, job, the job that the matron's job for patient flows advertised as someone working towards the master's degree, the person they give the job did not even have did not study the master's degree.

Interviewer 42:44

It shows that some of the things they put in the jobs they want do not count. What counts more is what you look like and the familial situation that you basically find yourself

in. Okay. The last question is, what can organisations do to ensure the self-inclusion of migrant women into leadership positions?

Interviewee 43:15

Okay, as I said, I think coaching is one of the things. I think coaching is very important; we need to be able to acknowledge the differences as well. So acknowledging the differences and understanding the processes, like I was saying, how we are brought up also affects how we behave. So we are brought up to be maybe invited to speak. So if we can have that recognition, to say the culture is different, and be able to be supported to build up our confidence, that would help people to be able to feel more confident. I think the system itself makes it very difficult. So there is the disc system discrimination, or whatever you call it, the system discrimination or institutional discrimination. So you find that sometimes it is just that some jobs are perceived to be good enough for others. Not good enough for other black people.

Interviewer 44:23

Okay, so good enough for other races and not so much for black people. Yeah. Okay. You have mentioned coaching quite a bit, and I want to sort of like going back into that. How can you describe what coaching is like for somebody who is hearing coaching and they do not know what it is, and maybe they will think about it, football coach?

Interviewee 44:50

Yeah, I think I think having experienced some coaching is about, you know, supporting someone to think differently on the things that they think. So one of the things I was talking about where, you know, when you find had a bad experience, you tend to go back to it and whatever happens, you might not look at it positively, you always find it in a negative because you have already got that, that that bad experience, which is there, so you keep burdening. So it is not easy to kind of think positively. So if you do some coaching, it will help you think differently about how the situation looks. So, for example, if you went for a job interview, you might think differently and think the person they gave the job, like I was

saying, the person they gave the job, was more experienced than me. I did not think they did not give me a job because I was a black person. But if you think all the time was because I am black, you tend to go around in circles. So coaching will help you break that cycle to stand; it starts with looking at what you can do to change things yourself. So instead of just thinking about or blaming this as the situation, there is something you can do to change that situation. So I think, in short, coaching helps you think differently to change your situation.

Interviewer 46:14

Thank you. That was very good. Thank you very much. You would be glad to know we have come to the end of the interview. Thank you very much. I think your information will be very useful in that not only in the report but also in helping other people going forward.

9.6. Appendix 5: Screenshots of coding phases

Nodes-Level 1-4-5-22

1	2	3	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
			Name	Files	References	Created On	Created	Modified On	Modified	
			Demographics		1	2 11/12/2021 12:42	AC	11/12/2021 12:44	AC	
			Arrival in the UK		24	26 11/12/2021 12:45	AC	07/01/2022 12:50	AC	
			Country of origin		26	28 11/12/2021 12:46	AC	07/01/2022 12:47	AC	
			Directly employed by the public sector organisation		18	20 11/12/2021 12:48	AC	07/01/2022 12:53	AC	
			Employed through an agency or self-employed		8	9 11/12/2021 12:49	AC	05/01/2022 12:31	AC	
			Family situation		18	21 11/12/2021 12:49	AC	07/01/2022 11:28	AC	
			Family whereabouts, UK or Abroad		7	8 11/12/2021 12:50	AC	31/12/2021 17:59	AC	
			Length of being in the UK		4	5 11/12/2021 12:50	AC	27/12/2021 13:03	AC	
			Qualification and employment before coming to the UK		16	17 11/12/2021 12:50	AC	05/01/2022 14:03	AC	
			Year obtained the highest postgraduate qualification and also year obtained ILR		18	25 11/12/2021 12:51	AC	07/01/2022 12:58	AC	
			Career expectations		1	1 11/12/2021 12:42	AC	27/12/2021 13:13	AC	
			Current position in terms of seniority based on aspirations on arrival		12	13 11/12/2021 12:52	AC	07/01/2022 11:32	AC	
			Current position is middle manager with extra responsibilities		2	2 28/12/2021 13:37	AC	07/01/2022 11:33	AC	
			Expectations before arriving in the UK vs reality		13	15 11/12/2021 12:51	AC	07/01/2022 13:15	AC	
			How did you manage to reach your current position~		5	5 11/12/2021 12:53	AC	03/01/2022 17:39	AC	
			Lack of progression and career mobility opportunities		9	11 11/12/2021 12:53	AC	31/12/2021 17:04	AC	
			Positives for coming to the UK		6	8 12/12/2021 10:32	AC	02/01/2022 16:08	AC	
			Immigration reality and structural hostility		1	1 11/12/2021 12:43	AC	03/01/2022 11:22	AC	
			Did not tell employers about getting ILR		2	4 28/12/2021 15:50	AC	29/12/2021 16:57	AC	
			Effect political and hostile Immigration policies nationalist and capitalist focus		13	21 11/12/2021 12:55	AC	05/01/2022 12:25	AC	
			Effects of negative press of migrants and prior immigration status on mindset and ambition		8	10 11/12/2021 12:55	AC	07/01/2022 13:25	AC	
			They changed the goal post and i was affected by it		1	4 04/01/2022 19:52	AC	05/01/2022 11:56	AC	
			Employers just gave letters but i paid for my own visa		1	3 26/12/2021 13:02	AC	26/12/2021 13:25	AC	
			ILR made things easier		9	12 21/12/2021 19:00	AC	05/01/2022 14:10	AC	
			No transition or integration support from the home office or employer		17	25 11/12/2021 12:55	AC	05/01/2022 12:35	AC	
			Structural racism and othering		16	23 12/12/2021 11:11	AC	05/01/2022 14:48	AC	
			Job offer revoked through no personal fault		5	5 28/12/2021 15:59	AC	04/01/2022 16:24	AC	
			There is need to educate natives about the benefits of migrants to the economy		2	3 28/12/2021 16:46	AC	07/01/2022 12:42	AC	
			They harm as people live in fear and suspense to the extent that people end up unnecessarily seeking solicitors		6	7 11/12/2021 12:55	AC	05/01/2022 12:45	AC	
			Waiting for ILR breaks you and makes you resilient at the same time, you muddle through		6	11 11/12/2021 12:55	AC	05/01/2022 12:24	AC	
			Starting and support systems in the UK		1	1 11/12/2021 12:43	AC	11/12/2021 12:43	AC	
			Community help or hindrance and lack of family support		8	8 11/12/2021 12:57	AC	05/01/2022 13:26	AC	
			SL-Need to unlearn migrant mindset of believed the we will stay at the bottom of the ladder		3	7 05/01/2022 13:27	AC	07/01/2022 13:45	AC	
			Held multiple low level jobs to survive		6	6 11/12/2021 12:57	AC	05/01/2022 14:05	AC	
			SL Appreciate low positions and what got me to leadership		1	1 05/01/2022 14:08	AC	05/01/2022 14:08	AC	
			Joined home country or ethnic minority community		3	3 11/12/2021 12:57	AC	30/12/2021 11:48	AC	
			Joined home country or ethnic minority community		5	6 30/12/2021 13:17	AC	07/01/2022 11:29	AC	
			Lack of role models		19	25 11/12/2021 12:57	AC	05/01/2022 13:11	AC	
			Struggled to get UK first job - had to start over or step back to lower job		1	1 03/01/2022 17:37	AC	03/01/2022 17:37	AC	
			Told myself I would get an office job		8	10 11/12/2021 12:57	AC	01/01/2022 15:55	AC	
			upbringing, gender-related roles, influence, or norms on self-perception		1	1 11/12/2021 12:43	AC	11/12/2021 12:43	AC	
			Dealing with stereotypes and leveraging for self-inclusion		1	1 11/12/2021 12:43	AC	11/12/2021 12:43	AC	
			Challenges of being labelled as the angry black woman		6	7 11/12/2021 13:00	AC	04/01/2022 16:33	AC	
			Creating our networking and mentoring to leverage opportunities positively		6	6 11/12/2021 13:01	AC	03/01/2022 16:42	AC	
			Fighting the system to break the barriers		11	16 11/12/2021 13:01	AC	05/01/2022 14:50	AC	
			SL-Be carefully strategic so you do not lose your career		1	1 03/01/2022 16:35	AC	03/01/2022 16:37	AC	
			Muting self or speaking less		10	17 11/12/2021 13:01	AC	03/01/2022 16:42	AC	
			You are employed to challenge the status quo provided you do it with facts and strategically		2	3 03/01/2022 17:57	AC	04/01/2022 14:03	AC	
			Positively using qualifications as an anchor that they cannot take away		2	2 11/12/2021 13:01	AC	28/12/2021 13:25	AC	
			Regressed and delayed in progression generally due to assigned unseen differences with black caribbean or tho		4	6 24/12/2021 18:08	AC	31/12/2021 15:34	AC	
			There always seems to be just one person better at the interview (copy and paste responses)		5	8 11/12/2021 13:01	AC	04/01/2022 13:49	AC	
			We need a lot of selfs which are knocked down if want to progress-needs self-care and empathy		7	9 11/12/2021 13:01	AC	01/01/2022 15:43	AC	
			We need to keep speaking up		10	16 11/12/2021 13:01	AC	04/01/2022 14:48	AC	
			Being strategic about career upward mobility and what they have done		1	1 11/12/2021 12:43	AC	12/12/2021 17:41	AC	
			Ask for help and be transparent with family		6	8 01/01/2022 15:56	AC	07/01/2022 12:27	AC	
			Downgrading CV or seek lower jobs as a way in		9	9 11/12/2021 13:10	AC	03/01/2022 13:34	AC	
			Find Coaching, Mentorship and sponsorship by a senior person		13	24 11/12/2021 13:05	AC	05/01/2022 13:35	AC	
			Not mentioning prior work experience in the home country		1	1 30/12/2021 11:57	AC	30/12/2021 11:57	AC	
			Leaving the organisation If they dont feel appreciated		7	7 11/12/2021 13:12	AC	03/01/2022 16:46	AC	
			SL-Dont make noise leave quietly. You can't fight an elephant		1	2 03/01/2022 15:42	AC	03/01/2022 16:46	AC	
			Leveraging progression opportunities and support offered		8	12 26/12/2021 16:05	AC	07/01/2022 11:45	AC	
			Especially from managers and mentor		1	1 07/01/2022 12:26	AC	07/01/2022 12:26	AC	
			Negotiate when needed		2	2 01/01/2022 16:06	AC	04/01/2022 13:58	AC	
			Playing to the politics on the way up		5	7 11/12/2021 13:12	AC	30/12/2021 11:59	AC	
			Positive network of sisterhood or otherwise		7	10 12/12/2021 17:14	AC	05/01/2022 15:05	AC	
			Vision and self-belief		3	4 11/12/2021 13:05	AC	26/12/2021 15:38	AC	
			Why seek mentorship outside the black race		5	7 11/12/2021 13:12	AC	05/01/2022 13:16	AC	
			Barriers related to career mobility and what had to overcome to get to their current position		1	1 11/12/2021 12:43	AC	26/12/2021 16:37	AC	
			Accent, name, barriers affecting opportunities		12	18 11/12/2021 13:07	AC	05/01/2022 13:20	AC	
			Dont let anything or anyone define you with their preconceptions		1	3 05/01/2022 14:34	AC	05/01/2022 14:57	AC	
			English last name has to some extent worked in my favour		2	2 04/01/2022 16:48	AC	05/01/2022 13:15	AC	
			English idioms and play with words making it hard to understand and compete even when competent for the		1	1 19/12/2021 10:35	AC	31/12/2021 17:59	AC	

72	English idioms and play with words making it hard to understand and compete even when competent for the	1	1	19/12/2021 10:35	AC	31/12/2021 17:59	AC
73	SL-Lost myself a bit to fit in and be accepted	1	1	03/01/2022 17:42	AC	03/01/2022 17:54	AC
74	Fear of decrimination and lack of motivation after a bad experience or negative treatment	9	9	11/12/2021 13:07	AC	07/01/2022 13:49	AC
75	SL-Apply anyway and break the cycle of thinking everything else is going to be bad	2	3	03/01/2022 17:54	AC	04/01/2022 16:38	AC
76	Frustrated but kept trying and moving forward	15	21	11/12/2021 13:10	AC	04/01/2022 14:52	AC
77	Keep going you will get the job you want eventually despite the challenges	1	1	04/01/2022 16:40	AC	04/01/2022 16:40	AC
78	Going back to Education in the UK to navigate obstacles and trying to rebuild lost career capital	22	42	11/12/2021 13:10	AC	07/01/2022 12:53	AC
79	Why black people go back education	2	5	04/01/2022 17:02	AC	04/01/2022 17:36	AC
80	Gravitate towards those who can help	7	7	11/12/2021 13:10	AC	07/01/2022 12:29	AC
81	Having self-belief as a driver to belong or move to find another job	6	9	12/12/2021 16:16	AC	05/01/2022 15:00	AC
82	Home country communities or other migrants reinforcing the doubt and influence their reluctance to apply fc	4	4	11/12/2021 12:57	AC	30/12/2021 11:47	AC
83	Lack of community cohesiveness in black people	6	9	11/12/2021 13:07	AC	05/01/2022 15:03	AC
84	Lack of diversity at the top, in recruitment panels and BAME ethnic hierachies as a nemesis	9	17	26/12/2021 14:45	AC	05/01/2022 13:43	AC
85	Feeling lonely at the top	3	4	03/01/2022 16:21	AC	05/01/2022 15:09	AC
86	Make sure interview panels are representative,	1	1	03/01/2022 17:15	AC	03/01/2022 17:16	AC
87	Lack of mentors, professional networks or social capital	7	8	11/12/2021 13:07	AC	03/01/2022 17:50	AC
88	I wish I has a mentor or coach	2	2	05/01/2022 15:23	AC	07/01/2022 12:32	AC
89	Proximity to London and needing to go where the job is when seeking career progression	4	5	19/12/2021 11:07	AC	05/01/2022 11:56	AC
90	Skin colour or racism and discrimination despite having qualifications, desire and experience	16	31	11/12/2021 13:07	AC	07/01/2022 12:31	AC
91	Ignore or call it out	1	1	07/01/2022 12:32	AC	07/01/2022 12:32	AC
92	Them and us- Different rules for them than us	13	28	11/12/2021 13:07	AC	05/01/2022 13:19	AC
93	When you report or challenge the system you risk being managed out of the organisations	9	12	11/12/2021 13:05	AC	04/01/2022 14:04	AC
94	Working twice as hard and harder than white people in a bid to be seen	12	14	12/12/2021 15:47	AC	07/01/2022 13:28	AC
95	We over perform	1	1	07/01/2022 13:30	AC	07/01/2022 13:30	AC
96	Career upward mobility and deskilling, resilience, discrimination, or the fear of discrimination	1	1	11/12/2021 12:43	AC	03/01/2022 15:54	AC
97	Being in senior but only in Diversity and inclusion positions	3	4	11/12/2021 13:12	AC	30/12/2021 13:19	AC
98	Better in comparison with other migrants or ethnic minorities	3	5	11/12/2021 13:04	AC	01/01/2022 15:52	AC
99	Dealing with glass ceiling and glass cliffs	11	16	11/12/2021 13:12	AC	04/01/2022 17:18	AC
100	Demoralised due to unment assumptions that the British educational system in the home country would be ac	5	9	11/12/2021 13:12	AC	05/01/2022 12:17	AC
101	Empty praises, deskilling and covert discrimination - Too good to leave the lower position	11	15	11/12/2021 13:12	AC	04/01/2022 13:37	AC
102	SL-Had to move to another organisation to go higher	3	3	03/01/2022 16:54	AC	05/01/2022 14:33	AC
103	How we are incomparison with white people has an impact on how we rise - reality of what we meet	11	14	11/12/2021 13:04	AC	05/01/2022 15:28	AC
104	Lack of progression support by leadership and being used as cover for higher positions without higher pay	9	14	11/12/2021 13:01	AC	07/01/2022 11:34	AC
105	Managing expectations and knowing that it is hard in a foreign country	9	11	22/12/2021 18:13	AC	05/01/2022 12:33	AC
106	People taking credit for their expertise	1	1	31/12/2021 17:41	AC	31/12/2021 17:41	AC
107	Pressure to conform, fit in, and be part of the ingroup	10	16	11/12/2021 13:12	AC	03/01/2022 17:45	AC
108	Transferable skills and social capital may be more desired than just qualifications when seeking higher positior	2	2	28/12/2021 15:45	AC	04/01/2022 13:45	AC
109	SL-Mentor others so you learn as well	2	4	03/01/2022 15:53	AC	05/01/2022 15:12	AC
110	Wanted to diversify and gain more skills	2	3	11/12/2021 12:54	AC	24/12/2021 18:13	AC
111	The benefits of employing migrants the UK Organisations	1	1	11/12/2021 12:43	AC	03/01/2022 11:25	AC
112	Companies can benefits from having migrants in leadership positions but they do not give us opportunities	26	29	11/12/2021 13:15	AC	07/01/2022 13:39	AC
113	Representing demographic thought and representation	2	2	03/01/2022 17:04	AC	05/01/2022 15:23	AC
114	Migrant women with the ILR and right qualifications be influential leaders and become leaders provided they	20	22	11/12/2021 13:15	AC	07/01/2022 13:28	AC
115	What organisations can do to ensure the inclusion of migrant women into leadership positions	19	23	11/12/2021 13:15	AC	07/01/2022 13:45	AC
116	Be more flexible treat people equally	3	3	28/12/2021 17:09	AC	05/01/2022 15:25	AC
117	What can be done going forward (solution)	0	0	26/12/2021 16:33	AC	26/12/2021 16:33	AC
118	Appreciate the gratitude for those we have mentored	3	3	27/12/2021 12:45	AC	03/01/2022 18:19	AC
119	Changes needed at a policy and olrganisational level	5	5	28/12/2021 16:39	AC	05/01/2022 12:39	AC
120	Development of a resource or way forward to help other women to bridge the gap	4	5	24/12/2021 18:25	AC	01/01/2022 16:18	AC
121	Power dressing	3	3	27/12/2021 12:46	AC	07/01/2022 12:37	AC
122	SL-Key attributes for success as Africans	9	37	03/01/2022 12:54	AC	07/01/2022 13:36	AC
123	Stay focussed and continue working hard	1	2	03/01/2022 15:06	AC	03/01/2022 15:08	AC
124	The interview as a reflective opportunity	2	2	30/12/2021 12:08	AC	05/01/2022 15:34	AC
125	Too used to keeping low paid jobs that it is difficult to change the mindset	1	1	30/12/2021 13:32	AC	30/12/2021 13:32	AC
126	My notes to add to discussion chapter	1	1	30/12/2021 12:06	AC	30/12/2021 12:06	AC
127	Why people leave	3	6	31/12/2021 16:09	AC	05/01/2022 12:31	AC
128	SL-So how did you manage to get to your current position	1	1	02/01/2022 18:11	AC	02/01/2022 18:14	AC
129	You need to constntly prove yourself	2	2	03/01/2022 11:57	AC	05/01/2022 15:14	AC
130							

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Nodes Level 2 6-5-22

1	2	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
		Name	Files	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modifie
		Demographics		1	2 11/12/2021 12:42	AC	11/12/2021 12:44	AC
		Directly employed by the public sector organisation		23	27 11/12/2021 12:48	AC	05/05/2022 18:40	AC
		Family situation whereabouts, UK or Abroad		22	28 11/12/2021 12:50	AC	05/05/2022 23:59	AC
		Qualification and employment before coming to the UK		16	17 11/12/2021 12:50	AC	05/01/2022 14:03	AC
		Year obtained the highest postgraduate qualification and also year obtained ILR		18	25 11/12/2021 12:51	AC	07/01/2022 12:58	AC
		Year of arrival or length of being in the UK		30	57 11/12/2021 12:50	AC	06/05/2022 00:00	AC
		Starting out, career expectations vs current at time of interview		1	1 11/12/2021 12:42	AC	06/05/2022 08:35	AC
		Community help or hindrance and lack of family support		12	17 11/12/2021 12:57	AC	06/05/2022 00:12	AC
		Current position in terms of seniority based on aspirations on arrival		12	14 11/12/2021 12:52	AC	06/05/2022 08:43	AC
		Expectations before arriving in the UK vs reality		13	15 11/12/2021 12:51	AC	07/01/2022 13:15	AC
		Held multiple low level jobs to survive		6	7 11/12/2021 12:57	AC	06/05/2022 00:13	AC
		How did you manage to reach your current position~		5	5 11/12/2021 12:53	AC	03/01/2022 17:39	AC
		Lack of progression and career mobility opportunities		9	11 11/12/2021 12:53	AC	31/12/2021 17:04	AC
		Lack of role models		5	6 30/12/2021 13:17	AC	07/01/2022 11:29	AC
		Positives for coming to the UK		6	8 12/12/2021 10:32	AC	02/01/2022 16:08	AC
		Struggled to get UK first job - had to start over or step back to lower job		19	25 11/12/2021 12:57	AC	06/05/2022 00:13	AC
		Upbringing, gender-related roles, influence, or norms on self-perception		8	10 11/12/2021 12:57	AC	06/05/2022 08:42	AC
		Immigration reality and structural hostility		1	1 11/12/2021 12:43	AC	03/01/2022 11:22	AC
		Did not tell employers about getting ILR		2	4 28/12/2021 15:50	AC	29/12/2021 16:57	AC
		Effect political and hostile Immigration policies nationalist and capitalist focus		13	21 11/12/2021 12:55	AC	05/01/2022 12:25	AC
		Effects of negative press of migrants and prior immigration status on mindset and ambition		9	14 11/12/2021 12:55	AC	07/01/2022 13:25	AC
		Employers just gave letters but i paid for my own visa		1	3 26/12/2021 13:02	AC	26/12/2021 13:25	AC
		ILR made things easier		9	12 21/12/2021 19:00	AC	05/01/2022 14:10	AC
		No transition or integration support from the home office or employer		17	25 11/12/2021 12:55	AC	05/01/2022 12:35	AC
		Structural racism and othering		18	27 12/12/2021 11:11	AC	06/05/2022 00:11	AC
		There is need to educate natives about the benefits of migrants to the economy		2	3 28/12/2021 16:46	AC	07/01/2022 12:42	AC
		They harm as people live in fear and suspense to the extent that people end up unnecessarily seeking solicitors		6	7 11/12/2021 12:55	AC	05/01/2022 12:45	AC
		Waiting for ILR breaks you and makes you resilient at the same time, you muddle through		6	11 11/12/2021 12:55	AC	05/01/2022 12:24	AC
		Dealing with stereotypes and leveraging for self-inclusion		1	1 11/12/2021 12:43	AC	11/12/2021 12:43	AC
		Challenges of being labelled as the angry black woman		6	7 11/12/2021 13:00	AC	04/01/2022 16:33	AC
		Creating our networking and mentoring to leverage opportunities positively		6	6 11/12/2021 13:01	AC	03/01/2022 16:42	AC
		Fighting the system to break the barriers		11	17 11/12/2021 13:01	AC	05/01/2022 14:50	AC
		Muting self or speaking less		12	20 11/12/2021 13:01	AC	03/01/2022 16:42	AC
		Positively using qualifications as an anchor that they cannot take away		2	2 11/12/2021 13:01	AC	28/12/2021 13:25	AC
		Regressed and delayed in progression generally due to assigned unseen differences with black caribbean or t		4	6 24/12/2021 18:08	AC	31/12/2021 15:34	AC
		There always seems to be just one person better at the interview (copy and paste responses)		5	8 11/12/2021 13:01	AC	04/01/2022 13:49	AC
		We need a lot of selfs which are knocked down if want to progress-needs self-care and empathy		7	9 11/12/2021 13:01	AC	01/01/2022 15:43	AC
		We need to keep speaking up		10	16 11/12/2021 13:01	AC	04/01/2022 14:48	AC
		Being strategic about career upward mobility and what they have done		1	1 11/12/2021 12:43	AC	12/12/2021 17:41	AC
		Ask for help and be transparent with family		6	8 01/01/2022 15:56	AC	07/01/2022 12:27	AC
		Downgrading CV or seek lower jobs as a way in		9	9 11/12/2021 13:10	AC	03/01/2022 13:34	AC
		Find Coaching, Mentorship and sponsorship by a senior person		14	25 11/12/2021 13:05	AC	05/01/2022 13:35	AC
		Leaving the organisation if they dont feel appreciated		7	8 11/12/2021 13:12	AC	06/05/2022 00:06	AC
		Leveraging progression opportunities and support offered		8	13 26/12/2021 16:05	AC	07/01/2022 11:45	AC
		Negotiate when needed		2	2 01/01/2022 16:06	AC	04/01/2022 13:58	AC
		Playing to the politics on the way up		5	7 11/12/2021 13:12	AC	30/12/2021 11:59	AC
		Positive network of sisterhood or otherwise		7	10 12/12/2021 17:14	AC	05/01/2022 15:05	AC
		Vision and self-belief		3	4 11/12/2021 13:05	AC	26/12/2021 15:38	AC
		Why seek mentorship outside the black race		5	7 11/12/2021 13:12	AC	05/01/2022 13:16	AC
		Barriers related to career mobility and what had to overcome to get to their current position		1	1 11/12/2021 12:43	AC	26/12/2021 16:37	AC
		Accent, name, barriers affecting opportunities		14	23 11/12/2021 13:07	AC	05/01/2022 13:20	AC
		English idioms and play with words making it hard to understand and compete even when competent for t		2	2 19/12/2021 10:35	AC	31/12/2021 17:59	AC
		Fear of decimination and lack of motivation after a bad experience or negative treatment		11	12 11/12/2021 13:07	AC	07/01/2022 13:49	AC
		Frustrated but kept trying and moving forward		15	22 11/12/2021 13:10	AC	04/01/2022 14:52	AC
		Going back to Education in the UK to navigate obstacles and trying to rebuild lost career capital		22	47 11/12/2021 13:10	AC	07/01/2022 12:53	AC
		Gravitate towards those who can help and having self-belief		12	16 11/12/2021 13:10	AC	06/05/2022 00:16	AC
		Home country communities or other migrants reinforcing the doubt and influence their reluctance to apply		4	4 11/12/2021 12:57	AC	30/12/2021 11:47	AC
		Lack of community cohesiveness in black people		6	9 11/12/2021 13:07	AC	05/01/2022 15:03	AC
		Lack of diversity at the top, in recruitment panels and BAME ethnic hierarchies as a nemesis		11	22 26/12/2021 14:45	AC	05/01/2022 13:43	AC
		Lack of mentors, professional networks or social capital		9	10 11/12/2021 13:07	AC	03/01/2022 17:50	AC
		Proximity to London and needing to go where the job is when seeking career progression		4	5 19/12/2021 11:07	AC	05/01/2022 11:56	AC
		Skin colour or racism and discrimination despite having qualifications, desire and experience		16	31 11/12/2021 13:07	AC	06/05/2022 00:05	AC
		Them and us- Different rules for them than us		17	40 11/12/2021 13:07	AC	05/01/2022 13:19	AC
		Working twice as hard and harder than white people in a bid to be seen		12	14 12/12/2021 15:47	AC	06/05/2022 00:05	AC
		Career upward mobility and deskilling, resilience, discrimination, or the fear of discrimination		1	1 11/12/2021 12:43	AC	03/01/2022 15:54	AC
		Being in senior but only in Diversity and inclusion positions		3	4 11/12/2021 13:12	AC	30/12/2021 13:19	AC
		Better in comparison with other migrants or ethnic minorities		3	5 11/12/2021 13:04	AC	01/01/2022 15:52	AC
		Dealing with glass ceiling and glass cliffs		11	16 11/12/2021 13:12	AC	04/01/2022 17:18	AC
		Demoralised due to unmet assumptions that the British educational system in the home country would be		5	9 11/12/2021 13:12	AC	05/01/2022 12:17	AC
		Empty praises, deskilling and covert discrimination - Too good to leave the lower position		13	17 11/12/2021 13:12	AC	06/05/2022 00:08	AC
		How we are in comparison with white people has an impact on how we rise - reality of what we meet		11	14 11/12/2021 13:04	AC	05/01/2022 15:28	AC
		Lack of progression support by leadership and being used as cover for higher positions without higher pay		9	14 11/12/2021 13:01	AC	07/01/2022 11:34	AC
		Managing expectations and knowing that it is hard in a foreign country		9	11 22/12/2021 18:13	AC	05/01/2022 12:33	AC
		People taking credit for their expertise		1	1 31/12/2021 17:41	AC	31/12/2021 17:41	AC
		Pressure to conform, fit in, and be part of the ingroup		10	16 11/12/2021 13:12	AC	03/01/2022 17:45	AC
		SL-So how did you manage to get to your current position		2	3 02/01/2022 18:11	AC	02/01/2022 18:14	AC
		Transferable skills and social capital may be more desired than just qualifications when seeking higher positi		4	6 28/12/2021 15:45	AC	04/01/2022 13:45	AC
		Wanted to diversify and gain more skills		2	3 11/12/2021 12:54	AC	24/12/2021 18:13	AC
		The benefits of employing migrants the UK Organisations		1	1 11/12/2021 12:43	AC	03/01/2022 11:25	AC
		Companies can benefit from having migrants in leadership positions but they do not give us opportunities		27	30 11/12/2021 13:15	AC	06/05/2022 00:14	AC
		Migrant women with the ILR and right qualifications be influential leaders and become leaders provided the		20	22 11/12/2021 13:15	AC	07/01/2022 13:28	AC
		What organisations can do to ensure the inclusion of migrant women into leadership positions		21	26 11/12/2021 13:15	AC	07/01/2022 13:45	AC
		What can be done going forward (solution)		4	7 26/12/2021 16:33	AC	26/12/2021 16:33	AC
		Appreciate the gratitude for those we have mentored		3	3 27/12/2021 12:45	AC	03/01/2022 18:19	AC
		Changes needed at a policy and organisational level		5	5 28/12/2021 16:39	AC	05/01/2022 12:39	AC
		Development of a resource or way forward to help other women to bridge the gap		4	5 24/12/2021 18:25	AC	01/01/2022 16:18	AC
		Power dressing		3	3 27/12/2021 12:46	AC	07/01/2022 12:37	AC
		SL-Key attributes for success as Africans		9	37 03/01/2022 12:54	AC	07/01/2022 13:36	AC
		Stay focussed and continue working hard		1	2 03/01/2022 15:06	AC	03/01/2022 15:08	AC
		The interview as a reflective opportunity		2	2 30/12/2021 12:08	AC	05/01/2022 15:34	AC
		Too used to keeping low paid jobs that it is difficult to change the mindset		1	1 30/12/2021 13:32	AC	30/12/2021 13:32	AC
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Interview coding nodes levels 3 to 4

Name	Description	Files	References
0. Introduction (followed by demographics)		31	149
1. Social identity and self-categorisation -Black African HQHSM women’s lived experiences and socially ascribed identities		31	217
a. Social Identity - How black African HQHSM women’s lived experiences shape their identities and the likeliness of seeking leadership positions in public sector organisations in England		27	82
Being trapped in drudgery, serving time, and obtaining indefinite leave to remain provides freedom of choice and a way out		9	12
Effects of unpleasantly negative media on immigrants, hostile immigration policies, nationalist rhetoric, and restrictive immigration status on mental health, well-being, and career ambition		16	33
Racism and discrimination from co-workers and lack of education on the economic benefits of having migrants		4	10
The impact of systemic racism and othering based on socially ascribed identities		18	27
b. Self-categorisation – acting on jolt moments that trigger identity-challenge dynamics due to lived experiences		31	135
Community support or impediment and absence of role models or assistance in achieving the current position		19	39
Expectations prior to arrival in the United Kingdom versus current seniority based on those expectations		20	28
Strategies employed in the face of hardships from acquiring the first job in the UK, starting over, accepting a lower-paying position and working numerous low-level jobs to make ends meet		25	40
The influence of upbringing, gender-related roles, or social standards on self-perception		8	10
Uneven, unfair competition or lack of advancement and mobility opportunities		9	11
2. Identity (individual) - The beginnings and journeys of black African HQHSM women through the immigration system and the workplace experience while on the ‘limited leave to remain’ visa, on their career trajectories		31	566
a. Identity meaning-making - The impact of the beginnings and journeys of black African HQHSM women through the immigration system and the workplace experience while on the ‘limited leave to remain’ visa on their career trajectories		28	146
High levels of anti-immigration sentiment and the absence of transition or integration help from the home office or employer result in anxiety while awaiting the ILR as individuals battle for survival. This both weakens and fortifies them		18	39
Non-Caucasian sounding names and accents, English idioms, and play with words make it difficult to understand and compete even if the individual is qualified and competent for the job		15	25

Name	Description	Files	References
Postcode lottery in that professional growth is determined by proximity to London; the further you are from London, the lesser your prospects of success		4	5
Them and us 'othering' tendencies, such as different rules for them than for us despite our skills and experience, e.g., skin colour or racism - leading to fear of discrimination, lack of motivation following unpleasant encounters, or poor treatment		24	76
b. Intersecting identities - Complexities resulting from black African HQSM women's gender, race, ethnicity, and status as first-generation migrants in the workplace		30	138
Lonely at the top - Lack of diversity in the upper echelons, recruitment panels, and professional and social networks		17	32
Losing oneself - the dilemma between the urge to conform, fit in as part of a higher-order ingroup and preserve one's identity		13	24
Managing workplace plagiarists - tempering expectations and understanding the complex dynamics of sovereignty, especially relating to white and ethnic hierarchies		18	26
Microaggressions, glass ceiling and glass cliffs once you are offered a higher position		14	24
Role creep - Empty compliments and promises, de-skilling, covert and overt discrimination denying career progression, soft support while being used as cover for higher positions without higher pay		16	31
c. Identity reconstruction - How the black African HQSM women navigate the multiple intersecting identities, opportunities, and challenges to reach their positions		31	282
Leveraging self-inclusion opportunities and responding strategically to obstacles and career progression prospects		29	152
Diversifying and acquiring more transferable skills and social capital may be more desirable than qualifications alone when applying for positions of leadership roles		7	12
Having vision, self-belief, positive networks of sisterhood or otherwise, and gravitating toward individuals who can guide keeps one moving when frustrated, as does working twice as hard and harder than white people to be recognised		24	63
Leaving the company If undervalued, even if decreasing one's CV or moving horizontally is the only way in		12	17
Playing to the politics and negotiating, when necessary, i.e., capitalising on advancement opportunities, seeking mentorship from beyond the black race, and embracing assistance offered		14	26
Seeking executive or senior-level sponsorship, mentoring, and coaching		17	33
Reacting and dealing with stereotypes and moments of discrimination		27	130
Accepting that they do not belong and focusing on mental health, self-preservation, self-care, self-love, and self-empathy, and carefully picking and choosing battles		7	9

Name	Description	Files	References
Creating congenial familial networks and mentorship ties in own communities		6	6
Disillusionment stems from regrets that appear to be copied and pasted in applications and interviews, with the most common regret purporting there is always just one outstanding candidate		5	8
Returning to education in the UK to overcome obstacles and regain lost professional capital while drawing favourably on qualifications as they cannot be revoked		25	79
Speaking less or muting oneself to avoid being labelled an angry black woman		15	27
3. Co-construction - recommended future model		31	143
5a. Migrant women's role in self-inclusion into leadership positions		19	60
Critical success factors and proposals for Black African HQHSM women's successful career advancement		12	43
Development of a resource or strategy to assist other women in closing the gap		11	17
5b. Changes at the organisational and policy levels - The actions organisations must take to ensure leadership positions are filled equitably		30	83
Easing the labyrinth - providing migrant women with ILR and suitable qualifications with the proper tools and support to apply for and flourish in leadership roles.		20	22
Openly celebrating migrants' contributions - Articulating the benefits of employing migrants		22	30
Targeted reverse mentorship and assistance initiatives - encouraging prospective migrants leaders and natives executives to understand each other's subcultures		27	30

Themes from the Interviews – Phase 5

Sample Coding based on Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021) Thematic Analysis

Themes	Files	References
1. Introduction (followed by demographics)	31	156
Directly employed by the public sector organisation	23	27
Family situation whereabouts, UK or abroad	22	28
Qualification and employment before coming to the UK	16	17
Year obtained the highest postgraduate qualification and year obtained ILR	18	25
Year of arrival or length of being in the UK	30	57
2. Social identity and self-categorisation - Black African HQHSM women's lived experiences shape their identities and the likeliness of seeking leadership positions in public sector organisations in England	31	217
2a. Social Identity - How black African HQHSM women's lived experiences shape their identities and the likeliness of seeking leadership positions in public sector organisations in England	27	82
Effects of intolerable media publicity on immigrants, hostile immigration policy, nationalist rhetoric, and immigration status on mental health, well-being, and aspiration	16	33
Indefinite leave to remain allowed for freedom of choice and an escape route	9	12
Racism and discrimination in the workplace from co-workers and the need to educate natives on the economic benefits migrants bring	4	10
The impact of systemic racism and othering based on socially ascribed identities	18	27
2b. Self-categorisation - Jolt moments and processes resulting from lived experiences for the black African HQHSM women	31	135
Community support or impediment and absence of role models or assistance in achieving the current position	19	39
Expectations prior to arrival in the United Kingdom versus current seniority based on those expectations	20	28
Strategies employed in the face of hardships from acquiring the first job in the UK, starting over, accepting a lower-paying position and working numerous low-level jobs to make ends meet	25	40
The influence of upbringing, gender-related roles, or social standards on self-perception	8	10
Uneven, unfair competition or lack of advancement and mobility opportunities	9	11
3. Identity (individual) - The beginnings and journeys of black African HQHSM women through the immigration system and the workplace experience while on the 'limited leave to remain' visa, on their career trajectories	31	428
3a. Identity meaning-making - The impact of the beginnings and journeys of black African HQHSM women through the immigration system and the workplace experience while on the 'limited leave to remain' visa on their career trajectories	28	146
High levels of anti-immigration sentiment and the absence of transition or integration help from the home office or employer result in anxiety while awaiting the ILR as individuals battle for survival. This both weakens and fortifies them	18	39
Non-Caucasian sounding names and accents, English idioms, and play with words make it difficult to understand and compete even if the individual is qualified and competent for the job	15	25
Postcode lottery in that professional growth is determined by proximity to London; the further you are from London, the lesser your prospects of success	4	5
Them and us 'othering' tendencies, such as different rules for them than for us despite our skills and experience, e.g., skin colour or racism - leading to fear of discrimination, lack of motivation following unpleasant encounters, or poor treatment	24	76
3b. Identity reconstruction - How the black African HQHSM women navigate the multiple intersecting identities, opportunities, and challenges to reach their positions	31	282

Leveraging self-inclusion opportunities and responding strategically to obstacles and career progression prospects	29	152
Diversifying and acquiring more transferable skills and social capital may be more desirable than qualifications alone when applying for positions of leadership roles	7	12
Having vision, self-belief, positive networks of sisterhood or otherwise, and gravitating toward individuals who can guide keeps one moving when frustrated, as does working twice as hard and harder than white people to be recognised	24	63
Leaving the company If undervalued, even if decreasing one's CV or moving horizontally is the only way in	12	17
Playing to the politics and negotiating, when necessary, i.e., capitalising on advancement opportunities, seeking mentorship from beyond the black race, and embracing assistance offered	14	26
Seeking executive or senior-level sponsorship, mentoring, and coaching	17	33
Reacting and dealing with stereotypes and moments of discrimination	27	130
Accepting that they do not belong and focusing on mental health, self-preservation, self-care, self-love, and self-empathy, and carefully picking and choosing battles	7	9
Creating congenial familial networks and mentorship ties in own communities	6	6
Disillusionment stems from regrets that appear to be copied and pasted in applications and interviews, with the most common regret purporting there is always just one outstanding candidate	5	8
Returning to education in the UK to overcome obstacles and regain lost professional capital while drawing favourably on qualifications as they cannot be revoked	25	79
Speaking less or muting oneself to avoid being labelled an angry black woman	15	27
c. Intersectionality - Complexities resulting from black African HQHSM women's multiple identities (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, and status as a first-generation migrant) in the workplace	30	138
Lonely at the top - Lack of diversity in the upper echelons, recruitment panels, and professional and social networks	17	32
Losing oneself - the dilemma between the urge to conform, fit in as part of a higher-order ingroup and preserve one's identity	13	24
Managing workplace plagiarists - tempering expectations and understanding the complex dynamics of sovereignty, especially relating to white and ethnic hierarchies	18	26
Microaggressions, glass ceiling and glass cliffs once you are offered a higher position	14	24
Role creep - Empty compliments and promises, de-skilling, covert and overt discrimination denying career progression, soft support while being used as cover for higher positions without higher pay	16	31
5. Co-construction - recommended future model	31	143
5a. Self-inclusion into leadership positions – Meaning and the black African HQHSM women's role	19	60
Critical success factors and proposals for Black African HQHSM women's successful career advancement	12	43
Development of a resource or strategy to assist other women in closing the gap	11	17
5b. Changes at the organisational and policy levels - The actions organisations must take to ensure leadership positions are filled equitably	30	83
Openly celebrating migrants' contributions - Articulating the benefits of employing migrants	22	30
Easing the labyrinth - providing migrant women with ILR and suitable qualifications with the proper tools and support to apply for and flourish in leadership roles.	20	22

Targeted reverse mentorship and assistance initiatives - encouraging prospective migrants' leaders and natives' executives to understand each other's subcultures	27	30
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9.7. Appendix 6: International Conference on HSM Women and Leadership

Highly Qualified Vs Highly Skilled at the Intersection: Migrant Women Navigating Identity in Organisations

Saturday, 19 March 2022, 10:00 - 4:00 GMT Online

#HSMWL #BreakTheBias

The event has now passed
Watch the sessions below & Join us on 18 Mar 2023

Int. Conference on Highly Skilled Migrant Women and Leadership (Virtual)

Highly Qualified Vs Highly Skilled at the Intersection: Migrant Women Navigating Identity in Organisations

Amina Chitembo, Director
PhD Researcher, Lecturer, Leadership, and Organisational Consultant

Professor Uduak Archibong, MBE
Pro Vice Chancellor Equality, Diversity Inclusion Director, Centre for Inclusion and Diversity University of Bradford, UK.

Dr Justus Masa, PhD
Group Leader, Electrocatalysis & Energy Conversion Faculty of Chemistry & Biochemistry, Ruhr-Universität, Germany

Dr Mercy Mumba, PhD, RN
Associate Prof, Capstone College of Nursing University of Alabama, USA

Ashiedu Joel
Founder, Ashioma Consults - a cultural capital & inclusive leadership company, Non-Executive Director, UK

4 Key speakers
+ 6 Steams presentations
+ Open dialogue with an all male panel
+ Networks knowledge exchange

Who is this conference for:
Men and Women globally who are practitioners, academics, policymakers, students, supporters, & allies who are interested in sharing best practices and learning.

Contribution to SDGs: 5, 10, 3, 4, 16, 17

Sponsors: CWUWUKIA, UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA, COLLEGE OF NURSING

Main Room - Intl Conference on Highly Skilled Migrant Women and Leadership

Stream C: Building social capital: First-generation migrant women's identity and participation

Stream F: Developing crucial soft skills: Mentorship and reverse mentoring in organisations

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81494879552?pwd=VUFZMjJvcWd3T2pHYmVkdFFZQ2FGdz09>

Meeting ID: 814 9487 9552 Passcode: 335996

Main room speakers and presenters are to be added as co-hosts/presenters on the day

Official opening:

Highly Qualified Highly Skilled Migrants Women: Self-Inclusion into Leadership Research

Amina Chitembo MSc, FHEA, PGCertLTHE

A special welcome from the Director of the People Work, Employment and Skills Research Institute, Leicester Castle Business School

Professor Jonathan Payne, Professor of Work, Employment and Skills

Opening Keynote: Navigating Multiple Identities: Career Upward Mobility and Organisational Leadership

Professor Udy Archibong, MBE, Pro Vice-Chancellor Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), Bradford University, UK

Men as Allies: Key Speaker: HSM Women and STEM leadership: a critical perspective

Dr Justus Masa, Group leader, Electrocatalysis & Energy Conversion, Faculty of Chemistry & Biochemistry at Ruhr-Universität, Germany

Supporting the Aspirations of Highly Skilled Migrant Women: What Roles Can Men Play?

Panellists

DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY LEICESTER **Saturday, 19 Mar 2022 10:00 - 4:00 GMT** **Migrants Leadership Institute**

International Conference on Highly Skilled Migrant Women and Leadership

Supporting the Aspirations of Highly Skilled Migrant Women: What Roles Can Men Play?

Dr Seun Kolade **Dr Chibuzo Ejiogu** **Dr Abel Adegoke** **Dr Henry Mumbi**

Highly Qualified Vs Highly Skilled at the Intersection: Migrant Women Navigating Identity in Organisations

Dr Seun Kolade (Chair), Associate Professor/Reader in Entrepreneurship & Int. Development, Associate Head Int, Dept. Of Management & Entrepreneurship, Chair, CEI African Entrepreneurship Cluster

Dr Henry Mumbi, Senior Lecturer HRM & OB, Programme Leader, HRM Undergraduate

Dr Abel Adegoke, Senior/Executive Partner (GP) at Hamilton Medical Centre, Birkenhead

Dr Never Muskwe, Associate Professor In HRM, HRM Subject Lead

Dr Chibuzo Ejiogu, Senior Lecturer, HRM, Programme Leader MA HRM by Distance Learning, Institute Head of Research Students

Young HSMW and Leadership Keynote: Rising and making an impact in the organisational leadership and research

Dr Mercy Mumba, Associate Professor, Capstone College of Nursing, University of Alabama

Future Focus Keynote – Optimising Resilience: A Model for Building High-Quality Career-Focused Social Capital

Councillor Ashiedu Joel (UK)

Chair and Discussion Moderator: Amina Chitembo, PhD Researcher and Lecturer, Session host: Thelma

Kembabazi, 2nd Year undergraduate student

Stream C: Building social capital: First-generation migrant women's identity and participation



Saturday, 19 Mar 2022 10:00 - 4:00 GMT



International Conference on Highly Skilled Migrant Women and Leadership
Stream C: Building social capital: First-generation migrant women's identity and participation

Discussion / Q&A



Dr Manjeet Ridon



Beatrice Hofmann



Caroline Bodneck



Deji Olagboye (Chair)

Highly Qualified Vs Highly Skilled at the Intersection: Migrant Women Navigating Identity in Organisations

(Please note that this session will stay on the main link)

Speakers and presenters are to be added as co-hosts/presenters on the day

Highly Skilled Indian Women Academics in Dubai: Gendered Experiences and Identity Reconstruction.
Dr Manjeet Ridon - DMU Dubai Provost, UK / UAE

Owning Your Destiny: Leveraging Networks and Bringing Your Chair to The Table

Beatrice Hofmann, Director, Nu-Life Wellness and Actress, Germany

Being A Young Leader: Defying Your Self-Limiting Beliefs and Imposter Syndrome

Caroline Bodneck, Renal Practice Educator, UK

Chair and Discussion Moderator: Deji Olagboye, PhD Researcher and Lecturer, UK

Session host: Arlene Kaumanya, 1st Year undergraduate student

Stream F: Developing crucial soft skills: Mentorship and reverse mentoring in organisations

(Please note that this session will stay on the main link)

Speakers and presenters are to be added as co-hosts/presenters on the day

Canvassing, Calibrating & Carving Space in Academia as A Highly Skilled Migrant Woman

Dr Natasha Katuta Mwila: Senior Lecturer, Program Leader Business Mgt. BA (Hons), UK

High-Skilled Migrant Networks: Empowering Migrant Careers, Equality, and Inclusion

Dr Chibuzo Ejiogu, Senior Lecturer, HRM, Programme Leader MA HRM by Distance Learning, Institute Head of Research Students, UK

Chair and Discussion Moderator: Regina Hule, PhD Researcher and Lecturer, UK

Session host: Arlene Kamuanya, 1st Year undergraduate student



Saturday, 19 Mar 2022 10:00 - 4:00 GMT



International Conference on Highly Skilled Migrant Women and Leadership

Stream A: Beyond role modelling: Being the first and helping others to rise

Discussion / Q&A



Leah Chilengwe



Amarachi Amaugo



Ali Abdoul



Juliana Nnadi (Chair)

Highly Qualified Vs Highly Skilled at the Intersection: Migrant Women Navigating Identity in Organisations

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87407433977?pwd=WTdkdXVjcGd3R1lnZzNZTTJmVGNJQT09>

Meeting ID: 874 0743 3977

Passcode: 293650

Speakers and presenters are to be added as co-hosts/presenters on the day

Understanding Yourself to Redefine Your Landscape

Leah Chilengwe, Interim Deputy Director (Various), Contracts and Performance, And Founder Of 'Life with Leah'
Business Coaching and Mentoring, UK

Coaching, And Strategic Networking: Developing Soft Skills and Harnessing Opportunities

Dr Amarachi Amaugo, Senior Lecturer, HRM & OB, Program Leader MA HRM, UK

Benefits of Allyship: Speaking Up When It Matters in The Workplace

Ali Abdoul, Diversity and Inclusion Project Manager, UK

Chair and Discussion Moderator: Juliana Nnadi, PhD Researcher and Lecturer, UK

Session host: Lina Lucumi Mosquera, PhD Researcher

Stream B: Beyond basics tackling critical and challenging topics

 **Saturday, 19 Mar 2022 10:00 - 4:00 GMT** 

International Conference on Highly Skilled Migrant Women and Leadership

Stream B: Beyond basics tackling critical and challenging topics

Discussion / Q&A

 **Fizza Anwar**  **Clara Meierdierks**  **Ngosa Kambashi**  **Tracy Luseno (Chair)**

Highly Qualified Vs Highly Skilled at the Intersection: Migrant Women Navigating Identity in Organisations

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85303906810?pwd=WVVCMDRGVWpiWVEza25HNVTcIVzUT09>

Meeting ID: 853 0390 6810

Passcode: 267841

Speakers and presenters are to be added as co-hosts/presenters on the day

Starting Over in Australia: A Journey of Identity Reconstruction and Self-Esteem Restoration in A Different Cultural Environment

Fizza Anwar, Trainer and Assessor, Australia

Becoming a Specialist in my Health and Social Care Career: Researching Family Carers Experience of Palliative Nursing Care of The Dying Elderly in The Nursing Home

Clara Meierdierks, Registered Nurse and PhD Researcher, Germany

A Mixed Methods Approach to Perceptions of male rape England

Ngosa Kambashi, PhD Researcher and Lecturer (Associate), UK

Chair and Discussion Moderator: Tracy Luseno, PhD Researcher and Lecturer, UK

Session host: Will Tendler, 2nd-year undergraduate student



Saturday, 19 Mar 2022 10:00 - 4:00 GMT



International Conference on Highly Skilled Migrant Women and Leadership
Stream D: Towards SDGs impact and contribution in the global south and south to south migration

Discussion / Q&A



Ngozi Eneh Ojo



Tracy Luseno



Andrews Darko (Chair)

Highly Qualified Vs Highly Skilled at the Intersection: Migrant Women Navigating Identity in Organisations

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85368104316?pwd=Ymp0MlpOV3JWVmRaZHdLVIRjR3hDQT09>

Meeting ID: 853 6810 4316

Passcode: 302632

Speakers and presenters are to be added as co-hosts/presenters on the day

Female Entrepreneurs in Nigeria- Empowering to Transcend Barriers

Ngozi Eneh Ojo, PhD Researcher Lecturer and UK /Nigeria

Displaced, Excluded, And Making Do Women Refugee Entrepreneurs Striving for Self-Reliance in Kenya

Tracy Luseno, PhD Researcher and Lecturer UK /Kenya

Chair and Discussion Moderator: Andrews Darko, PhD Researcher and Lecturer

Session host: Lina Lucumi Mosquera, PhD Researcher

 **Saturday, 19 Mar 2022 10:00 - 4:00 GMT** 

International Conference on Highly Skilled Migrant Women and Leadership
Stream E: Young leaders: first and Second-generation HQ/HSMs participation in leadership

Discussion / Q&A

Annabel Mwagalanyi **Amina Chitembo** **Bisola Ariyo**

Highly Qualified Vs Highly Skilled at the Intersection: Migrant Women Navigating Identity in Organisations

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86190894294?pwd=NnFHbWVCOTN1aTc4dkxoTFZRbmxOdz09>

Meeting ID: 861 9089 4294

Passcode: 953160

Speakers and presenters are to be added as co-hosts/presenters on the day

Looking for a Job Instead of Building a Career: The Challenges Young Female Migrants Face While Seeking Employment in the UK

Annabel Mwagalanyi, Lecturer and PhD Researcher UK

HSM Women Adding More Qualifications: Competitive Advantage, Stronghold, Or Refuge?

Amina Chitembo, PhD Researcher, Lecturer, Leadership, and Inclusion Consultant

Chair and Discussion Moderator: Bisola Ariyo, PhD Researcher and Lecturer, UK

Session host: Will Tendler, 2nd-year undergraduate student

9.8. Appendix 7: Research journey map

