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The Experiences of Internationally Trained Ghanaian Male Immigrants in Canada

by

Benedict Kojo Otoo

A THESIS

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Abstract

In this qualitative, narrative inquiry, I focused on a small segment within the pool of skilled immigrants who come to Canada every year—5 internationally trained Ghanaian males. I explored their experiences and how they navigated the challenges and opportunities related to seeking employment after having immigrated to Canada. I also examined the impact on identity of being a visible minority immigrant and drew out the learning experiences that have impacted them. Participants had resided in a province in western Canada for a minimum of 2 years. As an internationally trained Ghanaian male immigrant myself, I was a researcher–participant in this study. Together, the participants and I interpreted and shared our life experiences through storytelling. Narratives focused on why participants decided to immigrate; their significant learning experiences; their perspectives, as men of colour, and how they navigated the system in seeking employment; and the challenges they faced when integrating into a new culture and society. Major themes included hurdles, the importance of a support system, the path to jobs, spectra of colour and identity, and optimism and hope in a new country. The findings provide a broader view of how participants navigated the barriers, challenges, and successes associated with being an internationally trained male immigrant of colour in a province in western Canada.

Keywords: Ghanaian male immigrants, skilled immigrants, internationally trained, men of colour, Canada, Canadian immigration

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Dedication

I dedicate this to my wife, Esi Amenyeafe Otoo, and to my two daughters, Ama Nhyira Otoo and Akua Ayeyi Otoo. You complete my life circle. You are the reason I keep moving forward.

He who seeks knowledge begins with humbleness.

—(Banton, 1995)

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Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this research and to ensure shared understanding, the following terms are defined accordingly:

Educated: Having a minimum of a university degree. This term is also used interchangeably with *internationally trained*.

Ghanaian male: Male from Ghana over the age of 21 years.

Immigrant: Individuals who have settled permanently in Canada and who have been granted permanent resident status or citizenship (Statistics Canada, 2008).

Internationally trained: Individuals who have immigrated and who have earned a minimum of a university degree from Ghana.

Men of colour: Men from sub-Saharan Africa and originating from Ghana.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In this qualitative, narrative inquiry, I explored the experiences of five Ghanaian men who immigrated to Canada and who have resided in this country for a minimum of two years. I invited participants to share their stories of migration, focusing on tensions and challenges experienced when seeking employment in Canada. I share and examine their narratives through a critical exploration of the challenges, barriers, hopes, aspirations, and successes experienced. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the architecture of my study that includes background and context, statement of problem, purpose of study, locating myself as researcher, research questions, and research design. I conclude this chapter with a brief summary.

Background and Context

Internationally trained and educated immigrants face many challenges and a myriad of issues integrating into Canada. The 1967 Norms of Assessment "point system," mandated by the Canadian government, introduced standards for immigrant selection that favoured applicants with specific levels of education (White, Bilodeau, & Nevitte, 2015). This opened the door for educated immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa to make the journey from their home country to Canada. Immigration became a priority of the Canadian federal government following confederation in 1867, with the intent to leverage immigration to populate regions and strengthen the economy (Albanese, 2009; Kelley & Trebilcock, 1998). These early policies were restrictive; immigrants of Caucasian decent were sought while those from Southern Europe, South and East Asia, South America, and Africa were either banned or discouraged (Albanese, 2009). These policies made it difficult for people of colour to immigrate from Africa to Canada.

Since 2008, changes made to Canadian immigration policies have placed the focus on economic class and, more specifically, on immigrants with proven skills and abilities to

contribute to the Canadian economy (Alboim & Cohl, 2012). From this time forward, skilled people of colour began immigrating to Canada in larger numbers.

Challenges. "Immigrant" is a codified term that spans diverse classifications of persons immigrating to Canada. Immigrants may be varied in racial and cultural backgrounds, English language proficiency, skin colour, and level of education (Li, 2003). English language proficiency, education levels, or where education was secured in a home country often limit immigrants to work at lower level jobs. It is important to note that immigrant participants in this study were highly educated and possessed a minimum of a university degree. Notwithstanding higher levels of education, participants referred to navigating many challenges when immigrating to Canada and attempting to secure work.

New immigrants have fallen behind economically. To elaborate, since the early 1970s, the average employment earnings of immigrants have declined steadily compared to those of Canadian-born workers (Kustec, 2012; Picot, 2008). Further, immigrants typically resort to doing menial jobs to survive—working in lower-level positions relative to employment they would be taking up in their home countries. Several reasons account for this trend and include discrimination (Dechief & Oreopoulos, 2012), lack of recognition of foreign credentials and work experience in source countries (Ferrer & Riddell, 2008), and a growing and competitive labour market seeking highly educated Canadians (Picot, 2008). These are some of the major challenges faced by many who immigrate to Canada.

Lack of Canadian experience and transferability of foreign credentials are reported as the most critical hurdles for immigrant persons seeking employment (Guo, 2009). Even though a large percentage of today's immigrants are adults with rich and cumulative knowledge and work experience (Statistics Canada, 2003, 2008), their credentials are not assigned the same weight as

credentials obtained in Canada. The discounting of immigrants' credentials by employers is rife as employers assess credentials attained in less-developed economies as lower quality and less relevant than those attained in Canadian institutions (Banerjee & Lee, 2015). Newspapers have also regularly reported barriers facing immigrants when having their work experience recognized (Thompson, 2008). This phenomenon presents an ever-increasing barrier for immigrants to break through the job market. Invariably, much skilled labour remains underutilized, to the detriment of immigrant persons and to Canada as a whole.

Understanding race and gender in integration. This research explored the narratives of five internationally trained Ghanaian men in a province in western Canada. These men addressed their experiences of marginalization, discrimination, and job-seeking experiences through storytelling. I drew out themes from their narratives to better understand and explore their world. My goal was to understand how race and gender intersect in the lives and experiences of Ghanaian males who sought to integrate into Canadian society.

Discrimination, lack of acceptance, and economic hardship affect immigrants' perceptions and might impede whether they develop positive orientations for their host country (Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010). Their loyalty and attachment to Canada become questionable. Discrimination and marginalization because of skin colour pose a challenge when it comes to creating and maintaining social and political cohesion (Banting & Soroka, 2012). For this reason, educated immigrants may never truly feel a part of the fabric of Canadian society.

The larger context. It is worth noting how research affects and is affected by the context in which the research takes place. When undertaking this study, it was important to situate the research in the larger historical, political, and cultural context (L. T. Smith, 1999). Participants in this research had a minimum of a university degree and were part of the economic class that

Canadian immigration sought to attract. Economic class citizens are evaluated using a point system based on education and job experience. The result has been a highly educated and highly skilled immigrant population. From 2001 to 2006, over half of new immigrants to Canada had a university degree, a proportion roughly two and a half times greater than among the Canadian-born population (Statistics Canada, 2008).

In this study, I sought to understand how Canadian immigration policy played a role in integrating participants as newcomers into Canadian society and the economic supports that promoted active citizenship (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2016b, p. 45). One of my goals was to understand and explore the immigrant experiences of my research participants. Canada prides itself on being a multicultural society and welcomes immigrants from all over the world. Canada's official policy of multiculturalism and diversity has framed immigration in a way that downplays racism and discrimination (Harell, Soroka, Iyengar, & Valentino, 2012). Due to Canada's stated immigrant-friendly policy, research participants decided to leave Ghana and settle in Canada.

Many studies in the scholarly literature have focused on immigration and the experiences of people who immigrate from other cultures and contexts. For example, the experience of Chinese immigrants has attracted much attention (Costigan, Lehr, & Miao, 2016; Gilmour, 2013; Wang, Zong, & Li, 2012), and recent and relevant literature has highlighted the experiences of mostly Asian immigrants to Canada (Guo, 2013b; Shields et al., 2010; Zhu, 2015). Few studies, however, have focused on Africans, especially Ghanaian males immigrating to Canada. Thus, little is known about immigration and integration from the African perspective. My study addresses this gap by adding an African perspective to immigration studies in Canada,

highlighting the experiences and perspectives of African males through a select number of Ghanaian men.

My qualitative research was exploratory in nature. As very little has been written about the demographic who participated in my study, I listened to the participants to build an understanding based on what I heard (Creswell, 2014). Participants shared their stories and their thoughts, actions, aspirations, and hopes for more recognition as capable immigrants with the right education and skills to contribute to building Canada.

Statement of Problem and Purpose of Study

The gap in the literature on the African experience as immigrants in Canada, and my own insider view as an Ghanaian male who immigrated to this country, increased my curiosity and quest to know and learn more of the experiences of other Ghanaian male immigrants. Through this study, I explored the challenges and opportunities experienced by new immigrants and how their foreign credentials and prior work experience were perceived. I was also interested to better understand how race and gender affected their integration into Canadian society. This research gave a voice to a small segment of internationally trained Africans and may provide further insights pertaining to the larger pool of internationally trained immigrants who come to Canada every year.

The purpose of this study was to understand and examine the narratives of internationally trained Ghanaian male immigrants who now reside in western Canada. This was an exploration into the challenges, barriers, and successes they encountered in integrating into Canadian society. The participant narratives elucidate and highlight the attitudes, perceptions, behaviours, and other issues that arose as these Ghanaian male immigrants sought a better life for themselves and their families in Canada. This study also provided a platform for participants to tell their stories

in their own words, as an exploratory path to gaining insights into how they perceived and responded to their experiences.

Locating Myself as Researcher

I immigrated to Canada approximately four years ago from my home country, Ghana. I came to Canada with hopes, dreams, and aspirations. As an internationally trained Ghanaian with over 14 years of experience as a banker, I anticipated a smooth and seamless transition into society and the Canadian workforce. Being skilled did not necessarily guarantee me the type of work I was seeking, however. Integrating into Canadian society and attempting to enter the job market was a steep learning curve for me. Reflexively, I began to question if I had made the right decision by coming to Canada. This evoked a critical consciousness in me that I had never recognized before. Further, I had never seen myself as a person of colour until I immigrated to Canada. Now, I am more aware of who I am within this Canadian context.

My own personal conundrum, drawn from being a "skilled immigrant" in Canada, left me with more questions than answers and left me further questioning my own decision to immigrate to Canada. These personal experiences of immigration prompted me to explore, listen, and understand the narratives and experiences of other internationally trained Ghanaian male immigrants who had immigrated to western Canada. I share a similar sociocultural background with my participants, and my assumption was that I was in a better position to understand their experiences and narratives.

L. T. Smith (1999), in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*, spoke about research and Indigenous people, and how researchers have historically interpreted their findings through a Western paradigmatic lens. Her work sought to "deconstruct" the way the story was told. I drew inspiration from her work, and it served as a guiding map in my critical

analysis of my narrative inquiry such that the story would be told from the standpoint of immigrant men of colour from Ghana. My awareness of context sensitivity and understanding allowed for interpretation that led to holistic findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015).

Coming to Canada opened my eyes to a broad vista of new learning as an adult learner. My experience as an immigrant pushed me to explore new boundaries and to challenge expectations I had placed on myself. Sharing stories amongst other professionally trained immigrant men from Ghana piqued my interest to undertake this research and to examine if the experiences of other Ghanaian males who had immigrated to western Canada were similar or different to my own.

Locating myself as researcher in this study was also informed by exploring scholarly literature pertaining to adult learning, with a focus on experiential learning. How have my past experiences shaped me as an individual, and how have they helped me to adjust to and integrate into a new environment? Kolb (1984) addressed how experience can be harnessed and used as a learning tool in his seminal work, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Drawing out the experiential learning experiences of not just myself but also the research participants has brought new learning to the fore.

My position as a recent immigrant to Canada informed my decision to do this research. I have first-hand experience with the complexities of being new to this country and attempting to integrate. I acknowledge that my experiences and perceptions could potentially increase the subjectivity of the research; thus; I explored ways in which the research and researcher could interact to form a unique voice that comes from being truly reflexive in the process (Hertz, 1997).

Research Questions

This principal focus of the research was guided by the following aim: Giving voice to Ghanaian males who have immigrated to Canada in the last two or more years and their experiences of seeking and securing employment.

The following subquestions also informed the research:

1. What challenges and opportunities were experienced as a Ghanaian male immigrant to Canada?
2. What challenges and opportunities were encountered when seeking employment?
3. What was the impact on identity of being a visible minority immigrant in Canada?

The stories of these men elucidated the reflexive nature of a qualitative research; the research represented an ongoing conversation and opportunity to converse about an experience while living through it (Hertz, 1997).

Research Design

Methodology. Sharing the experiences and stories of my research participants was best served by employing narrative inquiry as a research methodology. Of all other qualitative methods, narrative inquiry gives more weight to the exploration of experiences as a mode of study. Narrative inquiry adopts a particular view of experience as the phenomenon under study (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375). This idea was buttressed further by Hatch (2002), who identified this medium as a way "humans make sense of their lives through story" (p. 28). Through narrative inquiry, we can foreground our "way of thinking about experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 477) and share our story with the world.

Participants. Five internationally trained Ghanaian male immigrants living in western Canada volunteered to participate in this study. Participants were selected based on the following

criteria: (a) being 21 years of age or older, (b) having resided in Canada for over two years, (c) being a Ghanaian male, (d) having a minimum of a university degree, and (e) having been gainfully employed before immigrating to Canada. Employing the snowball sampling method as espoused by Kelly (2009), l asked participants to suggest other Ghanaian men who met the research criteria and who might be willing to take part in the study.

The small sample size of my participants justified the use of narrative inquiry given that this methodology is ideal for "capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of the lives of a small number of individuals" (Creswell, 2014, p. 55). The primary method of data collection took the form of face-to-face semistructured interviews, providing an opportunity for participants to express themselves freely. The duration of each interview was approximately one hour.

Summary

In this chapter, I detailed the overall architecture of my study, which included the background and context, statement of problem, purpose of study, locating myself as researcher, research questions, and research design. In Chapter 2, I explore the key literature streams from the scholarly literature that guided this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

I examined key literature streams in preparation for this study. Exploring an existing body of knowledge upon which to inform my research deepened my understanding of challenges experienced by minority peoples immigrating to Canada. I organized the key literature according to the following categories: Immigration: coming to Canada, navigation and integration, foreign credentials, and experiential learning. I discuss the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that informed my study, concluding this chapter with a brief summary.

Immigration: Coming to Canada

Throughout the post–World War II period, Canada has pursued an aggressively expansionist immigration policy. In the 1960s, immigration policy reforms eliminated preferences for immigrants of European origin, producing a dramatic shift toward immigrants of Caribbean, Asian, and other non-European origins (Reitz, 2001). This opened the door for many new immigrants of colour to travel across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans to Canada in search of a new life. Society is now in a constant state of flux, pushed by globalization. Contemporary immigration is significantly affected by globalization and the erosion of borders and governments, and the hastening of global reach in the acquisition of knowledge, capital, services, and people (Boccagni, 2012). The overwhelming majority of new immigrants now fall under the "skilled worker" or "economic" immigrant categories (including the study participants, as skilled workers); refugees and asylum-seekers made up approximately 8% of the total international migrants in 2010 (Zapponi, 2013).

Research studies have highlighted the proportion of immigrants from developing countries with little or no emphasis on the numbers from sub-Saharan Africa. According to recent data, between 2002 and 2011, one in three new immigrants came from China (13%), India

(11%), or the Philippines (9%; Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). Although reporting on immigration statistics is not the focus of this study, the relatively low number of studies pertaining to immigration of people from Africa opens a conversation on the marginalization of these immigrants. The majority of immigrants to Canada from 2012 to 2014 (around 60%) were born in Asia, as has been the case for several decades. Africa accounts for 13.7% of immigrants recently to have arrived in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2008).

White et al. (2015) offered that to address gaps in the literaure, the nexus of immigrant experience should be brought to the fore by the subjective assessments they provide. There is much to be learned from how immigrants interpret experiences in their host country, through the lens of their experiences in their country of origin (Ogbu, 1993).

Challenges. As noted in Chapter 1, new immigrants face significant challenges when settling in a new country. Some key challenges include discrimination (Dechief & Oreopoulos, 2012; White et al., 2015), insufficient language skills, lack of recognition of foreign credentials and work experience (Ferrer & Riddell, 2008), and growing labour market competition from highly educated Canadians (Picot, 2008). Lack of acceptance and economic hardship in the host country can make it harder for immigrants to develop positive orientations toward the host country (White et al., 2015). Existing literature has indicated that visible minorities in Canada experience discrimination and exclusion, making integration into Canadian society difficult despite the multicultural policies that were introduced in the early 1970s (Agrawal, 2010; Creese, 2011; H. Smith & Ley, 2008). These challenges may cause those planning to immigrate to Canada to question their decision.

Opportunities. Despite the many challenges faced by immigrants, opportunities were also cited in the literature. Although opportunities may not be available and subsequently

realized by all who hope to immigrate to Canada, immigrants with higher education and proficiency in the official languages are likely to have more positive experiences. This is because such immigrants are more likely to be successfully employed and more actively engaged in the local community (Houle & Schellenberg, 2010; Lester, 2008). The literature has also suggested that immigrants with a strong social network are more likely to thrive. This finding was supported by Houle and Schellenberg (2010), who reported a positive association between satisfaction and the frequency of contacts with friends. Being among a familiar community of others affords a sense of familial connection. The work of Sapeha (2015) has also reinforced the importance of factors associated with immigrants' satisfaction with their settlement experience in Canada and how social integration factors—namely, involvement in local life and family connections—create the necessary opportunities for successful integration into their new environment.

With support from immigrant servicing agencies and from friends and family, if available, a person immigrating to a host country may adapt more easily than those who do not have these support systems. Taking advantage of opportunities available can be correlated to the personality traits of individuals immigrating as well: Steel, Schmidt, and Shultz (2008) referred to traits such as social assertiveness, empathy, extraversion, and internal locus of control—traits consistently found to be correlated with subjective well-being among the general population of immigrants.

Hope, fears, and aspirations. Immigrants' dream of "a good life" in Canada is affected by several factors. Immigrants come to a new country with the hope of making it economically and socially. Difficulties faced by the new immigrants sometimes shatter the optimism associated with assimilation (Kazemipur & Nakhaie, 2014). The literature included several

studies that examined this phenomenon, with a focus on the economic realities in the lives of new immigrants (Huber & Espenshade, 1997; Kazemipur & Halli, 2001; Portes, 1997). When economic realities are not realized, frustration, fear, anxiety, and angst can set in.

Immigrants are often motivated by the desire for a better future for themselves and their children; a variety of studies have reported their optimism (Maxwell, 2010). Whether those expectations are fulfilled might have a significant impact on how newcomers feel about the host country (White et al., 2015). Having arrived in a new country, when these expecations are not met, immigrants can become regretful and despondent.

Navigation and Integration

Canadian immigration policies have undergone a series of reforms, contributing to larger numbers of skilled individuals immigrating from developing countries (Kazemipur & Nakhaie 2014). Notwithstanding, immigrants of colour have a more challenging time integrating in their new country. Further, research has affirmed that non-Europeans or visible minories experience additional challenges, at the onset and over time, compared to White or European immigrants (Banerjee, 2009).

Race and gender. Researchers continue to examine the interaction between race and gender (Burns & Gimpel, 2000) and its impact on immigration, especially pertaining to people of colour. In sum, it is well documented that immigrants of colour are underprivileged in the Canadian labour market due to their combined status as immigrants and racial minorities (Hong, 2008). As well, in contrast to past immigration debates, contemporary discourses on immigration also consider gender (Gianettoni & Roux, 2010; Pajnik & Bajt, 2012). Gender is mediated through racialization, ethnicity, class, family status, sexuality, and age to shape immigrants' experiences in new countries (Bose, 2006; Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005; Mahler &

Pessar, 2006). Most scholarly literature, however, has focused more on the experiences of women—existing literature was sparse regarding how men, specifically, as a unit of study, settle into their new environment. There is thus a considerable gap in the literature regarding migration studies and male immigrants.

Acculturation. The process of adaptation and adjustment to a new cultural environment is generally understood as acculturation (Padilla, 1980). Pertinent questions related to acculturation may include the following: Do immigrants accept the culture of the new society? Do they discard their own societal norms and ways of doing things? Ultimately, the goal of integration is to encourage newcomers to contribute to Canada's economic, social, political, and cultural development. All permanent residents are eligible for settlement and integration programs (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2016c, section 3.1). A sense of belonging is conceived as a general feeling of inclusion and the desire to be close to a relevant social group (Pearce, 2008). For immigrants, a sense of belonging to their source country can provide a cultural anchor during their transition into the new society. Further, a sense of belonging to the host society reflects whether newcomers feel accepted, secure, and at home in their adopted country (Berry & Hou, 2016; Hou, Schellenberg, & Berry, 2017). To advance feelings of belonging, new immigrants often defer to groups of people with similar ethnic backgrounds (Nakhaie & Kazemipur, 2013).

Foreign Credentials

Research has confirmed that the nonrecognition of foreign credentials is a widespread problem for immigrants in Canada (Li & Li, 2008). Immigration has played a significant role in transforming Canada into a diverse and prosperous nation. It is only after arriving in Canada that many highly educated immigrant professionals learn of the deskilling or decredentializing

pertaining to their previous learning and work experience (Guo, 2009). Guo (2009) further identified the nonrecognition of foreign credentials and prior work experience of immigrant professionals as a manifestation of the politics of difference and knowledge.

Studies have clearly shown that immigrants from developing countries encountered significant difficulties in having their foreign credentials and work experience recognized compared to those immigrating from developed countries, such as the United States, Australia, Britain, or New Zealand (Mojab, 1999; Reitz, 2001; Statistics Canada, 2003). This finding was supported by Guo (2009), who argued that knowledge in Canada has been racialized. The knowledge possessed by immigrants is deemed inferior because their real and alleged differences are claimed to be incompatible with the cultural and social fabric of traditional Canada.

The urgent need to see credential recognition as part of a gendered process of deskilling that actively constructs Black or African immigrants as unskilled labour is key to the experiences of immigrants of colour in Canada (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). Canadian employers do not favourably regard credentials from less developed nations even though the immigrants are highly skilled. Employers' reservations in recognizing the value of premigration credentials and work experience often lead to frustration, anger, sadness, and disappointment among skilled immigrants (Grant, 2005). This was the latest report by Grant on immigration and integration in the Canadian society done for the Prairie Centre of Excellence in Edmonton, Alberta.

Job opportunities. A study of skilled immigrants from Asia and Africa found high levels of underemployment in that participants took casual and part-time work for which they felt overqualified (Grant & Nadin, 2007). People of colour face challenges in finding jobs. White immigrants fare better than immigrants of colour. In addition, a wage gap persists between men and women of colour and Canadian-born Caucasian men and women (Galabuzi, 2006). The

racialized nature of these cleavages has become marked in such a way that Galabuzi (2006) characterized the polarization of the Canadian labour market as a form of economic apartheid.

Recruiting immigrants on the promise that their skills will be recognized, but failing to address the multiple processes that prevent this from happening, is a waste of human capital. Questions on the efficacy of Canadian immigration policies that prioritize the recruitment of well-educated immigrants without addressing the multiple barriers that result in deskilling, or other issues that they experience in the Canadian labour market, come to the fore (Creese & Wiebe, 2012).

The nonrecognition of credentials exacerbates immigrants' inability to secure proper job opportunities. This position was affirmed by Mansour (1996), who claimed that Canadian employers treat schooling in certain countries of origin, mostly in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America, differently than they treat schooling in other, mostly European, countries of origin. Again, "[This] issue is particularly acute for immigrants with qualifications from anywhere other than Europe or North America" (Mansour, 1996, p. 2).

Canadian experience. Not having the requisite Canadian work experience is a significant barrier for individuals immigrating to Canada (Thompson, 2008). Additionally, failure to recognize foreign credentials and preferences for local accents further contribute to racialized discrimination (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). Regarding Canadian experience, some employers place a higher value on this criterion and, subsequently, exclude immigrants who are otherwise qualified (Buzdugan & Halli, 2009). Having experience in the Canadian context is amorphous; it is interpreted differently by each respective prospective employer.

To gain Canadian experience, immigrants settle for a variety of jobs far below their level of expertise, with hopes of demonstrating to future employers that they have worked in a

Canadian environment, and that they have gained some understanding and experience of Canadian culture and work ethic. Among all immigrant classes, refugees experience the greatest difficulty in finding a job that matches their field of training or education, despite having the legal right to work (Shields et al., 2010; Sweetman & Warman, 2012; Xue, 2008). Though the focus of my study was not on refugee immigrants, some parallels can be drawn between the experiences of refugees and the experiences of newcomer immigrants.

According to Guo (2009), epistemological misperceptions of differences and knowledges in Canada contribute to a deficit model of understanding and appreciation of differences. This perspective contributes to some people believing that they are, in fact, deficit, when immigrating to Canada, and that the knowledge of immigrant professionals, particularly those from developing countries, is incompatible and inferior, and hence invalid. This deficit model goes against the tenets of a multicultural Canada that welcomes immigrants.

Theoretical Lens

The theoretical framework that underpinned my research was experiential learning and how it informed the experiences of my research participants as people who immigrated to Canada. Experiential learning is pertinent to the experiences of immigrants who leave their home to relocate to another country. Learning must take account of the learners themselves and what they bring with them from earlier experiences. These experiences not only provide the foundation for dispositions, expectations, and motivations, but also establish the base of knowledge and expertise on which new knowledge must be built (Boud, 2005, p. 244). As human beings, learning from our experiences is key to defining who we are as individuals.

Learning through a critical cultural lens. When immigrating to a new country, people arrive with their own experiences and expectations regarding how their prior experience and

knowledge will help them to adjust and settle. Fenwick (2003) raised important questions, however, on the nature of experience itself impacted by asymmetric power issues contextualized in the form of colour and race. In coming to Canada, immigrants of colour suddenly become conscious of their identity. This begs the question: how does one learn and navigate this cultural milieu? According to Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2012), experiential learning becomes a strategy to exercise one's voice in the service of self and social empowerment and transformation in a new environment.

Learning and unlearning. Living in a new country can present a clash of cultures in a variety of ways. What might have previously been considered as "right and true" in the home country might not necessarily hold true in Canada. Despite prior experiences that have contributed to individuals' learning and knowledge acquisition, new learning and experiences may not align with them. This point was buttressed by the contributions of Usher, Bryant, and Johnston (1997) who asserted, "The meaning of experience is never permanently fixed; thus, the text of experience is always open to interpretation" (p. 105). For this reason, learning from experience may always be in a state of flux for those immigrating to a new country.

New experiences: Bitter or better. On a meta-level, what does the experience of coming to Canada contribute to immigrants' learning experiences? Will they experience dissonance and have regrets? Will they feel they should have stayed in their home country? A myriad of questions unfolds pertaining to how their Canadian experience will contribute to betterment or bitterness having undertaken this journey of immigration.

In Dewey's (1938) seminal work *Experience and Education*, he postulated that "all genuine education comes about by experience" (p. 13). Dewey further argued that not all experiences are educative—some experiences can distort growth. However, it can be difficult to

judge whether an experience has produced learning because “every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only the ground of what it moves toward and into” (Dewey, 1938, p. 31). Some immigrants will be successful in securing the work they desire, whereas others will take up employment that fails to recognize qualifications and experience from their home country. Consequently, individual experiences will vary—some people’s expectations will be fulfilled and others will be disillusioned.

Summary

In this chapter, I explored key literature streams that informed my study. These streams included immigration to Canada, navigation and integration, foreign credentials, and experiential learning. I also discussed the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that supported my research design, which I detail in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Design

I employed narrative inquiry as my research methodology. This research approach explored the stories people live and tell daily, dwelling on the experiences of Ghanaian male immigrants in Canada. These stories show the confluence of social influences on a person's inner life, environment, and unique personal history (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). In this chapter, I cover ontological and epistemological assumptions, methodology, analysis, ethical considerations, limitations, and delimitations. I conclude this chapter with a brief summary.

Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions

The foundations of my study are not complete without defining the ontological and epistemological assumptions I brought to my work. These assumptions informed my research and how I see the world, and they form an integral part of my philosophical orientation and the paradigms that I brought to this study (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Mertens, 2014). A critical component of my research project, therefore, was to spell out my rationale for claiming to know what I know. I did this by identifying the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of my research to give a clearer perspective of where I stood as researcher.

My ontological assumption encapsulates how I make meaning of my realities as a human being. I gravitate towards multiple meanings of phenomena. As a researcher exploring the experiences and narratives of immigrants, my approach focused on multiple realities in the sense that participants experience their place and time in the world in different ways (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2014). This reality is captured by how people tell their stories in the form of narratives and how each participant's reality is different and unique as an individual. People's

stories are how they make sense of the world around them (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), from their perspective, with its attendant subjectivities.

Epistemology captures one's way of knowing. My epistemological assumption underlying this research was informed by how the participants narrated and interpreted their experiences in Canada via storytelling. Through narrative inquiry, the researcher seeks to uncover many truths and narratives, instead of one single truth, from the stories and experiences of the participants (Hunter, 2010). By narrating and sharing the stories, both the researcher and the participants together construct and make meaning of their experiences (Creswell, 2014).

According to Creswell (2014), "The researcher's intent is to make sense or interpret the meanings others have about world" (p. 8); researchers "interpret what they find, an interpretation shaped by the researcher's own experiences and background" (p. 5). This is a constructivist and interpretivist worldview I uphold, and it served as my approach when undertaking this qualitative research. The aim of my research was to rely on the participants' views of their experiences and use their stories to inform my study. My research questions sought to understand the experiences of select immigrant Ghanaian males integrating into Canadian society. I wanted their voices, as a minority group, to be heard. Their experience needed to be further explored and understood, because little research has been done on it (Creswell, 2014). No better approach exists than a qualitative one to reveal the underlying themes and patterns in their stories.

Apart from constructivism informing my qualitative research, I was aware of the influence of reflexivity as I conducted my study. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2015), "There is an inherent reflexivity in narrative research that demands the attention of the researcher and the participant collaborators as the story emerges and evolves through multiple iterations" (p. 51). Reflexivity in this qualitative study was key to my interpretations of the participants' lived

experience. My personal experience as recent immigrant to Canada and my affinity for reading and writing influenced my choice of narrative inquiry as a qualitative research approach. The best fit for my research problem was a qualitative study because I sought to understand experience as a phenomenon. My epistemological and ontological paradigm of adopting a (social) constructivist and interpretivist worldview was influenced first by my role as an immigrant researcher and second by seeking to understand the experiences of my research participants. The goal of my theoretical framework was to better understand the world in which I live and work through a subjective interpretation of my own experiences and that of my research participants (Creswell, 2014).

Drawing from my interpretivist worldview, I looked at the experiences of the five male Ghanaian immigrants through the lens of the critical race theory. The idea of critical race theory emerged as result of trying to deconstruct the notion that racism is normal (Duncan, 2002). Critical race theory's key areas of interest are to better understand White domination and the suppression of people of colour that have been maintained through social interactions and global political economic structures (Crenshaw, 1995). Critical race theory is mainly focused on achieving acceptance for people of colour. Researchers have used this theory to explore systemic racism in Canadian laws and its pervasiveness over the years (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016).

This research gave me a perspective on how these men of colour navigate in their day-to-day social interactions in a White-dominated country. As a researcher of colour, my own views and voice in the research helped to "break open the mythical hold that traditional research has on knowledge" (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 272).

Methodology

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology that was first used by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) to describe the stories and experiences of a group of teachers. Through storytelling, participants could share and relive their experiences. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) defined narrative inquiry as follows:

> People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study. (p. 375)

My choice of a narrative inquiry as a methodology was informed by its nature and character, which seek to understand and inquire into experience through a "collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). As a researcher, I share some commonalities with my participants. We all have lived the greater part of our lives in Ghana, we are all residents of a province in western Canada, and our backgrounds are similar as skilled immigrants.

No other methodology throws more light on experiences than that of narrative inquiry. I employed narrative inquiry as espoused by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), with its emphasis on "a way of thinking about experience" (p. 477)—in this case, the experiences and narratives of Ghanaian male immigrants in Canada. Using this methodology, participants got to share stories

of their experience. “As a method, narrative research begins with the experience as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015, p. 51). I was drawn to this qualitative approach in the field of education by the idea of storytelling as a medium in sharing experiences. According to Groen and Kawalilak (2014), “Sharing our experiences through dialogue provides rich fodder and opportunity for exploration and learning” (p. 13). The concept of using a narrative methodology to adopt a view of experience as a phenomenon under study and reflexivity underscores how qualitative studies can be complex, intricate, and revealing (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

The nexus between story and reflection as a mode of inquiry piqued my interest in using narrative inquiry as my methodology. I understood my role as researcher and the delicate balance I needed to uphold in retelling the participants’ experiences through their stories. I chose a narrative inquiry methodology because through this medium, I was able to interpret my own lived experience and that of the participants I was researching. The choice of a narrative inquiry, as per Webster and Mertova (2007), “provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted by stories” (p. 1). This research was an opportunity to hear the under-represented voices of African immigrants in the immigration narrative of Canada.

Research participants. My goal was to recruit four to six Ghanaian males who had been in a province in western Canada for at least two years. I ended up with five participants for the study when I realized that gathering fresh data no longer sparked any new insights for my study. I was at a point of saturation (Creswell, 2014). My targeted participants were university graduates who held stable jobs as professionals before migrating to Canada. They had worked

full-time for a minimum of three years in Ghana before immigrating to Canada to seek new opportunities.

On receipt of ethics approval from the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (see Appendix A), I sent an email invitation to participate in this study to my prospective participants (see Appendix B). Participant selection was done through convenience and snowball sampling (Kelly, 2009), which involved locating one or two participants I knew personally who met the criteria I had established for participation, and they referred me to other prospective participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To participate, candidates needed to meet the following criteria: (a) be an internationally trained Ghanaian male, (b) have resided in in a province in western Canada for over two years, (c) be 21 years of age or older, (d) have a minimum of a university degree, and (e) have been gainfully employed before immigrating to Canada.

The initial primary channel of communication was by email and telephone. Qualified participants replied to my email invitation, and we set up an interview time. I emailed the consent form (see Appendix C) in advance for participants to review. Signing of the consent form was done at the time of the interview. I have used pseudonyms to protect my participants and ensure their privacy. Confidentiality was upheld at all times during this research.

Methods. I conducted one-on-one semistructured interviews with the participants as a means of data collection. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and took place at a mutually agreed location with each participant. Three of the interviews occurred in the participants' private home offices, another was done at a public library, and the last interview took place at a coffee shop. The interview protocol involved a brief introduction of the research

and a review of the consent form. To make each participant feel comfortable, I started with a preamble with words to this effect:

> This is an opportunity to gather the views and perspectives of Ghanaian male immigrants in a province in western Canada, and I really want to hear what your experiences are. It is basically a dialogue between the two of us that will be guided by some questions that I have, but not limited to that. I want you to share your story with me.

In collecting the data, I considered myself as both a researcher and an instrument in the data collection process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). I let participants know verbally that the interview would be recorded. All interviews were done with a stand-alone recording device (Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS-853) and a backup software device (Audacity) on my laptop, which was password protected. I used semistructured and open-ended interview questions, and I took down salient notes as the interview progressed. After each interview, I reviewed my notes and expanded them, adding pertinent thoughts, key ideas, and my understanding of each participant's story. I transcribed the interviews myself and ensured all participant information was well protected by allowing participants to select a pseudonym.

After the interviews were done, I gave participants the opportunity to member check the transcriptions. Member checking is a process in which the participants check their interview transcripts for accuracy and as a way of validating the data that was collected from the interview (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). I emailed the transcriptions to each respective participant and provided a two-week time frame to review. As a follow-up, I scheduled individual meetings with each participant to review and discuss the interview transcripts. This gave me an opportunity to discuss the themes that arose in individual narratives and receive

feedback on the intended message of the narrative (Hayden, 2015). One participant suggested minor edits to his transcript, which I implemented.

Analysis

All my interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. I combined the use of NVivo software (https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/home) with a manual data analysis process. The goal of my data analysis was to find answers to my research questions. The answers to my findings are also called categories, themes, or findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For the purpose of this study, I refer to my findings as themes that emerged after my data analysis.

Analyzing the data demanded a heightened awareness and an open mind to recurring and common threads, some of which were subtle (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). I employed the use of interim analysis, where the analysis occurred throughout the study rather than at the end of it (Hendricks, 2012). This method of inquiry required me to continually interpret and analyze the data collected. My process of analysis began with me playing back all the interviews and listening to them attentively even before I started transcribing the data. This step allowed me to familiarize myself with the conversations and immerse myself in my data, setting a foundation for me to start my data analysis. Once the qualitative data had been recorded in text form, I analyzed the text to search for categories and themes (Hendricks, 2012). I focused on identifying recurring themes or patterns that appeared often through the interviews. I also referenced my notes and compared them to the interview data. The emerging themes became the building blocks of my research.

My primary coding process was informed by Tesch's (1990) eight-step coding protocol, which involves reading all transcripts through to cluster similar topics, assembling the data, and finalizing the categories and themes. I began by trying to understand the data I had collected. As

noted above, I listened to each interview several times before the transcribing began to gain a thorough understanding of what each participant had to say. After carefully transcribing the data, I printed out all the transcripts and began the process of looking for themes. Saldaña (2013) referred to this step as theming the data. I used a coding process that involved organizing a word or words that represented a category in the margins of my transcripts (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). This initial process generated about 50 codes.

The process of grouping codes together is called *axial coding*, which involves combining codes under broader themes (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). During axial coding, I was able to systemically categorize and reduce the codes to a workable number of themes. The final step allowed me to start thinking about my findings in relation to my main research questions. I used final themes I arrived at and aligned them to answer my research questions (Bui, 2013).

The experience of the participants as immigrants was the pivot around which this research revolved. My role as a researcher and experiences as an immigrant helped me get a broader perspective into the complexities of life as an internationally trained immigrant. Throughout the analysis process, I was aware of my role as a researcher, and I was careful not to impose my own understanding on the participants when I collected and interpreted their data. I engaged in reflection at the beginning of the research process as a way to clarify my initial biases (Hendricks, 2012), and I kept them in consideration as I proceeded.

Ethical Considerations

As a researcher, I am morally bound to conduct my research in a manner that minimizes potential harm to those involved in the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). I knew that I would be working with human participants and that it would be important to address ethical issues. I

was bound by the ethics guidelines set by the University of Calgary and the formal approval that was given by the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board before I started my research. Aspects that I gave top priority to included maintaining the confidentiality of all participants' names and places of work. I used pseudonyms to further protect the participants from any possible ramifications from their participation, such as from employers. I ensured they were given the opportunity to member check their interview transcriptions and revise, add, or question any part of the interview. Participants were also made aware that partaking in this study was voluntary, that they had the right to discontinue participating in the interview without any negative consequences, and that any information collected prior to the point of their withdrawal would be used with utmost confidentiality and anonymity. None of the participants withdrew from the study. I reviewed the consent forms with participants prior to them signing to confirm that they had been informed of their rights and understood them.

As a researcher, I wanted to ensure that ethical considerations were duly addressed in my research. I moved beyond the institutional narrative of doing no harm by learning an attitude of empathic listening, by not being judgmental, and by suspending any disbelief as I attended to participants' stories (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007). Due to the nature of this study and the possible sensitivity around issues of racial and cultural identity, there was a minor risk that in responding to questions, some emotional concerns could arise. Topics of colour, marginalization, gender, and discrimination came up in my dialogues with these men, and I was attentive to their emotions and sensitivities. If concerns arose for a participant, he could have quit the research at any time without penalty and voluntarily withdrawn from the study; however, this did not occur. Even so, I informed the participants of counselling services available in the community for a minimal charge, should the need arise.

Creswell (2014) pointed out several ethical issues that can arise prior to a study and how to mitigate them, which I followed. At the beginning of the study, I ensured that I disclosed the purpose to all participants. In collecting data, I avoided deceiving participants by reiterating the purpose of study and discussing how the data would be used. Interview sites were selected for the participants' comfort, in locations that would not raise any power issues. In reporting, sharing, and storing data, I avoided disclosing information that would harm participants by using composite stories so that individuals cannot be identified (Creswell, 2014). At all times, I stored data collected from this study in a secure environment.

Limitations

Limitations of a study expose the conditions that may weaken the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). As a researcher, it is important to identify and acknowledge them (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). My own biases as a researcher stem from the fact that I am also a skilled and internationally trained Ghanaian immigrant, just like my research participants. I attempted to mitigate this limitation by explaining my biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding this research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) at all times. Failure to do so would have undermined the integrity of my research.

The restricted sample size of five male participants, all from a province in western Canada, limit the results, which may not be generalizable to a larger population. Out of the prospective participants, I could not control who came forward or who would have a change of heart and withdraw from the study. People who self-select to participate in research may have different characteristics than those who do not come forward, which further limits the findings.

Delimitations

My study was delimited to the lived experiences of internationally trained Ghanaian male immigrants, above age 21, who have resided in a province in western Canada for a minimum of two years. The participants for the research must have a university degree. By using a narrative inquiry methodology in my research, the interview was my primary mode of data collection. I used semistructured interviews to draw out participants' stories and experiences, which provided a rich description that was full of concrete details (Seidman, 2013).

Summary

In this chapter I discussed my research design. I first covered the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the research. I then explained the methodology I followed, including research participants, methods, and analysis. I covered ethical considerations and concluded by outlining limitations and delimitations.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this study was to explore (a) the challenges and opportunities experienced by Ghanaian male immigrants to Canada, (b) challenges and opportunities encountered when seeking employment, and (c) the impact on identity of being a visible minority immigrant in Canada. In this chapter, I present the participant demographics, a brief portrait of each participant, and the dominant themes that emerged from the data: (a) hurdles, (b) support system, (c) path to jobs, (d) spectra of colour and identity, and (e) optimism and hope in a new country. These dominant themes are further broken down into subthemes where appropriate. Findings are based on the dialogues, stories, and experiences shared by my research participants during our interviews, which were revealing, insightful, and thought-provoking for me as a researcher. My understanding of the experiences of visible minority men of colour has been enriched through the reflections and stories shared by my fellow internationally trained Ghanaian male immigrants.

Participant Demographics

All the five participants who volunteered to participate in this study resided in a city in western Canada. To ensure confidentiality, each participant is identified by way of a pseudonym, chosen to represent common Ghanaian male names (see Table 1). All five participants were immigrant men who had lived in Canada from 4 to 18 years. As well, all were professionals who had held jobs in their area of expertise prior to immigrating to Canada. Reasons for immigrating to Canada varied from marriage to seeking better opportunities in another country. Three participants held master's degrees and two had earned doctorate degrees in their respective fields.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Name	Gender	Profession in Ghana	Level of education	Home city in Ghana	Years in Canada
Ato	Male	University lecturer	Three master's degrees	Accra	4
Boakye	Male	Accountant	Master's, chartered accountant	Accra	7
Cudjoe	Male	Researcher/ environmental scientist	PhD	Kumasi	10
Danso	Male	IT professional	PhD	Kumasi	18
Ebo	Male	Geologist	Master's degree	Cape Coast	4

Participant Portraits

What follows is a brief portrait for each participant that includes why they chose to immigrate to Canada. The identity of all the participants is kept confidential—each was assigned a pseudonym. To give voice to the participants regarding their experiences having immigrated to Canada, I have included direct quotes in each portrait. This approach helps to bring the participant's perspective into the study (Creswell, 2014). To stay as authentic as possible to the interviewees, I did not edit any grammatical errors. I strove to stay true their words and feelings as much as possible.

Ato. Ato is a 43-year-old who has been in Canada for the past four years. He immigrated to Canada because of marriage. He was a university lecturer for a couple of years in Ghana before he decided to immigrate to Canada to be with his family:

> I really did not decide to immigrate to Canada initially. I think it was 2011; I was introduced to my wife now by a mutual friend. And six months later, she came to Ghana, and then, we got married. Now, of course, I think that we didn't even have the

> conversation as to whether we're going to live in Ghana or Canada. I mean, I was taking for granted that I would have to move to Canada. So that's basically how it came about.

The interview with Ato took place in the study of his house. His study was full of books covering a wide range of subjects from religion and philosophy to economics. Ato presented himself as confident, knowledgeable, and spiritual in that he drew upon "inner resources," the "beauty of the doctrine," and "how his ideas about faith and religion are intellectually based." He referred to himself as an "intellectual person." He holds a bachelor's degree and three additional master's degrees in various academic fields.

Boakye. Boakye is 40-year-old accountant who has lived in a province in western Canada for the past seven years. Boakye immigrated to Canada to be with family: "My wife lived in Canada for a while, so we got married and she convinced me to move here."

The interview with Boakye took place in his house. He has a master's degree and is a certified chartered accountant. "Having kids" and raising a family were two of the main reasons he decided to immigrate to Canada. Boakye got his "accountant certification in Ghana," where he worked for a number of years before permanently relocating to Canada.

Cudjoe. Cudjoe is a 47-year-old environmental scientist and researcher who holds a PhD. Our interview took place at a public library. He has been in Canada for a total of 10 years. He decided to immigrate to Canada mainly to look for work, share his knowledge, and learn from Canada because of his belief that Canada is a country that is serious on environmental issues:

> So, I was looking for work, really practice what I was learning. And once you get into environmental science, you want to get to where environmental issues are, and then, where they are being addressed. I know back home they are, but the question is, "Are we

really addressing them? Are we serious on them?" So that's one of the considerations. And of course, that Canada is an English-speaking country.

Canada was Cudjoe's first country of choice when he decided to immigrate. He believed he could apply and "really practice what he was learning" as a scientist and researcher. The road to settling in as an immigrant had many challenges for him. In hindsight, he wondered if he made the right decision in coming to Canada. He appeared to be disillusioned at times during the interview on the topic of securing a job and referred to the "frustration" and the "closed system" when seeking employment.

Danso. Danso is a 46-year-old IT professional. He has been in Canada for the past 18 years. He came to Canada with the aim of furthering his education. "Well, I came to Canada for my master's. That was the main reason. But then once I got here, I realized I could immigrate and hence decided to apply and become permanent resident." He also has a PhD from a Canadian university.

The interview with Danso took place in his house. Danso initially came to Canada to pursue a master's degree at a university in eastern Canada and did not intend to stay. Prior to coming to Canada, he was gainfully employed with a government agency in Ghana. He decided to add value to himself by furthering his education. After his master's degree, his supervisor recommended him for a PhD program. This opportunity led him to decide to remain in Canada permanently as an immigrant.

Ebo. Ebo is a 31-year-old geologist who has been in Canada for the past four years. He decided to come to Canada because of Canada's multilingual nature and job prospects, and to further his education:

> I chose Canada first and foremost because of the English language. I'm pretty much very confident in English, even though I know pretty much a little bit of French related to my job. I chose Canada because of basically English and French. That's first and foremost. It's easier for me to communicate. And then, secondly, for education. And then the last but not the least probably a job.

Ebo was the youngest of all the participants interviewed. The interview took place in a popular Canadian coffee shop. He appeared to have a positive outlook on his future in Canada and is looking forward to his family from Ghana joining him here. He affirmed that "Canada will always be his first choice" as country to recommend for immigration. His willingness to fit into his new environment was brought to the fore when he mentioned at the end of the interview that "if you are ready to learn, and you are ready to integrate into the Canadian culture, Canadian society, I think you'll be good."

Emergent Themes

Participants represented a professional group of Ghanaian men, who decided to leave their home country of Ghana and settle in Canada. Through the interviews, I explored how each participant navigated and situated himself as a visible male minority in Canada. More specifically, participants shared the challenges and opportunities they encountered related to seeking employment and settling into Canadian society. The following five key themes emerged from the data:

1. Hurdles;
2. Support system;
3. Path to jobs;
4. Spectra of colour and identity; and,

5. Optimism and hope in a new country.

Theme 1: Hurdles. My constructivist and interpretivist worldview underscored my quest to listen to, explore, and understand the experiences of my research participants. This framework served as a platform from which I made meaning to the voices of my interviewees. One of my main research aims revolved around the open-ended exploration of the challenges experienced as Ghanaian male immigrants to Canada. This aim connects to the hurdles and challenges my interviewees have faced and continue to face as minority men of colour in Canada and the barriers they needed to overcome as they sought to assimilate into their new environment. The following subthemes of frustrations and anxiety, lack of Canadian qualifications, and job seeking and the Canadian experience sum up the hurdles and challenges these men faced.

***Frustrations and anxiety*.** Coming to a new country as an immigrant is fraught with many challenges and obstacles. My interviewees used various descriptors to explain their frustrations and the anxiety they faced when they arrived as immigrants to Canada. The similar thread for all the participants was the fear of not getting a job. The following narratives capture the obstacles and challenges the participants faced when they first landed in Canada.

Ato described the fear of not getting a job as one of the challenges he initially faced. With three master's degrees under his belt, he had a genuine fear of coming to Canada and not finding a job despite all his qualifications. This is what he had to say regarding his fear:

> I mean, I think initially it's just the fear. You move here, and then, after a few days, you begin to think to yourself, "Why did I actually come?" Because I had a settled job; my life was actually settled in Ghana and all that. So, I think initially it was just this fear that, "Will I actually get a job?" And I think for me that fear was actually founded because—I mean, if you look at my qualifications, basically, I've three master's degrees, I have a

> bachelor's degree in different, different areas. And I remember people were telling me that it'll be difficult to get a job, and also because the first three degrees were in the social sciences, but the fourth one was actually in theology. I mean, you don't . . . theology is not something . . . it is something for the ministry, not for [commerce], . . . so I was really very scared.

Boakye expressed similar sentiments regarding the anxiety of not getting a job and the number of times he had to apply before getting one. The number of applications shows how determined and unrelenting he was in his bid to find a job when he first came to Canada:

> In terms of job searching, it took me—it was a little frustrating because I applied for over 200 jobs. Yeah, over 200 jobs. And I had a record of every single job that I applied for right from junior accountant positions to senior accountant positions, in between there, there's a whole lot.

Similarly, Cudjoe commented on his own challenges and incidents regarding his experiences of not getting a job. "How to get a job here is really challenging. Yeah. You can do all the calls. You can format all your resume here and there. But at the end of the day, getting in is a problem." Cudjoe exhibited frustration in the number of resumes he prepared and sent out to prospective employers without getting any positive response.

Danso reflected on the challenges of getting a job even though he had the right qualifications. As an IT professional, he came to Canada initially to do his master's and along the line decided to stay given the opportunities he saw: "Completing [my] PhD was challenging but finding an appropriate job with a PhD was even a greater challenge, something I hardly knew until job hunting begun." Of all the participants, he had been in Canada the longest (18 years).

Despite having completed his doctorate degree in Canada, he also experienced challenges when he was searching for a job.

Ebo, a geologist by profession, shared his narrative of the challenges he faced. With a sterling job record as a geologist and vast experience in Africa, it was nevertheless challenging and difficult to get the right job to fit his experience when he arrived in Canada:

> I've been in Canada since January 2014. Back home in Ghana, I was a consulting geologist. I worked across Africa, about seven or eight countries across the sub region. So, I'm pretty much experienced when it comes to geology. I mean, I've also worked on a mine. I happened to work at [Company Name]. Yeah, pretty much had the experience. So, looking online, and then looking at the job requirement and all that. I thought, "Hey, pretty much, I am very good in and I will be able to secure myself a job." But when I came to Canada, I spent the first part of two years looking for job. And it was pretty disheartening. It was very, very, very tough. When I saw any ad for sure, I saw lots of ads. Lots of ads relating to geology, which were, for me, basic geology jobs. But with my experience, about maybe five years of experience back home, I couldn't secure a job.

For all interviewees, getting a job was their main cause of frustration and anxiety considering the years of professional experience they had amassed back home in Ghana.

Lack of Canadian qualifications. Another subtheme that came out of this study was the issue of a lack of Canadian educational qualifications. Participants were literate men who could write, read, and communicate properly in English. They had university degrees from back home. However, not having a Canadian education was a hurdle they faced coming into Canada.

Ato had three international master's degrees and still had issues with securing a job. He expected to get a job right away, but this was not the case, despite him having his first and

second degrees from Ghana, his second master's degree from the prestigious University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, and his third from South Korea:

> I have a bachelor's degree in philosophy and religion, and then a master's in international affairs, both of which I did in Ghana. And then, I did another master's in development studies. That was at the University of Cambridge in the UK. And then, I went to seminary in Korea and did a Master of Arts in Theology as well.

Despite his above qualifications, getting a job did not come on a silver platter. Ato was of the view that a good resume with the requisite qualifications should get him a job irrespective of where those qualifications came from:

> So, I cannot believe that if I have the qualifications and I have what it takes to actually do a particular job, I don't have to go to look for somebody to recommend me or to refer me. My resume should be able to speak for itself.

Boakye expressed similar sentiments. He was trained as a chartered accountant. He affirmed that because he was not trained in Canada, he also experienced challenges securing a job. It took him a long time to get one, even though he believed that the skill set of an accountant should be easily transferable to any environment: "For me as an accountant, an accountant is the same everywhere you go. So, I mean, as long as you have the qualifications, you know what you're doing."

Cudjoe, trained as an environmental scientist, obtained his first and second degrees in Ghana. As well, he had a PhD from Germany. He was no different from the other participants in voicing the hurdles he faced over not having Canadian qualifications:

> Well, again, one of the challenges for immigrants is, even your type of education and degree being accepted in a system, they have a required system where they check your

> records. Done that. And since I studied in a developed country, yeah, so I knew that my degrees, education should be accepted here.

To Cudjoe's surprise, his PhD degree was not recognized, even though Germany is a country equally as developed as Canada. He went further to explicate the challenges in securing a job, suggesting that employers are looking for something beyond qualifications, but he was not too sure what exactly that is:

> One of the challenges would be, what the people really want? Okay? The jobs are being advertised. Okay? Of course, you prepare yourself. You make your resume or CV or whatever available. But as to how, what criteria to get into the minds of the recruiters, is a challenging task. You really don't know what they want. So, you see the job. You realize that you over qualify. But you realize you are up high and you are not taken. So, then you begin to think, it's not just only your qualification. Or maybe there is something else that they desire.

One participant, Danso, did have Canadian qualifications. He initially came to Canada as a student and decided to settle permanently. Although he completed both his masters and his PhD in Canada, and thus had Canadian qualifications, it was not easy for him to get a job. His point of view is contrary to that of the other participants, who believed they were not getting jobs because of their non-Canadian qualifications. He finished his masters just two years after the 9/11 bombing in the U.S.:

> It's kind of a little bit challenging, to be very frank and fair, especially when I completed my master's degree in 2003 just following 9/11. There was a recession, and it was generally difficult to find a job. I decided to continue with a PhD whilst looking for job. I tried combining studies and job hunting for about six months and concluded I could not

> combine the two effectively. I decided to focus on completing courses for the PhD rather than chasing jobs, which were hard to find at the time. . . . With a PhD in computer science focusing on data mining and analytics, I was expecting to find exciting and good job in Canada. Unfortunately, most of the calls I got were sales commission jobs for selling insurance or some telemarketing jobs. These companies pay on commission and not salaries, so they didn't care about my educational level.

Even though Danso completed his PhD in Canada, he struggled to find a job once he was done with school. He even contemplated moving to the U.S. at one point to explore further opportunities because despite his degree, he was still not getting a job of his choice and believed that employers were not looking at his qualifications.

The above excerpts illustrate that getting a job was not easy or straightforward for these Ghanaian male immigrants. Job hunting did not follow a linear path merely because they had the requisite degrees. The participants required fortitude and resilience to get a job commensurate with their educational levels.

Job seeking and the Canadian experience. All the participants came to Canada with the hope of getting of a good job commensurate with their level of education. When their job search began, they were confronted with issue of Canadian experience: Employers were looking for candidates with some knowledge of the Canadian work culture. This presented a shock to most of the interviewees. Adding to the challenge of not having Canadian experience, other issues came up during the interviews, ranging from being overqualified to securing a job just to get a foot in the door in the job market.

Ato talked about how one of his prospective employers expressed surprise over his qualifications and hinted of doubt as to whether he would stay in the job:

> So, for me again, I think because I have all these degrees, and I have a very high level of education, I think that when people looked at my CV, immediately they kind of think—I remember when I was doing my interview, one lady asked me, "Why don't you go and look for a job with the UN? Why are you coming—because you have all these international this, international that, and lived here and there." So, I think there's already a suspicion that probably you're just looking for a foot in the door and you may not last. And I think that's a real kind of problem for companies.

For Boakye, the issue of not having Canadian experience was more real and overt to him. Even though he had a PhD before coming to Canada, he was told several times by Canadian employers that he was not chosen for a position because he did not have Canadian experience. He still appeared appalled by this hurdle as he told his story:

> Well, the main challenge was not having Canadian experience. . . . They shouldn't prevent you from getting a job just because haven't got Canadian experience. But that's what seems to be the case because, I mean, before I got a job I went for a whole lot of interviews, got shortlisted for about four or five, and the feedback was that I didn't have Canadian experience, so they'd go with a different candidate, not because I wasn't qualified for the position. I didn't get the position because I didn't have Canadian experience. Plus, another thing that stood out was that they, "Oh, we think you're too qualified for this position. So maybe you get bored easily with the position." But I thought it was a way of just telling me that I didn't have Canadian experience.

Cudjoe also spoke about his lack of Canadian experience and how it was a hindrance for him getting a job in his field of expertise as a PhD holder. He brought to the fore the catch-22 that if one is not given the chance at a job, how is one expected to gain the necessary experience?

He asked a poignant rhetorical question to this effect that struck a chord with me as a researcher and got me reflecting deeply about the Canadian system:

> Talking of one other issue was Canadian experience [laughter] when you come here [laughter]. It doesn't matter what you have on paper, they will tell you to have Canadian experience. And the issue is, if you are not given the opportunity to work, how do you get the experience here?

Danso shared sentiments similar to the other participants concerning the hurdles in job seeking and Canadian work experience. He went further in highlighting the difficulties in even getting an interview when looking for a job:

> In my opinion, the biggest challenge is getting an interview, for people to listen to and talk to you. But then, that is a big hurdle, because people always feel they are not sure whether you can speak good English. They don't know your work ethic, especially when you don't have any work experience in North America. Probably specific job experience doesn't matter as long as you worked, even if it was at Tim Hortons, people will know maybe you have a balanced work ethic, you can go to work and come back. But then when you have nothing to compare with, it's hard. They can't judge. So, most recruiters will not even take the risk of calling you for an interview.

Danso appeared reflective when he was talking about his challenges as a foreigner trying to get his first interview in Canada. From his interactions with Canadian employers, they seemed more comfortable employing people with some semblance of Canadian experience, irrespective of where the experience was coming from. Danso went on to point out how one's self-esteem and ego are affected when one does menial jobs way below one's qualifications:

> Some new immigrants settle for menial jobs—[it's] a huge loss to the Canadian economy whilst making these immigrants feel very unwelcomed to Canada. The consequence is low self-esteem, leading people to question if they made the right decision coming to Canada.

Ebo did manage to get a bit of Canadian experience by doing jobs below his level of expertise as a geologist. He believed these job experiences eventually helped him to get a job in his field of expertise later:

> But then again, I spoke to some few colleagues, spoke to some few agencies, and pretty much I lacked the Canadian experience, so to speak. I think that working at some of Canadian retail stores—for example, I worked in Walmart as an overnight support manager. And then I worked in Superstore. I also worked with Pepsi, which pretty much my job was always interacting with customers. So, if you have all these on your resume, employers tend to kind of pay attention to some of these things, like, "Hey, you've had pretty much very good interactions with the Canadian society," and then it pretty much helps out.

Ebo did not hold back on the kind of jobs he did when he first arrived in Canada. He spoke freely about them without any inhibitions. He saw these menial jobs as stepping stones to be able to get a foot in the door and build his Canadian work experience.

Theme 2: Support system. Settling into a new environment calls for a support system to help ease the burden of navigating and integrating into the new country. For this study, support systems broadly and generally mean any support that helped to alleviate hardship or made the transition into Canada easier and more manageable. All the participants agreed on the importance of social and emotional supports to make their assimilation into Canada much easier. Without a

support system, life in Canada would have been arduous. The three subthemes of support were family, friend, and government.

Family support. Three out of the five participants noted family support as being key to their survival in Canada. Ato mentioned the support from his wife and how it was very important to him and kept him going. Her positive affirmations and encouragement never made him look back. Ato made mention of his wife 11 times during the interview:

> I think that in terms of talking with my wife, I think I cannot pinpoint a particular moment, but I think she was very significant in the kind of encouragement that she gave me. That she always believed that, "You will definitely find a job because you have so much in you." But then, I think family has also been key. And my wife and immediate family, I think she in particular has been extremely supportive, and I always believe that I had something in me, and therefore, I would actually find more than a job.

Family meant a lot to Ato, which was evident in the way he described the support he received from his wife when he first arrived.

Cudjoe talked about the support and solace he got not just from his biological family, but from his church family as well:

> Oh, of course. One of them is family and friends, and association, I mean, church. There's a charity organized at church. You meet people there. You succeed with them. You share together. And of course, the community support is also there.

Similarly, Danso highlighted the importance of not only his immediate family, but the support from his extended family as well:

> Supportive network. Well, since I have been to Canada, I came to Canada, I have a family, that is the first. And so, I have a big brother, a senior brother in Toronto. I have another brother in Edmonton. So, I kind of came to Canada having a family.

Family for Danso extended beyond just his wife and children. When he arrived in Canada over 18 years ago, he initially lived with his brother in Toronto before he moved to western Canada.

Friend support. Support from friends and colleagues is also important in the integration of new immigrants in a new country. Some of the participants emphasized the significance of friends on their journey of integration.

Boakye talked of the influence of not only Ghanaian friends, but other friends from Africa. These friends from Africa and others with similar cultural backgrounds helped him adjust in Canada:

> Well, I would say we have a number of Ghanaian friends. Not necessary Ghanaian friends. We have friends who are from Ghana, Nigeria, from other parts of Africa, that, yeah, we tend to hang out with and most of them have similar experiences, so we are able to relate to each other.

Danso and Ebo mentioned the friendships they made at school and how helpful they have been. Danso drew on support largely from his close circle of Ghanaian friends he made:

> There were a few Ghanaians too in the same university. And then though now I don't get so much involved into the Ghanaian association, that I still know a lot of Ghanaians that were very helpful when I came to Canada.

Ebo also highlighted the colleagues he made in school and noted how they relied on one another for job leads and referrals:

> I've been in contact with my colleagues back in school, SAIT [Southern Alberta Institute of Technology]. Yeah. We keep in touch. I try to link them to job availabilities elsewhere. And then they try to link me up with either of our friends or jobs elsewhere.

As with Danso, Ebo used the support from friends and colleagues he met in school in Canada, and in turn supported them, for job referrals and other assistance.

Government support. Government support is paramount in aiding new immigrants to settle in Canada, have a smooth transition, prepare their resumes, and find jobs upon arrival. Despite the participants having received some form of government support when they first arrived, they felt there was room for improvement and added their voices on how the government could do better. For this study, government agencies broadly include immigrant settlement agencies as described by the participants.

Ato acknowledged that the government is doing a good job, but more could be done for meeting the needs of immigrants in terms of job placement. He believed some of the settlement agencies are merely ticking boxes to get government funding:

> Some of the settlement agencies, because they depend on government funding, and because they need to be ticking certain boxes all the time, they're doing some good. Some of them are actually doing some good work, but I think for many of them, they're just doing something, so they can tick some boxes and get their funding for the following year.

Ato appeared very passionate on his views on government settlement agencies when he recollected his experiences with them:

> And I remember, for example, with the first internship I did, I think there was no real effort in actually trying to match me with a company where I would actually do really—

> my background would actually be very needed so that I'd get a job afterward. And I remember in conversations with the person that actually was in charge of that program, they kept asking me, "Oh, did they offer you the job? Did they offer you the job?" Basically that, if I was offered a job, then they can tick a box and say, "Oh, we put one person through, this person got a job, so you have to give us more money."

Ato believed the government-supported immigrant serving agencies were eager only to tick boxes to get more funding rather than being genuinely concerned with the type of job one got as an immigrant.

Boakye also thought that government support is a laudable initiative, but he hoped more could be done than just assist in writing resumes:

> I know the number of programs that helps immigrants, like new immigrants, to help them find work. But most of those programs help immigrants just to understand the Canadian workforce, like how people relate at work, how you should look for work, I mean, how we have to write your resumes, stuff like that. Which is good, but I think they should help—I think they should do more programs or offer more programs to immigrants that will help them find work easier than just doing resumes.

Beyond showing immigrants how to write resumes to fit the job market, Boakye felt that immigrant serving agencies should offer more in terms of assisting immigrants to get suitable jobs matching their qualifications.

Cudjoe acknowledged the support he got from the government. He had a much more positive spin on the help he received from government-assisted immigrant support agencies than the other participants:

> Yeah. The support system that I got—well, government programs are there, all right? Yeah. Those government programs, where they help very much is the technical aspect, like how to format your resume and cover letter and all those things. You can do it and they can correct it for you. They can even train you how to prepare for interview and all that.

Danso's situation was unique in that he came to Canada about 18 years ago, when there were no proper or defined government structures that assisted immigrants. Given that government support was almost nonexistent, he relied on the Internet and job-seeking websites to look for jobs. Support systems were not prevalent as they are now, so he was virtually on his own, with his destiny in his own hands:

> That is [laughter] kind of interesting. I know I used a few of the websites then. For most technology jobs, you could use Dice. There was Dice.com, mostly in the U.S., and then Workopolis and CareerBuilder websites. You go in there, post your resume.

According to Ebo, the government support system appeared enticing, but he found the reality on the ground to be different. He had checked government websites touting immigrant-friendly Canada, but on arriving Ebo realized that the promises of milk and honey were far from true:

> Well, everything looks pretty much good online. When you go to the Government of Canada website, talking about immigration, it's pretty much enticing. I mean, you are drawn to Canada when you just read all about it on the website. But then it's pretty much a different ball game when you're on the ground here. It's totally different here.

Theme 3: Path to jobs. Coming to a new country and not knowing anyone is a daunting challenge. Making it more challenging is the notion of having to look for a job on your own

despite having sterling qualifications and degrees. All my participants went through the phase of searching for a job. The subthemes for this finding are networking and mentorship, Canadian education, and volunteering and internships.

Networking and mentorship. Networking and mentorship played a significant role in assisting the participants in securing jobs as new immigrants to Canada. Having solid connections and a reliable network to fall on were pivotal in the narratives of the interviewees.

Ato reiterated the importance of networking and the links he got through a regional employment council. His mentor from the program assisted him in tailoring his resume for his job searches:

> I joined a mentorship program . . . and I was paired with a lady. . . She actually is the human resource—I think her title is a human resource leader—. . . and she's involved in recruitment and all these things. And I think that—she was also very important for me at that particular time in my life because she knew the work environment. And I think one of the things that she did for me was actually help me to structure my resume well and all that, and how to answer interview questions, and all that.

Ato praised his mentor and raved about how well they got along. She helped him tweak his resumes to suit specific jobs he was targeting. On the other hand, when it came to networking, Ato had a different view. It was a challenge for him to step out of his comfort zone to network with others and connect with complete strangers all in the name of looking for a job:

> The whole networking thing was really very alien to me. I've never had to look for a job that way before. If I wanted a job, I just send my resume. If you like me, you call me. But everybody was telling me that, "Oh, in Canada it was by referral. And so, if you don't

know anybody, it's difficult to actually get the job." And I think for me that was one very major hurdle. I just could not wrap my mind around that. And even now, I still can't.

Boakye affirmed the importance of networking and mentorship and noted how it propelled him in getting ready for the job market in Canada. He also benefitted from the same agency program Ato went through:

> They have this networking program that they used to do. Yeah. I think they did that once every month. So yeah. I was attending that every single month to get networks, and also try to see if that can help me at least get a job. Yeah, so. Eventually, like I said, through the mentorship program, that's why I got through. I got an interview for a job. So I would say that was the turning point because I don't think—if it weren't for them, I wouldn't even have had a chance to get an interview. And most of the time, that's what you need.

Boakye seemed to exhale with gratitude on the benefits of the mentorship program and how it turned his life around in his adopted country:

> I only got a job because there was this mentorship program in [a local college] where someone interviewed me. So I had a mentor who reviewed my resumes, and we're going through mock interviews and stuff like that. My mentor happened to work at [name of company]. . . . I had applied for a couple of positions there, same positions, same resume, nothing changed. And yeah. I didn't get even an interview. So one of them said, "Oh. We have a position if you're interested. I can pass your resume to someone." And through that network, that's how I got an interview. And probably I impressed at the interview, so they took me on.

Boakye had his breakthrough in getting a job through the mentorship and networking program, and he found it useful. It is interesting to note that he had initially applied for the same

position at the company in question and did not get the job. It was a clear case of knowing someone on the inside that got him his first job.

Cudjoe agreed that knowing someone on the inside, as pointed out by Boakye, is important. He talked about how open and closed the Canadian system is in terms of looking for a job:

> And there's one word that you often hear. That's networking. . . . Government has laws as to how people can get a job. A job has to be posted, has to go through the process. But there's always a back door somewhere that you wouldn't know. It's quite unfortunate. Sometimes you see the job post that you are applying for; the job is actually not there or has been given to somebody already. But they put it there just to fulfill government regulations.

Cudjoe affirmed the importance of knowing someone within an organization to get employed:

> So, you have to know somebody there. And, I tell you, when I got into the job market and I started working, I realized that referral plays a huge role here. It's like somebody knows somebody, another person, they actually prefer those people than you just come and nobody knows you. So the way I did it, first of all, was in touch with another Ghanaian, who had been here before he was working. So he had to introduce me. And then, by that introduction, that's how I got the opportunity to meet somebody. And then now, still went through the formal process. But to get a job, you really need to get to know somebody.

Three out of the five participants confirmed the importance of networking and mentorship in helping them to find jobs. A local immigrant service agency was a vehicle for the

participants through which they were able to meet their mentors, who set them on the path to securing jobs.

Canadian education. The participants, through their narratives, spoke about how getting a Canadian education helped them integrate, and may have been a factor in finding meaningful employment.

Ato, with his four degrees, went ahead and got a postgraduate diploma at the University of British Columbia. He initially expressed doubts as to whether the Canadian education helped him and was quite ambivalent on this issue. After reflecting soberly for a while, he concluded that it did help him get a job:

> So yeah, I settled on an adult education diploma at the University of British Columbia. And I finished that, I think, July 2016. So now, again, it's difficult to say whether that helped me to get the job or not. But I think that it probably did. It probably did.

Boakye also undertook a couple of short courses while he was looking for a job as an accountant, although he could not confirm whether the additional Canadian education assisted him in getting a job:

> Well, I did a couple of courses back. It was more like—oh, I'm trying to remember the course—Canadian Securities course. So that's for like mutual funds and stuff like that. So, while I was looking for work, I wanted do something that at least could get me . . . it could get me something to start with, but because I have my masters, I thought there was no point in me getting another degree. So, once I got a job, I've been just doing courses, training courses.

Cudjoe also did a couple of short courses related to his profession as an environmental scientist. Although he had a PhD, he undertook these certificate courses to help him get a job, a

practice he continues: “Once you are in the system, you do short courses here and there which, even up to now, I’ve been doing some courses online and all that. And I’m registered.” As with Boakye, he could not specify whether securing some Canadian education helped him to get a job.

Danso was ambivalent about the impact of his Canadian education in helping him get a job:

> I have a PhD level in education. Yes. Now, it’s useful because I have a job. But did it help me in getting the job? I am not too sure. Ideally, most people would think once you have a PhD, “Why don’t you go and teach?” That is the initial thing that comes to mind.

As the participant who has stayed the longest in Canada, Danso is working in an industry within his field of study. However, after completing his PhD, it took a long time for him to find a job in his area of expertise.

Ebo agreed that his Canadian education helped him find favour with prospective employers:

> Oh, Yes. I have actually had an upgraded postgraduate degree, so to speak, in SAIT. And I think that when employers see that you’ve had a bit of education in Canada, and so to speak, see and believe that you understand the Canadian culture, you’ve moved along with the Canadian students. So you can better kind of integrate and that you’ve had a very good understanding of the Canadian culture.

As the youngest participant in the interviews, Ebo was positive his Canadian education helped him get a job. Having some level of Canadian education gives a “good understanding of the Canadian ‘culture’ and employers are less apprehensive of taking you on board” (Ebo).

Volunteering and internships. Volunteering and internships had some influence on two of the participants’ job-seeking behaviour. Ato discussed an internship, and Boakye talked about

volunteering. Both followed these paths as a rite of passage to get a "foot in door" in the job space.

Ato spoke about having the opportunity to do an internship to understand the Canadian work culture and boost his self-esteem:

> I did an internship with . . . a language translation company. And that was good because it gave me—it was three months, so it gave me an opportunity to be out, and to kind of work in a Canadian environment, and see how things work, and go, and all that. So that was one very good one. And even though I was not offered a job, it was quite good for my self-esteem.

Ato believed the internship he did prepared him adequately for work within the Canadian system. Boakye also had the opportunity to do some volunteering at an immigrant service organization:

> So, I did volunteer work there for about three months. Yeah. I mean, they don't pay you. They don't give you nothing, so. I mean, I was just taking the bus and paying for my own transportation back and forth and just working for free basically. Yeah, I was doing that three times a week.

However, from Boakye's perspective, volunteering was an expensive venture for him, and he did not think he benefitted in any way.

Theme 4: Spectra of colour and identity. As a researcher undertaking this study, some of my early assumptions concerning the colour and identity of my interviewees as visible minorities were challenged as I listened to their stories and how they dealt with adjusting and settling in to Canada. It was a revealing and insightful experience for me as an interviewer. The issues of race and identity came up in the respective narratives of all the participants. Each

participant related to discrimination, race, colour, and identity from his own standpoint. How race and identity aided or hindered the participants in securing meaningful work was richly addressed by all five of them.

Ato believed his race and identity as a man of colour did not affect him when he went looking for a job. He described not having experienced any racial bias in his job search as an immigrant in Canada. He believed he was judged on his merit, with race or colour having nothing to do with securing a job:

> I suppose that I've been very fortunate in that I have not had like again, this overt experience of racism and all that. I mean, I've heard stories about it. And of course, the difficulty reality is that you don't know what people are thinking. I think also that when you're different, of course sometimes there's a bit of hesitancy there. So, it wasn't really kind of my colour or anything. I think that they looked at my credentials and thought I could actually do it. I think for me, I really don't think about that [racism]. If I have to apply for something, I just apply for it. If I don't get it, fine. Unless somebody gives me real reason to believe that there was something, I try not to think that it was actually something to do with race.

Boakye was also of the view that his race was not an issue when he went looking for jobs. He did not believe that race was a factor positively or negatively in securing employment:

> I can't really say much, because, I mean, I know that for most jobs they ask you to indicate your ethnicity—they ask you to indicate your ethnicity and if you're a minority or if you're underprivileged. Yeah, but I don't think that really helped me in securing the job because the job that I got, it wasn't through that, so it was through a network. That's how I got a job. So, I don't think it has any bearing. But, I mean, personally, I think

> people are a little bit intimidated when they are interviewing someone who's a minority because sometimes with the cultural differences they can't really understand them properly, especially if they've got an accent as well. So in a way, I wouldn't say it—I'd rather say it doesn't help because when people don't understand you properly because of your accent, it doesn't help when you're looking for work.

Cudjoe held a slightly different view when it came to race, cultural background, and ethnicity, and their role in helping or hindering him when he was looking for a job. For him, his ethnicity as a Ghanaian helped him in getting a job because he was selected through a referral from a fellow Ghanaian:

> Well, the cultural background, in terms of aid, is that those are the people you get to first. And those are the people that can help you to understand the system you are in because already you are in a new system. And you cannot do things the way you used to do back home where you came from. You're in Canada. You need to do things like Canadians. So, what the cultural aid is, they will be able to help you out. "Okay, this is how things are done here."

On the other hand, Boakye felt that his identity as an immigrant hindered him in his job search. From his perspective, some jobs went only to people born in Canada:

> It's a kind of—not that they don't want to accept you. But there are key positions you realize you wouldn't get. The key job areas that they'll prefer giving Canadian-born or something. You see? They wouldn't tell you. But it's hard to get that. By the time you go and push that, is that you know it's clear [laughter]. So that's where the disadvantage come in. Yeah, and that, "Okay, if you [were] schooled here and maybe would have helped." So, culture helps you to get some contacts and know the system. But it works

> against you when you are in it. And the level that you can get to, some of positions, some opportunities, you may not get.

Boakye held a contrary view when it came to job opportunities: he felt some jobs were the preserve of people born in Canada. The system, he believed, was not open and transparent for people of colour from outside Canada.

Danso highlighted the stereotyping of Black people in Canada and how he was looked upon as being a refugee. Even so, what was more of a hindrance than race was not having a Canadian education:

> I wouldn't say just because I am Akan or probably a Ghanaian has hindered me from getting a job. But then you look at the bigger picture, the fact that, at that time, there were not a lot of Black people, people might not have much interactions in their social settings with Blacks. And there are stereotypes that comes with being Black, especially in Canada, where most people know some Black people were brought in as refugees fleeing wars, hunger, and economic hardships. You are more likely to be seen through that lens as a refugee, and sometimes people conclude, "Oh, you are part of the refugees." And some of these group have been tagged with some characteristics, whether true or not true, and you are perceived the same way as well. But other than that, I wouldn't think that being an Akan as my ethnicity or maybe just being a Ghanaian has hindered me in finding job. But I will say, as a Black man, finding job in Canada, the first job, especially when you don't have experience or education from Canada, in those days and with a PhD—and I think now, it's still the same issue—it's tough. It's not easy.

In fact, Danso noted one instance where his ethnicity and cultural background helped him to find a job:

> And yeah, possibly one case where my ethnicity and background has helped me in finding a job, it happened the interviewer Brenda had her sister gone to Tanzania [in East Africa] for a safari, and that was the talking points for the whole hour-long conversation. After a long chat she said, "Okay, you have to come and see my director." And I thought probably that was going to be the main interview. I went back in three days to meet the director and he asked if we could go grab coffee. I obliged, and we went downstairs. . . . We had a normal conversation, and I was offered a job, and that's how I started my first professional job in Canada. It felt good and liberating, at long last.

Danso believed he found favour with this employer, who took him in for a job, because the interviewer's sister had recently been to the African continent and had had a positive experience there.

Ebo saw race and identity through the spectrum of linguistic and cultural nuances and not necessarily through the colour of one's skin. He chose to see bias or discrimination through the lens of communication between different cultures, and differences in identity, not skin colour:

> I would like to think—I don't want to look at it from the point of view of colour. But then when I'm looking at it as a kind of a language difficulty, right? Because back home, I mean, in our culture where we're coming from, you always have to call your bosses sir, so you speak. But in the Canadian culture or at work here, we don't do that. So, yeah. And sometimes the way you kind of would want put your statements across, even when you were in a board meeting or anything like that, you would have to pretty much be a little bit circumspect. Well, you can't bring the way you put your information across back home to the same thing here. So, it's kind of a language issue in comparison to colour or race. I think it's a language issue.

Theme 5: Optimism and hope in a new country. One overriding theme that struck me as a researcher was the hope and belief all the participants had in Canada. Despite the challenges faced in settling in, finding a job, and integrating into a new country, there was a ray of hope in their new adoptive country. The participants were positive in their outlook regarding their future in Canada. Regardless of the hurdles these participants had to go through, all was not doom and gloom. Holding on to hope and the will to succeed fanned the flames of optimism for some of the interviewees.

For Ato, being an erudite individual, little things such as having easy access to books meant a lot to him. He expressed his sentiments and optimism as follows:

> The door will definitely open. And again, my experience is that, once you actually get your first job, everything that you've done actually comes together for you, and you're able to use—and it's easier to actually move on from there. I think generally, it's been a good experience. I like living in Canada particularly also because I have access to get any book I want. I think for me, that's one of the pluses.

Cudjoe expressed similar views. He saw Canada as an open and multicultural society, welcoming to all:

> In comparison here to other places, they are still doing well. They are open to immigrants, which is very great. They believe in multiculturalism. So people come and they just get into their cultural heritage. You know that's how they move on, and even through the finance decisions and work. So that keeps them going. So it's been a nice experience being here.

Cudjoe agreed with Ato that Canada is a great country to be in and is open to attracting immigrants. Ebo also saw Canada as fantastic country to live in and espoused much belief in Canada as a country:

> I thought as much that Canada is a better alternative than any other country that I had ever visited. Canada is a great country, for sure. I've been here since January 2014. And then finally speaking, I don't really feel like I'm an immigrant. I pretty much relate to everything. I'm learning every day—day in, day out. So, it's a fantastic country. Working here, yes, it's a bit of a challenge. But, hey, it's not like you're back home in your country.

Talking to Ebo as a researcher, his sanguinity and hope in Canada, despite his initial challenges settling in, was almost infectious:

> So, once you're ready to brace yourself, once you're ready to go through a little bit of a learning process, I think you'll be good. Because I've had encounters with the doctors and physicians. And then they told me, "Hey, you know what? It's not easy for the first couple of years, but eventually, if you are ready to learn, and you're ready to integrate into the Canadian culture, Canadian society, I think you'll be good." So, I think that Canada will always be a first choice for me as long as travelling around or maybe [inaudible] sponsoring if I have to look for someone. But then the job market is also good. But you need a little bit of training . . . to be able to assimilate to the Canadian society.

Ebo was full of praise for his newly adopted country and believed opportunities abound in Canada, even though it takes time for them to come to fruition.

Watching my participants and hearing their perspectives, I got a sense of optimism that their reasons for immigrating to Canada would eventually be fulfilled. Despite all the hills and valleys they had to go through along their journey as immigrants, they still felt there was a future and hope for them in Canada. Success was only a matter of time and patience.

Synthesis

All participants spoke of their varying experiences as immigrants: their challenges and opportunities as newcomers to Canada, the barriers and openings they encountered when seeking employment, and the impact of their identity as visible minorities. The themes drawn from the findings ranged from hurdles they encountered as immigrants, to the support system that assisted them in settling down in the country, to their quest to find jobs as men and family heads, to how race aided or hindered them in their job search. The last theme that concluded the findings was the hope and optimism they have in their new country. A rather interesting thread runs through the themes, starting with their challenges as immigrants and ending with hope, optimism, and belief in their new country.

The first theme that came out of the study was the hurdles the participants had to go through when they came to Canada. All the participants spoke extensively of the hurdles they had to overcome to integrate into their new environment. Some key words and phrases depicted how palpable the notion of hurdles was, such as “fear,” “challenge,” “open and closed Canadian system,” “generally difficult to find a job,” “pretty disheartening,” and “very, very, very tough.” These quotes exemplify the hurdle theme as shared by the interview participants.

For immigrants to succeed, hurdles or barriers must be overcome. These barriers and obstacles had to be addressed by the new immigrants as they sought to settle in. The major

hurdles included frustration and anxiety in not getting a job, not having Canadian education qualifications, and lacking the requisite Canadian experience as new immigrants.

The hurdles and challenges encountered by my participants are in line with other studies that have explored the plight of immigrants in a new country, and especially in Canada. Findings from this research depicting the obstacles immigrants face are thus consistent with the literature (Aydemir, 2011; Bonikowska, Hou, & Picot, 2011; Lightman & Gingrich, 2012; Reitz, Curtis, & Elrick, 2014). These works have affirmed the systemic challenges and hurdles immigrants have to overcome on their path to fully integrating into Canada.

I discuss this finding further, and make recommendations, in the final chapter. Given the current immigration policies in Canada that seek to encourage, support, and promote active citizenship for all in the country, overarching questions need to be answered, such as how the personal and social challenges of immigrant men of colour should be addressed. Key questions along these lines will need to be asked to stimulate further discussion and critical reflection. These questions will serve as a catalyst for further recommendations on how the immigrant experience can be improved.

The second major theme that came out of the study was the importance of new immigrants in Canada having a support system as a bulwark. Without the support they got from family, friends, and government agencies, the dream of continuing to live in Canada would have been almost an impossibility. These support systems helped participants during the vicissitudes of their initial months in the country. Despite all the initial challenges, there was something to find solace in, be it though family, friends and other governmental support.

The study highlighted the importance of a support system and how it was key in helping them to find their feet in their new country. The mention of words and phrases such as “family,”

"mentor," "immigrant organizations," "friends and colleagues," "government programs," "wife," and "children" highlight what support meant to the participants. One of the participants mentioned his wife 11 times during the interview. This stood out for me because it showed how the support from his wife was almost a lifeline to his stay in his newly adopted country.

The findings under Theme 2 confirm and are corroborated by existing literature that has espoused the importance of support systems for immigrants (Dobrowolsky, 2011; Houle & Schellenberg, 2010; Lewis, 2010; Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008). The literature has shown that immigrants with support in a new country fare much better than immigrants who come in without knowing anybody. These findings open up further discussion on what integration and navigation, with the help of the given support systems, mean for these immigrants in Canada. In Chapter 5 I explore the correlation between positive association and familial connections, among other support systems. I also address further questions on how to improve existing support systems from the government.

Finding job as an immigrant is a daunting task. From writing one's resume to meeting Canadian standards, trying to get a job in one's chosen field, and trying to understand what a prospective employer requires of a candidate from a totally different culture and work ethic is a behemoth that must be overcome. The path to finding jobs is a pivotal theme in that the other themes revolve around it. The first task as a male immigrant—from a Ghanaian cultural norm, where men are seen as the head of the family—is to get a job to be able to take care of one's family and pay the bills. Without a job, life is hard. My participants left their country of birth and sought to create a new life in a new country. They were all highly skilled, and finding a job in their area of expertise was crucial to their success in Canada. Networking, mentorship, having a

Canadian education, volunteering, and internships all played important roles in their quest to find jobs.

Tied to the first theme, hurdles, was the issue of job seeking and the lack of Canadian experience. The road to finding a job was fraught with many challenges and difficulties for the participants. Nevertheless, almost all participants found meaningful work at some point in their job search. Although the work was meaningful and was somewhat related to their prior experience, almost all the participants had to start from entry level positions within their given fields.

It is worth mentioning some of the salient phrases and words that are exemplars of the path to jobs theme. Among a select few are "who you know," "getting into the mind of the employer," "overqualified," and "networking." The literature that supports the challenge of job searching for immigrants can be found in works on immigrant labour market integration (Li, 2008; Nakhaie & Kazemipur, 2013). Findings from this study open new questions as to how roadblocks to seeking jobs can be eliminated and how the process of integrating immigrants into the workforce can be made easier, so that skilled arrivals can contribute their quota to the Canadian economy. I explore this idea further in the final chapter.

The spectra or position of colour and identity came out as a key theme in this research. One thing that stood out for me in this study was the participants' positions on race and identity. My earlier broad view was that race always impacted immigrants negatively. One of the participants, Cudjoe, talked about how he used his race and ethnicity to his advantage by drawing on advice from people from his own background. Cudjoe stated that "those are the people you get to first. And those are the people that can help you to understand the system." To an extent, this view also goes to highlight the importance of support from family and friends.

This finding shows how cultural background and ethnicity can assist immigrants in settling in and securing meaningful work. Thus, the benefits of new immigrants relying on their ethnicity or racial ties to settle cannot be overlooked.

For some other participants, race was not an issue when they went looking for jobs. They held the view that competence took precedence over colour. Ato said, “So, it wasn’t really my colour or anything. I think that they looked at my credentials and thought I could actually do it.” This assertion also challenged my existing view on racism in Canada. He went on to buttress his above point by saying that “I’ve never had, fortunately, instances of overt racism where my colour, or race, or ethnicity has actually been a factor.”

Nevertheless, racism, like the proverbial sword of Damocles from Greek mythology, will always be there. Other participants had contrary views on race and how it hindered them in realizing their full potential as men of colour in a new country. Words and phrases such as the following conjured or evoked the issue of race: “accent,” “key positions you realize you wouldn’t get,” and “stereotypes that comes with being Black.” Statements like these affirm that racism still exists in Canadian society, as do works by authorities such as Gibb and Hamdon (2010), Guo (2015), and Shan (2009). My participants’ views on race were subtle, and even though none of them said they experienced overt racism, the findings open a plethora of questions on systemic and institutional discrimination, which I discuss in the final chapter.

The final theme that emerged in this study was the hope and optimism shared by the participants. Despite all the initial challenges, they still saw a future for themselves in Canada. Except for Ebo, whose wife and child will be joining him later, all the participants have their families here and believe that Canada is the best place for their children to grow up.

The following statements from the participants undergird the reasons why they see a future in Canada for themselves and family. Ato said, “I think generally, it’s been a good experience. I like living in Canada particularly also because I have access to get any book I want.” This may seem an absurd reason to someone else, but a simple thing like getting access to all the books he wants means a lot to him. Others shared words like “nice experience” and “Canada is a great country.” This shows that the positive has outweighed the negative for the participants as immigrants.

Tying in the love for Canada and the will to keep forging ahead despite challenges opens the lid on acculturation, which is the process of adaptation and adjustment to a new cultural environment and country (Padilla, 1980; Ward, 2013). Through this very process of adapting and change, learning experiences are simultaneously picked up along the way. In the words of Ebo,

> I’m learning every day—day in, day out. So, it’s a fantastic country. Working here, yes, it’s a bit of a challenge. But, hey, it’s not like you’re back home in your country. So, once you’re ready to brace yourself, once you’re ready to go through a little bit of a learning process, I think you’ll be good.

Ebo is not daunted by what lies ahead. He is eager to make the best of his time in Canada. The relevance of this new learning journey is that it becomes a strategy to exercise one’s voice in the service of self, social empowerment, and transformation in a new environment (Merriam et al., 2012). I explore questions on contextualized experiential learning and the experiences of immigrants to Canada in the final chapter.

Summary

This chapter focused on findings and detailed the dominant themes and subthemes that emerged from the interview data. The participants had different and varying experiences as

immigrants to Canada. The main themes that emerged out of my study were as follows: (a) hurdles, (b) support system, (c) path to jobs, (d) spectra of colour and identity, and (e) hope in a new country. In Chapter 5, I discuss the implications of the findings for immigrants of colour in Canada.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendation

In this study, I used narrative inquiry to explore the experiences of five internationally trained Ghanaian males who immigrated to Canada. I examined the (a) the challenges and opportunities experienced as a Ghanaian male immigrant to Canada, (b) the challenges and opportunities encountered when seeking employment, and (c) the impact on identity of being a visible minority immigrant in Canada. Building on the dominant themes presented in Chapter 4, in this chapter I extend the findings and suggest recommendations for government and policy makers, immigrant service agencies, employers, and immigrants. I cover proposed changes and improvements for immigration reform for skilled immigrants. The chapter also includes a discussion on revelations and insights gained during the study and recommendations for future research. I conclude the chapter with my own reflections.

Discussion

My own experiences and observations as a researcher and an internationally trained Ghanaian male immigrant, the literature I explored covering immigration, and the findings of this study together have given me a much broader insight into what immigrating to another country means, especially when one is a visible minority. I continue the discussion begun in Chapter 4 on revelations and insights gained during the study on key areas, including immigrants' personal and social challenges, and their contextual experiential learning in a new country. Underpinning my discussion, I adopted a matrix recommended by Bloomberg and Volpe (2015) that allowed me to track my work, from the findings to my interpretations and corresponding conclusions, ensuring that these components were aligned.

Immigrants' personal and social challenges. Being educated and leaving one's country of birth to seek greener pastures in another country is not an easy decision to make. It is beset

with so much possible disappointment and unknowns, but also opportunities. All five participants interviewed were unanimous in the personal and social hurdles they had to overcome as immigrants. Personal challenges, among others, included their fear, anxiety, and frustration when they went out looking for jobs, considering how highly educated they all were. Social challenges manifested in various ways and ranged from how different they were in terms of being minority men of colour, to having accents, to discrimination against their non-Canadian credentials and experience.

Immigrants' personal and social challenges are noteworthy given the voice and weight the current literature adds to this debate (Agrawal, 2010; Creese, 2011; Dechief & Oreopoulos, 2012; Ferrer & Riddell, 2008; Hong, 2008; Picot, 2008; H. Smith & Ley, 2008; White et al., 2015). Collectively, this study drew out discrimination and exclusion, insufficient language skills, lack of recognition of foreign credentials, and lack of Canadian experience as some of the challenges faced by the study participants.

One of the key and dominant issues that came up was the difficulty for participants to find jobs commensurate with the educational qualifications they held. Even having a qualification from Canada was not an easy pass to getting a job. Employment discrimination was highlighted by one of the study participants, who felt some jobs were reserved solely for Canadian-born citizens. Getting a job was the first step to achieving economic independence as a new immigrant. Without a job, catering for one's family, especially from the African perspective as the man and the head of the family, can be ego shattering. Not having the financial means to take care of one's family can be devastating. This study highlighted the importance of getting a job and what it meant for the self-esteem of these male immigrants, particularly in light of how

educated they were and how they had all held stable and successful jobs before they decided to immigrate to Canada.

The findings from this research regarding the non-recognition academic credentials acquired outside of Canada, the lack of job opportunities for immigrants, and the need for Canadian experience confirms the work of various scholars (Buzdugan & Halli, 2009; Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Galabuzi, 2006; Grant & Nadin, 2007; Guo, 2009; Mansour, 1996). All the interviewees, to a large degree, experienced these personal and social challenges as immigrants to Canada.

Recognition of foreign credentials. I expatiate further on the non-recognition of foreign credentials by Canadian employers, even though it falls under the category of major challenges experienced by the participants, because it was such a dominant issue in this research. Being literate and educated, with a college degree, were among the qualifications that allowed the participants to come into the Canadian system as highly skilled immigrants. On getting to Canada, they realized that the degrees were not recognized. One of my interview participants had a PhD from Germany; another had three master's degrees, including one from the prestigious University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. On arriving in Canada, there were dismayed to find out that employers did recognize their qualifications. My study has confirmed the work of experts in this regard (Guo, 2009; Mojab, 1999; Reitz, 2001). Immigrants from developing countries encounter more difficulties with their foreign credentials and work experience than those from developed countries such as the United States, Australia, Britain, or New Zealand, who have relatively successful experiences.

When one's qualifications are not recognized, the road to finding a job becomes very bumpy and difficult to traverse. Four out of the five participants had to do other forms of

ancillary courses, ranging from certificate courses to postgraduate diplomas, to have a Canadian education that would look good on their resumes such that prospective employers could see that they had some form of Canadian education. Even with this education, two of the five participants were not sure if the Canadian education helped them in securing jobs. The findings from the study reveal that having a Canadian education does not necessarily translate into getting employment. One of the interviewees, after completing his PhD in Canada, had to wait for quite a while before getting a job in his field of expertise. Given this situation, having a Canadian education is not necessarily a guarantee for getting a job.

Again, my participants were unanimous in their views on how their overseas certificates were virtually worthless to employers when they arrived in Canada. There seemed to be a consensus amongst them that their academic credentials did not matter, despite some even having PhDs before they immigrated to Canada.

The impact of the support of government, family, and friends. With all the hardships encountered by my participants, they found solace in the support systems around them. The research participants vocalized the importance of the support structures they relied upon on when they came to Canada as immigrants. Overwhelmingly, without the support they received from the government, family, and friends, it would have been extremely difficult to live, find their way, and know what to do in terms of settling in and finding jobs. Not all the support measured up to their expectations, especially regarding the government support they experienced through the immigrant settlement agencies; most of the participants agreed that more could be done to assist immigrants. Even though not all their expectations were met, some of these agencies helped set up mentors, provided volunteer opportunities, and assisted participants with fine-tuning their resumes for jobs.

Where the participants really got the most assistance was through the informal support from family and friends. This was in no small measure impactful on their stay in Canada. Apart from friends and family, some participants mentioned the influence of religious support from their church and mosque members. One of the participants was on the verge of leaving Canada for the U.S., but for the timely intervention and advice from members of his spiritual and religious family, he changed his mind. This decision paid off, and he is currently enjoying his time in Canada and is gainfully employed in the career of his choice.

The fact that immigrants decide to uproot themselves and disconnect from their home countries to relocate to another obviously suggests the presence of an initial positive view of the destination country. But, such views can be tested by an immigrant's experiences after arrival to Canada (Kazemipur & Nakhaie, 2014). If not for the support system in the form of kinship from family and friends, and to some extent the government through immigrant service agencies, most of the participants would have returned to their home country shortly after immigrating to Canada. In short, the participants benefited from the support systems of the government, family, and friends, and this help positively affected their decision to stay in Canada.

Navigation and integration. The support system the immigrants relied on was beneficial. Nevertheless, they still had to navigate and integrate into the new society they found themselves in. All the participants had to contend with being able to understand the Canadian system so that they could integrate as new immigrants. Searching for employment was a key element in attempting to understand the dynamics of the Canadian job market. As men who had families to take care of, it was not an easy task to get meaningful jobs. A couple of these men had to take jobs in supermarkets and warehouses to be able to put food on the table as they sought to find jobs that matched their qualifications. These were very trying times for these

participants, who were already doing decent jobs as professionals in Ghana before they immigrated. It affected their egos and self-esteem to a significant extent, and they constantly questioned if coming to Canada was the right decision.

Despite the challenges the participants encountered in settling and fitting in, they voiced an overwhelming hope and optimism in their new country. It takes several years before immigrants gradually settle into the system. The participants had collectively spent between 4 and 18 years in Canada. Only one of the participants expressed the intention of going back home in the near future as things were not working as expected for him. The other four had found jobs they enjoyed and seemed fulfilled.

After a sense of settlement, there was a sense of adaptation and acculturation, where participants have adapted to the Canadian way of life. With the support from family, friends, and the government, they had a sense of belonging to their new country. This finding is supported in the work of Berry and Hou (2016) and Hou et al. (2017), who found that a sense of belonging to the receiving society reflects whether immigrants feel accepted, secure, and "at home" in their adopted country. After all these years, four out of five participants feel very much at home in Canada. It entails a lot of perseverance, determination, and mental fortitude to navigate the system, overcome all the barriers, and fully integrate into Canadian society.

All five research participants had a rough time settling into life in Canada, especially in terms of finding meaningful work and jobs of their choice: Not a single interviewee had it easy when he embarked on his job search. They all had to overcome barriers and obstacles, and work continually every day, to surmount these barriers and negotiate their identity as minority men of colour in Canada.

Discrimination: Overt and covert. With regards to their visible minority status, my participants experienced some forms of racism and discrimination to varying degrees. The position or spectra of colour came out as a key finding of the research. I describe the elements of perceived racism and discrimination that emerged from the study in binary form, one part being overt, another part being covert. Three out of the five participants acknowledged that they did not experience any form of racism when looking for jobs; the other two alluded to some form of racism and discrimination during their job-hunting process. Even though my participants said they never experienced overt racism they believed there was some discrimination and that particular jobs were reserved for those born in Canada, and Caucasians. They perceived some reservation towards people of colour, people who had different accents, people who spoke English in a "non-Canadian" way. They felt they were not treated as equals when it came to looking for jobs, even though they had high academic qualifications and considerable work experience.

This covert discrimination has been the position of some authorities on immigration studies in Canada. Despite Canada's expressed preference for highly skilled immigrants, and the fact that immigrant professionals bring significant human capital to the Canadian labour force, several studies have revealed that many immigrant professionals experience deskilling and devaluation of their international qualifications and work experience after immigrating to Canada (Guo, 2009, 2013a, 2013b; Guo & Shan, 2013; Li, 2008). This devaluation is more pronounced for people from sub-Saharan Africa, and the experiences of my participants reinforce this position. Whichever way we look at this finding, I can conclude that racism and discrimination were experienced by some participants in one form or another.

Contextual experiential learning. None of the participants' experiences took place in a vacuum, and learning occurred in their comings and goings as they acculturated to Canada. As immigrants, the participants, with all their educational qualifications and life experience, had much to offer in terms of knowledge sharing and transfer to their new country. As well, they benefited from new learning, whether intentional or not. Experiential learning influenced the lived realities and learning experiences of my participants as male immigrants to Canada, manifesting in the experiences they encountered. One of my participants explicitly mentioned how every day in Canada was a learning experience. He referred to the different way of doing things and the new Canadian culture he was absorbing every day.

For these men of colour, coming to Canada opened up a new consciousness and made them aware of race and identity as issues. At home in Ghana, they took being Black for granted because everyone else was also Black. Coming to Canada, they had to navigate a new cultural milieu, opening up experiential learning through the unconscious negotiation of who they are as a visible minority. This process affirms the work of authorities such as Merriam et al. (2012), who propounded that experiential learning thus becomes a means to exercise one's voice and empower oneself in a new setting.

Other forms of learning for the participants included learning to volunteer and network. These skills were relatively alien to them. One of the participants was vocal about how networking was a big challenge for him. Nevertheless, he had to unlearn his old ways of doing things and adapt to fit into the Canadian environment. All the research participants, whether their experiences made them better or bitter as individuals, experienced conscious and unconscious, and intentional and unintended, learning as part of their sojourn in their new physical and sociocultural environment.

Recommendations

This study creates a myriad of opportunities for improving upon the immigrant experiences of people of colour to Canada. Despite the well-meaning intentions of the Government of Canada, there is still much room for improvement to realize the lofty aims of its immigration policy. Lots of money, planning, and resources go in to attract the right people to Canada. It is only prudent to ensure that the immigration policy as a whole is right for Canada as a country and for the new and potential immigrants coming to the country.

Government and policy makers. In this section, I briefly put forth some recommendations targeted at the government, including recommendations for future research in immigration studies.

Assist internationally trained immigrants to find work. The Government of Canada has been magnanimous in opening its doors to attract skilled labour from all over the world. Not all developed countries do this, and Canada needs to be lauded for this approach. Despite this initiative, though, there is still a lot of work to be done to assist the targeted labour that arrives on the shores of Canada to find jobs that match their skills and qualifications.

Most educated immigrants come to Canada and are hit with the hard realization that the degrees and qualifications they have are not recognized by prospective employers. Educated immigrants go through a rigorous vetting and screening process by Canadian immigration authorities before they are allowed into the country, not to mention the amount of money they are expected to show in their bank accounts to prove they will be self-sufficient when they arrive. On arriving in Canada, no matter their qualifications, immigrants are told they do not have the requisite Canadian experience; employers are not ready to employ people without Canadian experience. Research has indicated that although the immigration policy appears to be

successful at recruiting highly educated immigrants, more needs to be done to support their transition once they arrive in Canada (W. C. Smith & Fernandez, 2017). The federal government should ensure occupational placement services mitigate the mismatch between qualifications and occupational opportunities for new immigrants.

Once the government allows qualified immigrants into the country, it is only reasonable for the government to assist them to find jobs in their area of expertise. However, at present, immigrants arrive in Canada only to realize they are on their own. One way to avoid disappointing prospective immigrants is to open the immigrant application to specific available jobs. This process has already begun, but there is room for improvement. The immigration process should be targeted and focused to fill jobs that are available. Immigration just for shoring up population targets, and not for finding jobs for the immigrants to utilize their skills, defeats the whole purpose of economic immigration.

For prospective immigrants looking to come to Canada, government websites paint a picture of alluring promises, possibilities, and success stories. This idyllic situation is in stark contrast to the reality; when immigrants get to Canada, they realize the path to success is not as straightforward as it looks. To some extent, government marketing borders on untruths and does not reveal the whole picture. My fervent suggestion to the government is for it to offer more support to immigrants to match their expectations in terms of what attracted them to Canada in the first place.

Workable and practical government programs. Workable and functioning government programs to train and assist highly educated immigrants to integrate into the Canadian workforce should be made more accessible. These programs could take the form of training models to inculcate and disseminate the Canadian workforce culture, enabling immigrants with the right

skills and tools to get the right jobs. Such assistance would help to eliminate the issue of immigrants undertaking menial and survival jobs in the pursuit of trying to gain Canadian experience, and could help to bolster their integration. Currently, this role is left to a few nongovernmental agencies that help to bridge the gap and integrate immigrants into the workforce. The federal and provincial governments should take on this mandate directly and put workforce training and integration programs into place .

Beyond this, government policies should move away from funding that supports short-term employment programs oriented to low wage employment. As well, measures should be put in place to demonstrate the government's commitment to anti-racist or employment equity programs across the country for both public and private sector employees (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). When such programs are put in place, the overall experience of skilled immigrants would be much better, and they would feel more welcome and more a part of the fabric of Canadian society.

Incentives for employers. The government could look at incentivizing employers and organizations to employ highly trained immigrants using tax relief and other incentives. Skilled immigrants are here to contribute their quota and help to build Canada. They possess knowledge, expertise, and experience, and did not come with the intention of being dependent on the social system. These trained immigrants want decent jobs and want to see themselves as fully fledged members of Canadian society, who are contributing their quota to the country they have chosen to live in. It should not be too much of a challenge for employers to harness what these educated immigrants have to offer. Most of them speak English, French, or even both languages. The caveat for an incentive approach is that if it is not well implemented and monitored, it may lead to potential abuse by employers, and the whole purpose can be defeated. Abuse could take the

form of employers hiring immigrants just for the tax exemption, and then letting them go. Employment could be possibly tied to a retention policy for the tax incentive to kick in.

According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (2016a), research has indicated that "immigrants in Canada are chronically underemployed, at an estimated annual cost to the Canadian economy of $20 billion . . . [and] companies are critical in closing the gap and are uniquely positioned to do it" (p. 1). The private sector can alleviate this burden on behalf of the government by employing immigrants with the right skills. The private sector acts more rapidly in response to market opportunities, such as an influx of talent, than governments do, as the latter are unencumbered by politics and bureaucracy (Koser, 2015). What the government could do is to incentivize and offer tax relief to companies that do employ skilled immigrants. Employer incentives should be an area the Government of Canada looks at critically as a way of improving the immigration process.

Immigrant service agencies. The role immigrant service agencies play in the welcoming and integration of new immigrants to Canada cannot be overlooked.

Match immigrant skills with the right employers. First, immigrant service agencies could assist in matching highly skilled immigrants to prospective employers. The current practice of most of these agencies is to match new immigrants to companies that offer survival jobs, such as in large supermarkets and factories. There is a mismatch between what the highly skilled immigrants can do and what jobs they are being offered. The idea behind this recommendation is allow immigrants to get the necessary experience in the Canadian work environment before they find meaningful work on their own that matches their qualifications and training.

Most often, all immigrants, whether skilled, unskilled, or refugees, are grouped together by immigration agencies. Opportunities for survival jobs are offered without due regard for the qualifications held by those with international training. The employment programs offered by settlement agencies are limited in scope and actively push immigrants into low-wage employment. This practice undermines the government's role in fostering economic integration in Canada (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). These agencies should rather assist immigrants to find jobs where they are best suited. My recommendation for these agencies is to desist from being a conduit for cheap labour for supermarket chains all in the name of giving immigrants the necessary experience. The educated immigrant has much more to offer.

Proper oversight and auditing. The federal and provincial governments should exercise more robust oversight into the activities of these agencies, to ensure that they are assisting new immigrants in settling in properly. These agencies, it appears, are currently funded with some government support. They should not be placing immigrants into any kind of job, irrespective of qualifications, simply to be able to tick off boxes to prove how many immigrants they have helped with the integration process. With proper oversight and auditing of their activities, governments could ensure categorically that skilled immigrants are gaining experience in their area of choice.

Moving beyond the volunteer trap. Immigrant and settlement agencies do open their doors for some immigrants to come in on select days to volunteer, as a form of helping them get Canadian experience. Although this is a laudable idea, such that immigrants are able to put the volunteer experience on their resumes, these agencies should move beyond the volunteer stage and actually assist immigrants in finding jobs that measure up to their qualifications. Skilled

immigrants are at a loss as to how some of these volunteer opportunities translate into them finding meaningful work.

The work that immigrants do at these offices tends to be rudimentary, such as filing paperwork, making outbound phone calls, and doing data entry. It would be much more productive for these agencies to fully harness the skills of educated immigrants, and of mutual benefit for both the agency and the new immigrant.

Employers. In this section I present recommendations targeted to employers. For new immigrants, gaining meaningful employment is an important factor in their integration. The role of employers is therefore key to making the Canadian immigration program a success.

More opportunities for immigrants. Employers are wary of taking on board employees if they are not sure of their skills and work ethic. This is especially true when the immigrant is from a developing country. How this phenomenon can be addressed has always been an issue. Beyond this wariness, several professions especially, in the medical field, have barriers to entry for seasoned professionals coming from outside of Canada. Employers need to be more flexible and accommodating in their approach to take advantage of immigrants' skills and knowledge. With some training, these immigrants could be brought up to the required standards sought by the employers, and employers potentially have a lot to learn from employees coming from a different sociocultural background.

It is worth noting that companies with an ethnically diverse workforce out-innovate and out-perform others. One U.S. study found that they are 45% more likely than non-diverse firms to have expanded market share, and 70% more likely to capture a new market (Hewlett, Sears, Sumberg, & Fargnoli, 2013). Having a diverse workforce thus has mutual benefits for both the immigrant and the employer, and is more evidence of why the contribution of highly educated

immigrants must not be casually overlooked. I recommend that employers reexamine and question the practices that undervalue the qualifications and foreign credentials of immigrants who come to them looking for employment, and rather focus on what having a diverse and talented workforce could mean for their institutions and organizations.

Opportunity for cross-cultural competencies. Canada as a country prides itself on being a multicultural society. Employers can add to this mosaic of multiculturalism by employing immigrants of different races, creeds, values, and belief systems, especially if these immigrants are highly educated and can be a great resource to the company. People from other parts of the world have diverse cultures, experiences, and competencies that can be harnessed. There should not be a difference between a worker born in Canada and one born in a foreign land. The multicultural nature of Canada's population continues to evolve, with a growing number of culturally diverse groups within Canadian society. Culturally diverse groups can be defined as those different from the majority population with respect to religion, language, beliefs, and histories (Marsella, 2011). The immigrant population from African countries brings experiences and knowledge that Canada can benefit from. Employers should tap into this rich cultural and knowledge diversity.

Immigrants. Immigrants leave their country of birth and immigrate to new places filled with hope and optimism, in search of a better life. In this section I present recommendations targeted to the immigrants themselves.

Preparation and willingness to adapt. My first recommendation for would-be immigrants to Canada is to carefully weigh the pro and cons of coming to Canada. They must prepare properly, not only financially, but mentally, to adjust to the shocks, surprises, and unforeseen circumstances they may encounter when they arrive. It is not easy settling into a new

country, no matter how prepared one is. The way of life, the culture, and even the way of doing mundane things can be vastly different from the way things are done back home. Immigrants should not expect a smooth sail. That said, although the waters of immigration may be patchy and rough, as long as they see that reality as part of the journey of the immigration process, they will be able to embrace whatever comes their way.

Embracing new learning, and unlearning old ways, are all part of the package of the immigrant experience. According to Usher et al. (1997), "The meaning of experience is never permanently fixed" (p. 105). Whatever new learning immigrants pick up along the way, whether good or bad, is part of the meaning making of the experience. Provided the new immigrants are prepared mentally for the challenges of being in a new land, they can make their stay here worth the time.

Get a job before arriving. One sure way of getting ahead is to secure a job before coming, which would help to mitigate some of the employment challenges. Getting a job may seem like an onerous task, but it will surely save all immigrants a lot of trouble. Following this recommendation would cut out a lot of hurdles, like doing menial jobs, and would circumvent the whole process of getting Canadian experience. The government and policy makers could ensure that immigration is open only to specific jobs that are available on the Canadian market. This, in turn, would cut down the frustration, despair, and anxiety of highly educated immigrants who make it to Canada.

It would be more beneficial for immigrants to have jobs available and waiting for them before they set foot in Canada. The immigration policy appears to be successful at recruiting highly educated immigrants, but more needs to be done to support their transition once they arrive in Canada. For example, occupational placement services may alleviate the mismatch

between qualifications and occupational opportunities (W. C. Smith & Fernandez, 2017). This mismatch alleviation could be done under the supervision and auspices of the government, as recommended above.

Recommendations for Future Research

One area for potential future research is related to the experiences of internationally trained women of colour who immigrate to Canada. Their stories and voices need to be heard as well. These women come in as mothers, spouses, or single women, and encounter their own unique challenges trying to settle into a new environment. I see merit in extending research to understand the perspectives of these women; in particular (a) how have their gender and colour aided or hindered them in finding meaningful work, and (b) how have they coped with or without family in adjusting to a new country?

Another recommendation for future research is related to the importance of Canadian experience, especially for immigrants of colour. Is this preference a form of employment discrimination? Is it a feeder for particular industries to mine cheap labour off new immigrants to Canada? I believe this issue warrants discussion and should be investigated further as an area of future research.

Further, I recommend taking a deeper and more critical look into the accreditation system of some highly skilled professionals like doctors, accountants, and teachers, among others in Canada, and examine how these accreditations impact immigrants in finding meaningful work. Does getting accredited necessarily mean work is available? After accreditation, what are the next steps for immigrants? What are the barriers involved in getting into some professions as internationally trained immigrants?

There is much room for research on immigration in Canada. The future for further research into immigration to Canada is broad; currently, there are more questions than answers. This study has only peeled one layer off the onion.

Personal Reflections

Undertaking this research has been very revealing and insightful to me as an individual. I have learned a lot along the way, first by learning to be a researcher and listening to the voices of my kinsmen, with whom I share a similar experience. Just listening to their stories was like looking in a mirror to see my own reflection. Their stories resonated with me on many levels emotionally, and even to some extent spiritually. The process got me asking myself questions and led me on path of deep reflection, questioning why I came to Canada. I have lived their experiences, and I am still on that path. The story of internationally trained and educated immigrants continues to be told. It is as though all immigrants of colour have to go through a rite of passage, of difficult times and gloom, before they arrive at their destination.

The research topic, examining the experiences of internationally trained Ghanaian male immigrants, means a lot to me personally. I am an immigrant myself, and listening to the narratives of other men with similar experiences made their stories relatable. This made the significance of the study, and the exploration of the challenges, barriers, and successes they encountered in integrating into Canadian society, all the more meaningful. Looking at the immigrant experience in Canada through the lens of these men of colour gives a unique perspective. This study added to the already existing body of knowledge on immigration, and the authentic voices of my participants added to the narrative. I am utterly grateful to them for giving their time, sharing their narratives, and allowing their voices to be heard.

Immigrants want to be accepted as equals in Canada irrespective of their race, gender, creed, religion, or country of origin. All immigrants bring with them experience, skills, and knowledge that can be harnessed to make Canada a better place for all. As a multicultural country, our strength is in the diversity of all people and what they can offer. One thing that stood out for me during this study was the view of some of the study participants, who did not see race as an issue when they went looking for jobs. They believed in competence over colour. This perspective got me reflecting on some of my earlier-held views, where I had jumped to the conclusion that I had not gotten what I wanted in the system due to colour prejudice. It is not always about the colour of one's skin. Once a person is competent, with time, one can eventually get to where one wants to be. I admire my participants for how they looked at the situation and for the maturity they exhibited despite all the hurdles they had to overcome. They had an optimistic view of looking at their situation; to them, the glass was half full.

Personally, I immigrated to this country to seek opportunities not only for myself, but for my family as well. There have been numerous challenges along the way for me as an immigrant. I left my home country and a very comfortable job as an astute banker. Immigrating was not so much about the money for me; I was looking for meaning. I continue on my immigrant journey, and although I am not yet at my destination, I am optimistic about the future. I will not give up.

It is my fervent desire that internationally trained men of colour from Ghana and other parts of Africa who intend to immigrate to Canada see the findings from this research as a resource that can help inform their decision. By sharing the stories of my participants, I wish to give them hope and strength should they choose to leave the shores of their country. The essence of my research reflects the views of Stake (1995), who wrote that

> qualitative . . . study is a highly personal research. Persons are studied in depth. Researchers are encouraged to include their own personal perspectives in the interpretation. . . . The quality and utility of the research is not based on its reproducibility, but on whether or not the meanings generated, by the researcher or reader, are valued. Thus, a personal valuing of the work is expected. (p. 135)

I do hope my study adds some value and perspective to government and policy makers, immigrant service agencies, employers, and would-be immigrants who want to make it to Canada someday. The whole research journey and listening to my participants made me realize I was not alone in wanting to improve the immigrant experience. My participants were men with whom I had a similar background—highly educated and with so much to offer—who spoke collectively of the hills and valleys they had to traverse to get to where they are now. Some have arrived, others are still on their way. Their stories filled me with hope and endless possibilities.

Summary

In this study, I investigated the experiences of internationally trained Ghanaian male immigrants in Canada. The study contributes to the immigrant knowledge repository from the perspective of five men of colour from Ghana, in sub-Saharan Africa. Their narratives formed the foundation of this research, the principal focus of which was to give voice to their experiences of seeking and securing employment. The research took the form of a narrative inquiry, where the participants freely spoke about their experiences as immigrants in Canada and addressed their marginalization, discrimination, and job-seeking experiences through storytelling.

The research findings support the works of other authorities on the various challenges immigrants face, including discrimination, lack of recognition of foreign credentials, and work

experience (Dechief & Oreopoulos, 2012; Ferrer & Riddell, 2008; Kustec, 2012; Picot, 2008). It is worth mentioning that despite the above challenges, the study also affirmed the participants' hope, belief, and optimism in Canada. Arriving initially is unsettling for most immigrants, but with time and getting to understand the dynamics of the Canadian system, integrating becomes much less of a challenge.

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Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Form

Hello,

My name is Benedict Kojo Otoo. I am a master's student at the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. I am conducting a research that focuses on understanding the immigrant experience of Ghanaian male immigrants who reside in Calgary.

Participation in this research would involve being interviewed by myself, as researcher. This interview could be face-to face, via Skype, or over the telephone. If you are interested in participating in this research, the scheduled interview would take place at your convenience, sometime between September 2017 through June 2018.

There is no financial remuneration for participating in this study.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study. However, the final decision about participation is yours and your participation is completely voluntary.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at [email address] or by telephone at [telephone number]. I will then send you a confirmation that you are interested in volunteering to participate in this study. At that time, I will also provide you with further information.

Sincerely,

Benedict K Otoo (Interviewer)

Werklund School of Education

University of Calgary

[telephone number]

Email: [email address]

Dr. Colleen Kawalilak (Supervisor)

Werklund School of Education

University of Calgary

[telephone number]

Email: [email address]

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Mr. Benedict Kojo Otoo, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Werklund School of Education, [telephone number, email address]

Supervisor:

Dr Colleen Kawalilak, Werklund School of Education

Title of Project:

Experiences of Internationally Trained Ghanaian Males Who Immigrate to Canada

Sponsor:

(*If applicable, identify the project funding source here)*

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Participation is completely voluntary and confidential. You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to inform my master's degree research and focuses on developing an understanding of the experiences of Ghanaian males who immigrate to Canada. This study will focus on the perspectives of men as they perceive their own unique identity as minority men of colour and the intersections of race and migration in relation to their lived experience. This study may contribute to the work around integrating internationally trained migrants and their inclusion in Canadian society and in the workplace. Guided by narrative methodology, I seek, as researcher, to explore and interpret the lived experience of research participants. As researcher, I will gather the narratives of participants as they tell their story and bring out their unique experience of being educated male Ghanaians within the Canadian society.

What Will I Be Asked to Do?

You will take part in an audio-taped interview that will last for approximately one hour. During this interview, participants will be supported to share their thoughts and experiences as an immigrant in Canada. Participants will be invited to meet with the researcher to participate in the interview at a location of their choice. Follow-up procedures will involve a copy of the transcribed interview delivered to the participant to clarify or change any of the information collected.

Participants will have up to four weeks to review and express any questions they may have in terms of how aspects of the interview may be used. After the period to review the interview data has expired, participants will not be able to withdraw their data. If a participant does not respond to the request to review materials during this time, approval of information will be assumed.

All and any participation in this study is voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or repercussions. Participants will be informed before the interview of the right to withdraw from the study verbally and in writing on this consent form.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected

Personal information collected will be anonymized by removing potentially identifying information.

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide your name, email address, phone number, home address, gender, age, and academic and university education level.

You will be audiotaped and no one apart from myself as a researcher and my supervisor will have access to the recordings. The recordings will not be made available to the public.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some, or none of them. Please review each of these options and choose Yes or No:"

I grant permission to be audio-taped: Yes: ___ No: ___

I wish to remain to referred to by a pseudonym: Yes: ___ No: ___

The pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____

You may quote me and use my name: Yes: ___ No: ___

Are There Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

There is some minimal risk that, in responding to my research questions, some emotional concerns may arise, considering the possible sensitivity around issues of cultural identity. If this happens, you may request that the interview be terminated without penalty, and you may

withdraw from the study. If you desire, I will provide you with contact information on counselling and support services available to you.

Benefits of participating in this research may include the opportunity to advance the work of providing support to African immigrants immigrating to Canada. This study will allow you to express your learnings and understanding related to issues of immigration, diversity and professional advancement

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

No one except the researcher and his supervisor will have access to the taped interviews. There are no names on the questionnaire. Pseudonyms as a means of ensuring anonymity will be used. Only group information will be summarized for any presentation or publication of results. The questionnaires are kept in a locked cabinet only accessible by the researcher and supervisor. The anonymous data will be stored for five years on a computer disk, at which time, it will be permanently erased. An important limitation to be noted is, considering the small number of participants, confidentiality / anonymity of distinct individuals may be identifiable to other participants.

All participation in this study is voluntary and participants may refuse to participate altogether or withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or repercussions. Participants will be informed before the interview of the right to withdraw from the study verbally and in writing on this consent form. Information contributed before the withdrawal may be retained and used. Participants have up to 4 weeks after data collection for withdrawal from the study. Information collected will be used with complete confidentiality and anonymity

“Would you like to receive a summary of the study’s results? Yes: ___ No: ___

If yes, please provide your contact information (e-mail address, or phone number)"

_____

_____

"Are you interested in being contacted about a follow-up interview, with the understanding that you can always decline the request?" Yes: ___ No: ___

Signatures

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Mr. Benedict Kojo Otoo

Werklund School of Education/Faculty of Graduate Studies

[telephone number, email address]

and

Dr. Colleen Kawalilak

Werklund School of Education/Faculty of Graduate Studies

[telephone number, email address]

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-6289/220-4283; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

Appendix C: Guiding Questions for Interview Participants

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Werklund School of Education

Interview Schedule (for use with participants)

Experiences of Internationally Trained Ghanaian males: Interview

INTERVIEWER GUIDE

Participant Name: _ _____

Location _____Calgary_____DATE: __

A. *Interviewer: REVIEW terms of and sign consent form with participant.*

B. *Interviewer: RETAIN Consent Form*

C: Interviewer: READ to Participant: **Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview on the experiences of internationally trained Ghanaian male immigrants. This interview will take approximately 1 hour. I appreciate your participation. I will ask you a series of questions and record them, then later you will have a two-week window to review the interview transcriptions and edit them for meaning as you like, to offer corrections. Do you have any questions? Concise, direct answers will keep us on time please. Are you read to begin?**

C. *Interviewer: Turn Recorder on. Begin Interview. (Interviewer: KEEP THIS completed guide and file).*

Questions

1. What is your name?
2. Can you confirm your gender?
3. How old are you?
4. What is your level of education?
5. From where in Ghana are you from?
6. How long have you been in Canada?
7. What type of work did you do before immigrating to Canada?
8. What are some reasons you chose to immigrate to Canada?
9. As you reflect on immigrating to Canada and seeking work, what are some significant

moments (incidents/experiences) that come to mind?

10. What challenges did you face when looking for work?
11. Any particular supports or experiences that you recall that assisted you in finding work?
12. What level and type of education have you secured and has this education assisted you in finding meaningful work?
13. Has has your cultural background and ethnicity aided or hindered you in securing meaningful work here in Canada?
14. What type of supportive network have/do you draw from to support you having immigrated to Canada?
15. Drawing from your experience having immigrated to Canada and seeking meaningful work, what suggestions do you have for the Government of Canada in support of the integration of immigrants?
16. Are there any other experiences (stories) that you would like to share about your immigration to Canada and seeking meaningful work?

Thank you for participating in this interview. Your sharing of experiences and perspectives are tremendously important to this study!

Interviewer: Keep this paper page, with your notes, keep any documents the participant offers, file and retain.

Contact information:

Benedict K. Otoo (Interviewer)

Werklund School of Education

University of Calgary

[telephone number]

Email: [email address]

Dr. Colleen Kawalilak (Supervisor)

Werklund School of Education

University of Calgary

[telephone number]

Email: [email address]