

Successful Migrants: strategies for overcoming discrimination on the labour market.

Helga Juno Åberg

Sociologi C Självständigt arbete
Huvudområde: Sociologi
Högskolepoäng: 15
Termin/år: 2017
Handledare: Johanna Bergström
Examinator: Gunilla Olofsdotter
Kurskod/registreringsnummer: SO048G
Utbildningsprogram:

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Key words	2
1 Introduction	3
1.1 Aim	4
1.2 Research questions.....	4
2 Historic Background	4
3 Previous Research	8
3.1 Ethnic Discrimination.....	8
3.2 Ethnic Discrimination, Name Change and Labor Market Inequality	9
3.3 Visible and hidden forms of resistance and Racism as intimacy.....	12
3.4 The reality of invisible everyday racism.....	14
4 Theoretical Framework	15
4.1 Decoloniality.....	15
4.2 Intersectionality.....	17
5 Method	20
5.1 Data Collection	22
5.2 Interviews.....	22
5.3 Sampling	23
5.4 Method of Analysis.....	23
5.4.1 Table: Discourse Analysis Sample.....	25
5.5 Ethical Research Practice.....	26
6 Results and Analysis	27
6.1 Informer 01.....	27
6.2 Informer 02.....	30
6.3 Informer 03.....	33
6.4 Informer 04.....	3435
7 Summary	3637
8 Discussion	3738
9 Conclusion	39
10 Bibliography	4044
11 Appendices	4446

Abstract

Discrimination against migrants in the work place is a frequent subject of studies and discussions. Perceptions and experiences of the Swedish labour market are directly connected to where we come from – our skin colour, religion, and gender. These may even be opposite if we compare a native Swedish and a migrant's experience of job search, career opportunities, salary, and daily work life. The aim of this thesis is to look closer at migrants that were able to fight or stop discrimination after they were exposed to it. The thesis focuses on strategies used by such individuals and what knowledge and/or experiences led them to resist against it. Decoloniality theory makes up the foundation of the analysis of the material collected from interviews, examining different standpoints from dominant Western world perspectives. This study also uses intersectionality in ~~order~~ order to tackle the strategies' complexity and help deconstruct discrimination. Each individuals' experience with discrimination in the workplace and their choice of strategies to avoid it are analysed. The thesis shows how decoloniality theory could connect to migrants' positive attitudes towards most of their professional choices and attempts to retake power amidst discrimination.

Key words

migrant, discrimination, strategies, labour market, working conditions, Decoloniality~~y~~

1 Introduction

Our perceptions of and experiences on the Swedish labour market are directly connected to where we come from – our skin colour, religion, and gender. These often vary a lot from each other when comparing native Swedes' and migrants' job search experiences, career opportunities, salary, and daily work life. Discrimination against migrants at the work place is a frequent subject of studies and discussions. The DO (2017a) or Equality Ombudsman, the government agency responsible for regulations and prevention of discrimination, reports on the experience of discrimination based on ethnical belonging as one of the most common grounds for prejudice. If you add religion to this account, it is the most common cause for discrimination in Sweden (DO, 2016). According to the Swedish Migration Authority, "migration is one of the greatest issues of our time" (Migrationsverket 2017). Migrants exposed to prejudice or racism do understand and identify it as discrimination in most of the cases. However, less is known about how migrant individuals find successful strategies to overcome bias and establish themselves. The aim of this thesis is therefore to look more closely at how migrants exposed to discrimination fight against it or stop it from happening. The focus is on strategies used by such individuals and what knowledge and/or experiences lead them to react against discrimination. There are more inspiring ways and strategies than the predominant "mistrust and cut off" from Swedish society that many minorities choose, and end up getting lost in a negative spiral (DO, 2010, p.35).

This bachelor's thesis is relevant to the field of Sociology and integration studies since qualitative research and statistics show that Sweden is one of the European countries with the highest employment rates among its native Swedish population. However, it also has a significant difference between national and international inhabitants' unemployment rates. It is common that migrants experience difficulties when searching for a job, and among those who work, many feel they are overqualified for the jobs they work in (SCB, 2016a). This narrative will be further developed throughout this thesis. Its focus is on answering research questions about discrimination and strategies that combat it on an individual level. However, these will also be discussed at the structural level. The material collected from interviews will be analysed with the help of Decolonial theory, keeping in mind that the interviewees' strategies are

powerful expressions against subjectivation. Decolonial theory exposes point of view other than those based on Western knowledge. To provide more complexity to the study, Intersectionality theory will also be part of the analytical framework of this research, lifting and addressing migrants' experiences by looking at the intersection of race, class, gender and age in relation to the labour market, helping to deconstruct discrimination and theorizing the strategies further.

1.1 Aim

Aim of the Research:

The aim of this research is to identify and study strategies that migrants use to overcome discrimination on the labour market.

1.2 Research Questions

- How do migrants experience discrimination at their working places?

2 Historic Background

The economy, war, and politics around the world influence migration in Sweden. In the 1960s, most migrants were from other Nordic countries, predominantly Finland. Migrants from Southern Europe also moved to Sweden in order to work in different industries during this period. In 1968, new laws and regulations for migrants coming from outside the Nordic region were established. The 1970s recession reduced migration to low and steady levels. By the middle of the 1980s, there was a rise in migration from outside of Europe as a consequence of refugees from the wars in Iran and Iraq. During the 1990s, migrants from Kuwait also started to arrive to Sweden. The number of migrants from Norway increased as well, instigated by a monetary crisis in their country. Throughout the 1990s, war in Yugoslavia was another factor which increased migration from that region. In 1995, Sweden became a member of the European Union (EU) which in turn increased the number of migrants arriving from other European countries (SCB 2016b, p.20).

During the 2000s, migration in Sweden rose, especially after 2005. In 2015, 134,000 people immigrated to Sweden. However, Swedish citizens returning to Sweden represent 15% of the number of immigrants. Less than 10% are immigrants coming from Scandinavian countries and 25% are immigrants from Europe (SCB 2016b, p.20).

“The largest number of immigrants since year 2000 are from those coming from countries outside the EU. They represent almost half of the number of immigrants in Sweden. They are refugees from Iraq, Syria and Somalia. Labour immigrants from India and China and students from China and Pakistan. There are also family laces immigrants from i.e. Thailand...Women are the highest percentage in family migration. (SCB 2016b, p. 20).”

Migrants move to Sweden for several reasons. They come different time events and have different backgrounds. This makes the foreigners living in Sweden a very diverse group (SCB, 2009 p.17). According to SCB’s latest labour force survey from 2016, the population of foreigners aged 15-74 years in Sweden was 1,475,000 (2017a, p.09). By the end of 2016, there were almost 1,7 million people born outside Sweden living in the country. Migration contributes the most to Sweden’s population increase. In fact, in 2016, migration reached a record high due to the war in Syria which caused many to search for asylum in Sweden (SBC 2017).

In 2016, the Equality Ombudsman (DO) conducted a social environment analysis with the purpose of discovering where to find the greatest risks of discrimination in Sweden in the coming five to ten years. The purpose was to find out which zones of society have the most urgent need, and what efforts should be made in those areas to reach the greatest effects in integration. Results showed that:

“Growing inequalities in living conditions, increased segregation, displacement of responsibility from society to the individual, as well as normalization and amplified spread of extremist views is leading to increased risk of discrimination (DO 2017a, p.52).”

They found the above-mentioned inequalities across the social spectrum, but particularly in the areas of public service including housing, education, social services, and social security. It is very important that working aged migrants succeed and establish themselves in the labour market in Sweden in order to avoid segregation and

negative health and social consequences and the growing inequalities like the ones quoted above. This analysis also showed that these will only worsen in five to ten years. It noted that the most vulnerable individuals will have an increased risk of being discriminated against at recruitment situations as well as in their workplaces over time (DO, 2017b, p.52). This relates directly to the relevance of this study about migrants and their strategies in overcoming discrimination.

“Employment rate among foreign born was 60.1%, while among people born in Sweden the rate was 68.8%...The unemployment rate among foreign born population was 15.6%. Among people born in Sweden, the unemployment rate was 4.8% (SBC,2017a, p.30-31).”

The DO (2017b p.44) or Equality Ombudsman received 572 reports based on ethnic discrimination in 2016. From those reports, 188 were reported at the work place, 24 during public hiring processes, 14 were related to the government employment agency *Arbetsförmedling*, and 3 reports were from private business and private professionals' services. This report did not include the complaints made based on religious discrimination against Muslims or those assumed to be Muslim.

“Individuals who experience discrimination can suffer serious consequences. People who are discriminated may have i.e. worsen self-reported health than those who do not experience discrimination. They also have lower trust for others and for social institutions. Those individuals often change their behaviours patterns to avoid ending up in similar situations in the future (DO 2016, p.16).”

There is extensive research, both international and Swedish, about individuals who experience and suffer from discrimination and how they handle it (Bursell 2012; DO 2016). Researchers have studied individuals' strategies to deal with discrimination and their attempts to “recreate, maintain, enhance or change their ethnic hierarchy” (DO 2016, p. 19). Those episodes are happening today, and all of us engaged in social life are in some way involved in these processes.

In Sweden, all individuals are protected by the Discrimination Act 2008:567, defining different forms of discrimination as:

1. Direct discrimination: that someone is disadvantaged by being treated less favourably than someone else is treated, has been

treated or would have been treated in a comparable situation, if this disadvantaging is associated with sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.

2. Indirect discrimination: that someone is disadvantaged by the application of a provision, a criterion or a procedure that appears neutral but that may put people of a certain sex, a certain transgender identity or expression, a certain ethnicity, a certain religion or other belief, a certain disability, a certain sexual orientation or a certain age at a particular disadvantage, unless the provision, criterion or procedure has a legitimate purpose and the means that are used are appropriate and necessary to achieve that purpose (DO 2017b).

The SOU, Swedish Authority of Public Investigations (SOU 2014, p.24), analysed labour court rulings finding out that persons with power manage to strengthen their position in relation to those who have a subordinate position. In principle, the person who finds himself subject to discrimination rarely succeeds after taking action. The consequences of these results are directly connected to the normalization of discriminatory actions. One example of this was the fact that juridical actions were in principle left intact when introducing the new law. This made those who lacked protection even more vulnerable. This means that the experience for an individual reporting discrimination often becomes one of reinforcing vulnerability and powerlessness.

3 Previous Research

3.1 Ethnic Discrimination

To understand ethnic discrimination, one may first look at the concept of race, which is based on biological differences used to classify and reduce, in other words, “ways of being to visible, embodied and hierarchically ordered forms of difference” (Gunaratnam, 2003, p.08). This act of categorization became prevalent during European colonialism and was used to classify the differences in the colonial

population together with other geopolitical descriptions such as “modern and primitive or advanced and backward” (Gunaratnam 2003, p.11).

In ethnicity, the discourse is constructed based on cultural and religious structures, but it also includes biological inheritance (Gunaratnam 2003, p.04). Ethnic discrimination refers to the differential treatment given by the dominant ethnic group, based on inadequate, biased factors that disadvantages those individuals from those with another ethnic background. There are many factors influencing discrimination. It may come from individuals or groups’ fear over losing their social and economic position or losing cultural identity. These individuals and groups may also feel threatened by the possibility of others getting access to social positions and resources (DO 2016, p.17) i.e.: the case of discrimination against women in the labour market. Some employees prefer to work only with people from the same ethnic background (homophily) by having the misconception that ethnicity and productivity are related, or may have xenophobic attitudes against other ethnicities as well as negative stereotypes, refusing to employ migrants regardless of their credentials (Bursell 2012, p.13).

In the labour market, ethnic discrimination causes unequal opportunities in employment, income, career opportunities, and professional networking. Research shows that racism and discrimination are becoming subtler and consequently more difficult to identify and acknowledge (DO 2016, p.17). Ethnic discrimination in labour markets may occur in diverse ways such as:

Access to institutions or procedures: hiring, interviewing, unemployment.

While functioning within a domain: wages, evaluation, work environment.

A movement through a domain: promotion, layoffs, rehiring. With actors such as employers, customers, coworkers (Blank, Dabady. and Citro 2004, p.68).

From the points made in the quote above, discrimination may occur as direct hostile actions or avoidance of interaction with an individual of a different ethnic background, or of an assumed different ethnic background. It may occur consciously or unconsciously and sometimes it may be a product of invisible everyday racism from

individuals or from social structures (Blank, Dabady and Citro 2004; Schmauch 2006; Bursell 2012).

The focus of this thesis is ethnic discrimination, but it includes a deeper reflection on discrimination on the labour market by including the intersections of age, gender, class, sexuality and religion analysing the complex ways in which ethnic discrimination is interconnected to those other identities.

3.2 Ethnic Discrimination, Name Change and Labor Market Inequality

Moa Bursell (2012) uses the human capital approach as explanation for ethnic inequalities. This neoclassic economic concept states that “individual characteristics like ethnicity or gender are irrelevant to productivity and are thus of minor importance for labor market stratification” (Bursell 2012, p.07). Bursell describes how it becomes more complex when applied to immigrants as they lose their human capital temporarily while adapting in their new country. But once new skills such as language, cultural and social knowledge are learned, employment and wage differences are supposed to fade. The author describes an important phenomenon:

“However, many Swedish employers value merits acquired in Sweden more than those acquired abroad. Thus, it seems that immigrants would often need a Swedish degree and Swedish work experience in order to be evaluated similarly to natives with merits of the same quality (Burns et al. 2007). The argument for favouring Swedish credentials is that foreign credentials bring a greater risk into the employment decision, as it is more difficult to judge the quality of education and work tasks at foreign institutions and organisations (Bursell, 2012, p.17)”

For Bursell, ethnic discrimination on merits evaluation is institutionalised, since “government officials who reject other kinds of discriminatory practices do not denounce these standards. Instead they seem to judge foreign merits by the same

standards” (2012, p.18). The reason for this affirmation is the fact that, according to the author, devaluation and neglect of foreign credentials are not included in their definition of discrimination. It is an unfair process since network recruitment and ethnocentric evaluation of work credentials take away migrants’ chances to compete in the labour market.

The lack of transparency makes it very difficult for scholars studying hiring discrimination and its impact on labour market chances. “Only recruiters know how many applicants apply for one position, what their credentials are, and exactly what the recruiters themselves are looking for in an applicant” (Bursell 2012, p.18). This therefore contributes to the difficulty of proving discrimination. Since the burden of proof lies with the accuser, Bursell quotes the result by an Ombudsman of Discrimination employee: “This is probably why no employer in Sweden who has pleaded not guilty has ever been convicted of discrimination” (Bursell 2012, p.19).

In Bursell’s studies of responses to stigma and discrimination, her focus shifts from proven to perceived discrimination of how individuals from migrant groups respond to stigma, xenophobia and discrimination. For the author, it may be a difference in what kind of strategies individuals choose based on their social classes as “structures are influenced by diverging assessments of society’s structure of opportunities” (2012, p.24).

Bursell (2012) discussed several strategies to overcome stigma, xenophobia and discrimination:

Confrontational strategies: trying to discuss the issue with the insulting or discriminatory person, suing him or her, or verbally returning the insult. Conflict deflation: ignoring the incident to preserve emotional energy, or adopting strategic silence. Religious faith: long term strategy coping to racism and discrimination by religious faith (We are all equal in God’s eyes). Humour strategies: long term strategy, the use of humour. Avoidance strategy: systematically avoid situations in which xenophobic and

discriminatory incidents are likely to occur. Climbing up socioeconomic ladder through education and hard work. A strong position in the labor market makes you less vulnerable. Avoiding social interaction with the majority by living in areas populated by ethnic minorities, working at workplaces dominated by ethnic minorities, and marrying and choosing friends from ethnic minorities. Universalizing: celebrating racial mixture, or referring to membership in human race. Assimilating strategies: or passing strategies like religious conversion or name change, are employed to avoid being categorized as a member of the stigmatized group. Entrepreneurism: as employment strategy (Bursell 2012, p.25-26).

The list above is important to the study of strategies to fight discrimination at the work place. It can be used as an instrument to identify mechanisms behind the stories migrants tell about their experiences with discrimination. Classifying diverse types of responses to stigma and discrimination exemplifies the permeability in the barrier dividing “us and them” (Bursell 2012, p.34). It shows how migrants’ attitudes can be translated into strategies and help to identify factors and experiences that influence their behaviours.

This section discusses two articles by Paula Mulinari (2015, 2017). In her first study, Mulinari (2015) writes about “Exploring the experiences of women and migrant medical professional in Swedish hospitals” and focuses on gender and ethnic discrimination. She puts a particular focus on individual resistance by analysing different strategies created “to deal with (or to manage) these inequalities and what forms of resistance are legitimate, available and possible – and for whom” (Mulinari 2015, p.667). All her interviewees, regardless of being in high status positions, spoke about having experienced discrimination and exclusion at their workplace, especially in relation to “informal networks in determining the possibility of career progression within the organization” (Mulinari 2015, p.670). Neither men nor women saw their organization as meritocratic but instead that “networks were often more important

than skills, qualifications and work experience” (Mulinari 2015, p.670). Swedish female doctors were especially aware of the male dominance in control of those networks at the hospital. Her interviewees took individual responsibility for the fact that they lacked informal networks as a causality of being migrant, and saw the fact that they had a different ethnicity as the reason for discrimination (Mulinari 2015, p.671).

In Mulinari’s study (2015) none of the migrant’s doctors mentioned ideas of collective agendas, but concentrated instead on individual strategies, i.e. working harder. She also discusses detachment, and migrants’ feeling that they were not equal to their non-migrant colleagues, and hence stopping caring about the development of their career after all the hard work. Using this strategy, they were able to practice their profession without the constant efforts and pressures of needing to be the best in order to compete with the others for opportunities (Mulinari 2015, p.673). This survival strategy was used to protect the migrant’s mental health and her/his life outside the work environment. Mulinari (2015) then raises the question of gender coding in resistance to racism, by comparing migrant women who stressed the importance of working harder in order to stay in the organization with migrant men’s attitude of also working hard, but using the strategy of accepting career limitations in a discriminatory environment and choosing to focus on their family life instead. For the migrant women interviewees, “at home” was not a place of retreat but yet another place where they most engage emotional energy and physical work at housework (2015, p.674).

In her second article, Paula Mulinari (2017) focuses on bodily strategies and forwards intersectional research by questioning place of birth and touching as processes of racialisation of minorities in their workplace (Mulinari 2017, p.02). She argues that:

“Workers with experience of racism have a specific knowledge on how racialized inequalities shape and regulate the labour market... while racism as a principle of social organization is often marginalised and even denied in Swedish mainstream scholarship, an exploration of labour from perspective of Swedish workers suffering racialisation illuminates the centrality of race and racism in the everyday experiences of the women and men I met in my study (2017, p.05)”

Mulinari's study of the embodied practices of discrimination during service workers' interactions focused on strategies of resistance to how looking with a "gaze of otherness" (Mulinari, 2017, p.05) with confusion or surprise questions the individuals' abilities and right to belong to a given place. It is the repetitive questioning of belonging "which never seemed to be answered until a person detached herself from the demand of belonging or being classified as Swedish" (Mulinari, 2017, p.08). It is also touching or asking if they may touch the individuals body (i.e. hair), making them different, exotic or "creating national boundaries while claiming bodily access to workers in diverse ways" (Mulinari 2017, p.10). This causes the individuals to develop strategies to be able to perform their work tasks by creating a certain distance.

The author found that several of those strategies were often exaggerations of performs included in their work routines such as smiling, talking and being overly friendly. "These forms of resistance were shaped by workers' vulnerable economic position, in which they needed both their jobs and the tips" (Mulinari, 2017, p.11). They needed to work more to cope with everyday racism, and be constantly aware of their interactions by choosing to be "invisible or super visible or to talk back or be silent" (Mulinari, 2017, p.12).

3-53.4 The reality of invisible everyday racism

Ulrika Schmauch's (2006) thesis summarized strategies in which the subjects of her studies described how they used strategies to deal with everyday racism. There are three main strategies:

"Re-defining experiences of racism into phenomena less threatening to dominant discourses; By distancing from the racism and exclusion and; By realistically limiting the influences of racism on the everyday as much as possible, and on the other hand, resisting or protesting against it (Schmauch, 2006 p.196-8)."

Schmauch found her informants redefined acts of racism as non-racist, trying not to see racism in their everyday lives. Or they considered themselves not any different from native born people in Sweden, and in this way refused to experience

discrimination. They took the responsibility for the experience of rejection or discrimination as just the way people are and tried to transform it by focusing on an individual's personality. In this way, they used the discourse that there is no racism in Sweden, and in some extent, unintentionally collaborated to cover it up. She found individuals may choose to move into areas where "everyone is an immigrant" (Schmauch, 2006, p.197) and look for places to live where they feel welcome. Alternatively, they may look for places where they find many others in the same position, thus leaving areas where racism and discrimination are experienced or actively planning to move away from those areas in the future. Those who choose to resist racism are required to spend energy on trying to control their emotions and reactions and resist experiences of discrimination. This involves calculating if a protest or confrontation would lead to them being considered overly sensitive, extreme, or incapable of understanding Swedish social rules. Many individuals in the study recognized that resisting racism limits their chances of making an impact in society (Schmauch, 2006, p.198). The experiences of Schmauch's informants may as well represent experiences migrants have in their work environment. Examples include ignoring episodes of discrimination in order to integrate with colleagues and the work environment, changing the work place, profession, or moving to other areas to find a more migrant friendly neighbourhood and environment. Resisting is identified by finally considering reporting or confronting discrimination in the work place at the risk of being considered a conflictual person or unable to understand Swedish social rules.

4 Theoretical Framework

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework of the thesis. By presenting the theory of Decoloniality, the thesis questions and rejects the position of subordination given to colonised countries and its inhabitants, demonstrating how it is still being reproduced today by the Westernized world. Including an intersectional perspective provides a tool to analyse migrants' stories of overcoming discrimination. Both theories focus on power, anti-discrimination, and question discriminated individuals' role in society from a perspective of empowerment, which is the aim of the thesis as a

whole. They work together in this study as theoretical instruments for the analysis of the complex constructions of power without an ontological hierarchy of inequalities.

4.1 Decoloniality

Decolonial theory is a critical social theory which offers another way to reach for truth and universality than the dominant Western standpoint. As stated by Maldonado-Torres (2011), it is a way of dismantling old hierarchies of knowledge based on power and geopolitics, seeking new and more powerful ways of thinking from the colonial world (Maldonado-Torres 2011, p.117). Its explanatory coverage fits the group and focus of this thesis as well as the phenomena researched.

Many migrants today are still seen as under or less qualified in the Western labour market. Decoloniality theory gives people a response to discrimination by focusing on exposing “technologies of subjectivation” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p.489).

“Decoloniality’s point of departure is existential realities of suffering, oppression, repression, domination and exclusion. Decoloniality facilitates the unmasking of racism as a global problem as well as demonstrating how knowledge, including science, was used to justify colonialism. Finally, decoloniality accepts the fact of ontological pluralism as a reality that needs ecologies of knowledges to understand (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p.492).”

Decoloniality combines knowledge, practice, and action. Its efforts are to change the world by organizing and communicating critique of colonization and dehumanization in a holistic movement that reaches others and invites them to question their “paradigm of being, acting and knowing the world” (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p.7). To act and react, or in perspective of this thesis, to find strategies, to decide to change and stop discrimination, is an act of changing attitudes. It does not accept being discriminated against since one cannot not change one’s ethnicity, and thus requires a change in attitude. “Attitude is the definition of an orientation towards knowledge, power and being that can make the subject turn decolonial” (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p.23). By not accepting discrimination and finding strategies to stop or avoid it, migrants’ attitudes change towards their labour market situation.

Mohanty (2003) discusses the power of the privileged, the ethnocentrism, and the system of Western domination by uncovering forms of colonialism and patriarchy in her feminist debate of the exploitation of Third World women. She refers to Anouar Abdel Malek's analysis of the world balance of power within culture, ideology, and socioeconomic conditions by the Western "struggle to control over the orientation, regulation and decision of the process of world development." (Mohanty, 2003, p.20).

Contemporary imperialism is, in a real sense, a hegemonic imperialism, exercising to a maximum degree a rationalized violence taken to a higher level than ever before – through fire and sword, but also through the attempt to control hearts and minds. For its content is defined by the combined action of the military-industrial complex and the hegemonic cultural centers of the West, all of them founded on the advanced levels of development attained by monopoly and finance capital, and supported by the benefits of both the scientific and technological revolution and the second industrial revolution itself. (Mohanty, 2003, p.20)

If Decolonization is the uncovering and affirmation of those forms of power by Western modernity, Decoloniality is the act to "re-humanize the world," not accepting hierarchies of domination that discriminate based on individuals' ethnicities. Decoloniality questions discourses, knowledges and practices and finds creative ways to trespass the colonial structures of today to a more open world, accepting of multiple forms of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p.10).

To put the theory in perspective with the world today, a good example, discussed by media around the globe, is the the Black Lives Matter movement. It is for some individuals a provocative social movement misunderstood even by those who suffer racial discrimination. The population found in this collective movement does not support racial violence. However, the controversial questioning statement of 'Don't all lives matter?' in response shows how Western ideas of universalism are so spread among our ways of thinking and how it may be mixed with the ideal and effort of creating a world where we are all equals and we can live under the same conditions and opportunities, Maldonado-Torres summarises the discussion using the Decoloniality perspective presenting how to dismantle discrimination in this debate, and showing its relevance in modern debates about discrimination today. After all, if

all lives matter equally,, there would not exist an overrepresentation of black assassinations, blacks in the imprisonment system and in the statistics of police violence (Maldonado -Torres 2016, p. 8). In short, this perspective exemplifies the ways liberal universalism is misused and why a decolonial perspective is relevant when discussing discrimination today.

4.2 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a form of comprehending the world's complexity by looking at individuals and their experiences in social and political spheres which are shaped by many factors that mutually influence each other. An intersectional perspective is used as a tool in the interpretation of the empirical data used in this thesis, providing a frame to analyse people's problems of discriminatory barriers in their work environment and the different strategies used by these interviewees to address discrimination and structural problems related to it.

“Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analysing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and multiple influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people's better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves (Collins and Bilge, 2016, p.193).”

These analytical tools allow the material to assume many different forms. Just like the world, people are also very complex. Their experiences can be lifted by translating and accepting that they are shaped by so many different axes. De Los Reys and Mulinari (2007) define what these intersections create, according to personal understandings, and specific forms of exercises of power that involve a particular experience. To study discrimination in the labour environment, it is important to look for inequalities constructed in the intersections at different levels. In the case of immigrants, their

specific forms of consensus and subordination towards existing power structures, institutional practices, and individuals' actions and strategies they are using to contest it help to define this (De Los Reys and Mulinari, 2007, p.9). This perspective is especially relevant when considering the context of today's labour market and its demand for flexibility and efficiency as well as the unstable forms of work and supply responsible for new forms of inequality in the labour market (SOU, 2014, p.22). Intersectional analysis can be used to problematize the hegemonic Swedish heteronormative power defining the feminist agenda and deconstruct established boundaries between gender, sexuality, class, and race/ ethnicity (SOU, 2014, p.18). It allows for questioning the way we see and accept things and brings attention to the different forms of exercising power and how it reflects different forms of discrimination regarding institutional space, knowledge levels, and political legitimacy (SOU, 2014, p.20). Border creation, exclusion practices, and in some extension the inability of migrants to identify these boundaries can also be read as a sign of powerlessness, discrimination, and subordination experienced by many in working life.

“Power is being ignored, which is reflected in an active ignoring of knowledge that questioned established reality images. The approach to inequalities based on ethnicity, sexuality and functional capacity is too often based on notions of cultural differences, divergent identities and lack of accessibility, but rarely on a sense of understanding where these categorizations constitute constitutive elements in an uneven distribution of power and influence within work organizations (SOU, 2014, p. 21).”

De Los Reys and Mulinari (2007) stress that it is important to emphasise Sweden's link to the “Western colonial project” and that it should be a point of reflection to understand today's ongoing forms of inequality (De Los Reys and Mulinari, 2007, p.84). Analysing power relations and its “unequal distribution of material and symbolic resources” (De Los Reys and Mulinari, 2007, p.11) helps to understand social contexts, whether power creates social justice or inequality. Intersectionally allows to localize how power is accessed, whether structural, disciplinary, cultural, or interpersonal. As a theoretical instrument, intersectionality allows one to study the complexity of modern forms of institutional discrimination, everyday racism, and stigma.

“Thinking about social inequalities and power relations within an ethos of social justice, and doing so not in abstract generalizations but in their specific contexts. Attending to how intersecting power relations shape identities, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural representations and ideologies in ways that are contextualized and historicized introduces a level of complexity into everything. (Collins and Bilge, 2016, p.202).”

The quote above summarizes the balance between intersectionality and decoloniality by stating that a part of intersection is also to contextualise and historicize in discussions of power relations, allowing for complexity. The theories complement and strengthen each other in the specific context provided by the interviews through immigrants’ stories of overcoming discrimination in the work place.

The operationalization of the combined theories focuses on interpreting how the discourses of the migrants were “transformed into new ways of acting and interacting” (Bryman, 2008, 509) or into strategies. It allows for a better understanding about the choices migrants coming from different ethnicities, age, gender, class, religious background, and of distinct categories of migrations face. Having a diverse group of informants allows for an analysis through the lens of intersectionality and decoloniality to uncover their strategies and what leads individuals to their choices. Decoloniality and Intersectionality were also used to develop the interview guide (Appendix A) to uncover oppressive institutions and discrimination in the migrants’ experiences in their work environment. This will be explained in detail in the following section.

5 Method

This study uses qualitative methods based on critical studies theory about the way migrant individuals interpret their experiences fighting discrimination. Bryman (2008 p.22) defines qualitative method as a “research strategy that usually emphasizes words... embodies a view of social reality as constantly shifting emergent property of individuals’ creation.” To get a deeper understanding of migrants’ strategies to avoid discrimination, this thesis follows a qualitative sociological tradition featuring an

inductive approach which connects theory and research. Interviews focus on migrants' perceptions of their social worlds, examining the strategies they use to avoid discrimination, their social properties, and interactions. Moreover, this study looks for meanings of their told experiences by using interviews, scientific articles, and journals. Decolonisation theory and an intersectional perspective are used to analyse the information gathered from interviews. The balance between theory and the contextualisation of the interviews in this research is important to document as migrants are a source of knowledge and bring experience when discussing discrimination.

It is enough to address the marginalization and the pathologizing of minorized experiences in research, by simply focusing analytic attention upon these experiences, or by attending to the inadequacy of racial and ethnic categories in research by an obsessive expanding and refining of categories... such practices can reserve processes of analytic marginalization, but they continue to constitute race and ethnicity through the same discursive system, based upon fixed binary categorizations between a normalized, dominant whiteness and negatively valued, pathological or deviant 'Others'" (Gunaratnam Y. 2003, p.21).

Decoloniality and Intersectionality reinforce each other throughout this thesis. To only apply the intersectional perspective without considering power relations, social dynamics and changing processes would not give the insight of how white norms are constructed. Decolonial theory uncovers those processes. The intersectional approach in this thesis is strongly bounded to a transnational feminist thinking, looking at the intersectionality with the background of economic, political and cultural hegemony and power relation between nations. Taking into account geopolitics is also an important part of the examination of those intersections (Lykke, 2009, p. 112-13).

Ethnocentrism and discrimination are interconnected. An individual affected by these negative forces may react in response. In their testimony, the coding of interviews extracts the strategies, experiences, or attitudes of migrants as well as what influenced them to act as they did or continue to act in this way. The focus is on non-native

Swedish migrants. This broad understanding was chosen to give different kinds of migrants a sense of union, since challenges of overcoming discrimination on the labour market have obstacles to all migrants, but specially for non-Western migrants who have a lower status in the Nordic and Western world. This thesis focuses on individuals who chose to live in Sweden for a longer period or permanently that have acquired some significant social ties to Sweden. This includes individuals that chose to move here for family reasons, to work on a work visa, as well as refugees and asylum seekers forced to move due to external factors. In other words, the migrants in this study, a diverse group, have lived in Sweden long enough to develop a career and to experience opportunities and challenges in their work environment.

Nina Lykke writes about “addressing one selves intersubjective, interaffective and intercorporeal relations to our research subjects, materials and locals (2014, p.8).” I am aware of the influence that being a woman, Latin American, and immigrant in Sweden may have. My own background may for example influence where I acquire my knowledge and which conclusions I draw from what I see. Enabling me to study strategies against migrant discrimination embedded my research in line with Schmauch’s idea that “knowledge isn’t universal, but situated, people who are situated in different ways in social structures see different things (2006, p.60).” I focus on the migrant as actively involved, responsible and as an expert on the issues studied in this thesis. Or at least a migrant with the attitude to break this dualism by trying to uncover and work through it. Or as all the informers interviewed in this paper describe themselves – fighters. This means that I do not see the migrant as an apathetic subject or defenceless victims of structural discrimination.

5.1 Data Collection

Data collection started at the library data base searching MIMA and LIBRIS for articles containing key words as: Discrimination, Strategies, Labour Environment, Work place, Migrants, Ethnic Minorities, Xenophobia. From there I found other articles in the bibliographies of papers I read. My sociology teachers and thesis supervisor also discussed and recommended articles of interest. The other source of data was from semi-structured interviews of four informants, all non-native Swedes who see Sweden

as their home. Moreover, all four of them have experience in the Swedish labour market and labour environments. I am responsible for all translations in this thesis, including the transcripts of the interviews done in other languages than English.

5.2 Interviews

The interviews are semi structured. The choice for this type of inquiry was the fact that this kind of interview method makes it possible for the interviewee to respond to the questions using his/her own terms and the ability to assign significance relevant to their contexts. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allow for interviewee's perspectives to be compared. While questions were specific, this format allowed speakers more freedom to provide answers (May, 2001, p.150). The interview manual (Appendix A) was developed to provide guidance during this process. The participants were informed through email about the the aim of the study, requirements, and confidentiality guidelines (Appendix B). All informants were asked to sign an agreement document formalising their knowledge of the interview procedures and formalities (Appendix C). Interviews were digitally sound recorded in quiet places of their choice where they felt confident and calm to talk about their experiences. Two of them met me in their offices, one at a Café and another at the Grönborg Creative Centrum pub at Mid Sweden University. Interviews lasted 20 to 40 minutes.

5.3 Sampling

Informants were found using snowball sampling as well as by contacting gatekeepers who helped find informants (Bryman, 2008 p.184). Friends and my supervisor helped me to establish contacts with the possible informants. I contacted eight possible informers but half of them were unable to participate or had to cancel our meetings for several reasons. By the end of the scheduled time for interviews, I ended up with the final sample of four migrants, all living in the city of Sundsvall. Two of the informers are male and two are female. They are of various levels of education and hierarchy in their jobs. They all have full time jobs and represent migrants who came to Sweden due to family ties, migrants with work permits, and refugees/asylum seeker migrants.

All four of them speak and understand Swedish very well. The time they have lived in Sweden varies, with the shortest stay out of the sample being three years. On the other hand, the one who has lived in Sweden the longest has been in the country for twenty years. The informants come from different regions: Euro-Asia, Asia, Africa, and South America, but they share the experience of coming from non-Western countries.

5.4 Method of Analysis

The recorded interview material was transcribed directly after the interviews were conducted using the program Inqscribe. Each informer was given a number for identification. After that, all interviews were read a couple of times in order to find out if there were similarities in the context. It was impossible to be certain of if only four participants would be enough to reach data saturation, but when the interviewees' answers were coded, certain themes kept repeating themselves (Bryman, 2008, p.462). Each interview provided variation and at the same time enough theoretical saturation to be able to develop the analysis in this thesis. Interviewees' point of view, experiences of discrimination in their work environments and what drove them to react to discrimination were similar. Two of the interviews were conducted in Swedish and translated into English by me during the transcription, whereas the other two were conducted in English. These differences occurred because the interviewees were given the choice to pick the language they felt they could better express themselves in.

Most responses about how they were reacting against discrimination at the work place were taken from indirect questions about their career, relation to colleagues, and what role public authorities play in preventing discrimination and supporting migrants' inclusion in the labour market. This takes into account that some migrants use strategies of denial, accepting themselves as subjects of discrimination, or unconsciously separate themselves from other migrants and project themselves outside the migrant group suffering discrimination (Blank, Dabady and Citro, 2004; Schmauch, 2006; Bursell, 2012).

The interviewees' answers were coded in relevance to the critical theoretical frame and aimed to provide answers to the two research questions of this paper. Transcripts were organised in a question and answer format yet still kept certain dysfluency. Emotional responses were included in parentheses and other descriptions relevant to the interpretation like laughs, deep breathing, or gesture were also included. The interpretation coding is based on discourse analysis, since it "emphasizes the way versions of the world, of society, events and inner psychological worlds are produced in discourse. Language is depicted in discourse analysis as constituting or producing the social world (Bryman, 2008 p.500)."

In order to better illustrate the analysis, a table follows below with an example from the interviews:

5.4.1 Table: Discourse Analysis Sample

Key Words/Discourse	Informer 01	Analysis
<p>Decoloniality</p> <p>Power X</p> <p>Powerless</p> <p>Obstacles</p> <p>Educated X</p> <p>Subordinated</p>	<p>I came to Sweden I choose to come to Sweden, that was my decision. and then, I decided to do something different, do something.... because, there... in our country, Middle East, North Africa... or the entire world.... not Sweden.... it is hard! But here, it is easy!</p> <p>Sweden exports, one picture only, that Sweden is a <u>dream country</u>. When people come here, they see and hear something else. Here you must work, difficult to find a home, difficult to find a job, driver's license, a lot of rules, blablabla...people get tired of it. They have <u>no energy</u> to take the other steps, to integrate in society.</p> <p>They want to show you they have power and you have no power. For people from Migrationsverket, you are nothing, you are system, my superior decided...but for a person it means so much.</p> <p><u>Go, accept anything</u>. Show them that you can! Later, it may be something, maybe not what you thought, ok. Then you must show that you can do everything.</p>	<p>There is a general admiration for the freedom and the way the Swedish socioeconomic and political system works. At the beginning of the migrant experience, depending from where a migrant comes from, just that fact of been guaranteed basic human rights, in my informers' eyes, of superiority. + (theory decolonization) Once included in Swedish society, things may change and the real challenges of integration become tiring (structural discrimination).</p> <p>So, the reality and challenges give the migrant a sensation of powerless, (quote)</p> <p>And from here a few may find a strategy... (based of decoloniality attitude...).</p>

<p>Strategies</p>	<p>Coming from another country, as a person, positive, maybe think different.</p> <p>I started a XXXX association, this kind of thing. I built my own network. But first steps, it was Sundsvall municipality who did for me. Ok we will take care of you, as person.</p> <p>Exact... yes... well... one cannot say harder or easier here in Sweden, because it depends on the person, oh... that is my own philosophy. If I want, I can.</p> <p>I have. I live like... as two persons. One person who has a job here at XX and I have an income every month, I have an apartment, it is great. But at the same time, I have my life as XX, and there I have many trails, I may say... I try to develop self, I study by distance to be able to comprehend Swedish, I try to study more and more about Scandinavia about Sweden because I have the interest in history and culture (????) stuff, multicultural. It is important to me. At the same time, I get ideas, like all work (???) wants to have, to become in Sweden. That is the reason, like, that I have my project, called XX.</p> <p>Go, accept anything. Show them that you can! Later, it may be something, maybe not what you thought, ok. Then you must show that you can do everything.</p>	<p>Positive thinking</p> <p>Alternative ways to establish oneself</p> <p>Forward attitude</p> <p>Following goals</p> <p>Dealing with limitations</p>
<p>Intersection</p>	<p>Male, 29 years old. Refugee. Bachelor's degree, from his homeland, has no contacts, network in Sweden.</p> <p>Had a status position in his work before moving to Sweden.</p> <p>I got a good introduction at my work place. I feel safe here, it is very important for me, because I left a country in war.</p>	<p>In his home country, his profession was a cause for insecurity, so my informer describes his work place, in a different way than the others, for him it was very important to feel safe. Which is also the reason for him migrating to Sweden.</p>

5.5 Ethical Research Practice

Ethical research practice is essential for qualitative research and needs to comply with procedures and rules, and be within the specific ethics of the study context. This is very important when research includes close contact with research participants (Tracy, 2013, p242-3.) In this research, there were two notions complementing ethical procedures. The first was the notion of relational ethics, which places importance on caring and recognition, seeking mutual respect and a connection between researcher and researched. The second notion, feminist communitarianism, provides an ethical moral compass that puts importance in communal wellbeing firstly and is known to inspire researchers to collaborate with their participants (Tracy, 2013, p.245).

This research involved the selection and interviewing of migrant individuals in Sweden from non-European countries. Throughout the research process including development, presentation, interviews and interpretation, all ethical obligations suggested in course literature and other scientific sources were followed to ensure no harm, no deception, completely privacy and confidentiality.

The interviewees signed informed consent forms which listed them as voluntary participants, free to opt out and interrupt the interview at any time if they wish. The informed consent forms also explained the context of the material from the interviews and how it would be used, ensuring that their privacy would be protected. They were also informed that the research data would be safely locked in storage, reinforcing participants about confidentiality.

6 Results and Analysis

In all four interviews, informants shared stories of discrimination and explanations of their strategies to avoid or fight it. In many of their experiences, they were unaware, or did not perceive that the facts they were sharing were acts of discrimination, but instead described them as obstacles taken as a norm for migrants, acknowledging that this was happening because they were migrants. At the same time, strategies were on occasion used unconsciously to combat discrimination.

6.1 Informer 01

The first informer migrated to Sweden as a refugee and has been living here for three years. He has a comprehensive higher education degree in his field, but is working a job that does not require higher education. He noted:

“I came to Sweden...that was my decision and then, I decided to do something different, do something...because in our country, Middle East, North Africa, or the entire world....not Sweden...it is hard! But here it is easy!”

His experience with Sweden and the Swedish labour market is very positive. He enjoys his work and is able to pursue education in order to one day be able to work in his original profession. He describes himself as a very positive person, and has his own philosophy: “If I want, I can!” He is always looking for new opportunities in Sweden, and is aware of the importance of building a network, especially if he wants to work in his education field one day. Informer 01 reinforces Mulinari’s (2015) point in her studies on foreign individuals found that not having an informal network was limiting for career possibilities. He notes how this is a key factor for him, to one day possibly work in his profession again.

In three years’ time, he has already started two projects in Sweden. He talks of his colleagues and new friends in Sweden as a new family, and he perceives that they have opened their hearts for him. “But I have positive thinking and all doors opened for me.” He participated in a municipality project on inclusion in the labour market, and maybe because of this own experience, thinks that the responsibility to get a job is up to each individual.

Informer 01 sees the fact that migrants get offered simpler and unpaid jobs such as a 3-month internship program from his municipality as an opportunity:

“Exact... yes... well... one cannot say harder or easier here in Sweden, because it depends on the person, oh...that is my own philosophy. If I want, I can.”

For him things in Sweden are easier to accomplish, at least in the first part of his interview. He thinks the following is a great strategy:

“Go, accept anything. Show them that you can! Later, it maybe something, maybe not what you thought, ok. Then you must show that you can do everything.”

Throughout the interview, the interviewee demonstrated he is fighting discrimination using his positive attitude as a main strategy, even though he was possibly unaware of it. He is happy to have a stable life and a fulltime job that allows him to move beyond being a refugee and become a citizen. It is important to add that sometimes the willingness to belong to the Swedish labour market can also be used to describe how subordinate groups may unwarily become a part of the problem of inequality structures by accepting and reproducing subordination (De Los Reys and Mulinari, 2007, p.36).

“When they understood that I wanted to do something, that I am an active person, not active, I am tired, but that I have a dream, I want to do something special, I don't want just to be a number at Skatteverket, I hate it, just be a number that...for...for money, from Arbestförmödeligen, and later you become, Socialtjänst, or become whatever, work in a pizzeria, work illegal or live in second hand rental, this kind of stuff, I don't like it at all. So! They took care of me from the beginning, from my first steps, they told me, yeah...your road, looks like this, if you engage your time to learn Swedish, engage your time to think positive, you know how it is, right? Sometimes you think negative even though you have a good road, but think negative, end up in the wrong side.”

There is a general admiration for the freedom and the way the Swedish socioeconomic and political system works when Informer 01 talks to me. When he first came to Sweden, he was glad to have access to basic human rights and the same opportunities granted to native Swedes. It may be that migrants such as Informer 01 see this as an act of generosity and not as acquired rights and acquired obligations, like contributing taxes, and the responsibility of learning a new language to break barriers of new social and cultural rules (De Los Reys and Mulinari, 2007, p.30). Bursell (2012) presents deflation of this type of conflict, by ignoring the facts, and choosing it's on perspective as to preserve emotional energy to be a strategy for avoiding discrimination, in this case, unwarily used by Informant 01.

“I got a good introduction at my work place. I feel safe here, it is very important for me, because I left a country in war.”

The experience of seeking asylum or migrating to Sweden, encountering a modern world and economic superior structures and a Western worldview, may in its complexity already be overwhelming and create a sensation of powerlessness to many migrants coming from regions of war and from under developed countries (Mohanty, 2003, p.20). Once included in Swedish society through the labour market, things may change and the real challenges of integration become tiring. In the second part of his interview, the challenges Informer 01 was faced with and how he had to overcome discrimination became evident.

“They want to show you they have power and you have no power. For people from Migrationsverket, you are nothing, you are system, my superior decided...but for a person it means so much.”

Still, he kept talking about positive energy and the importance of trusting yourself, being responsible, as an individual for your own integration, not only in the work environment, but in general. He noted:

“Sweden exports one picture only, that Sweden is a dream country. When people come here, they see and hear something else. Here you must work, difficult to find a home, difficult to find a job, driver’s license, a lot of rules, blablabla...people get tired of it. They have no energy to take the other steps, to integrate in society.”

He was indirectly talking about labour marketing and housing discrimination, the language barrier, and how his qualifications are not recognized in Sweden, in this case his driver’s license. Some of these rules may contribute to what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) describes as “technologies of subjectivation,” a form of exclusion of the migrants’ skills based on the assumption that abilities acquired in the home country do not meet Swedish standards (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p.489). Many jobs in Sweden require a driver’s license, which places additional costs on the job seeker, and may be too expensive to get for migrants and refugees initially.

Still, at the end of the interview when I asked Informer 01 if he had any experience of discrimination in his working life, his response was negative. When asked about what strategies he believed may help migrants in their work environment or in getting

opportunities in the labour market, he responded that flexibility and the willingness to accept what is offered, even if not in your area of education make a difference. In his case, he was hired after one week of an unpaid internship and enjoys his job today.

6.2 Informer 02

My second informer lives in Sweden and has a work permit visa. She is very happy in the job position she occupies. While she started her education in another country, she was able to continue in Sweden. Her diversified international qualifications were appreciated and contributed to her entering the Swedish labour market. Because she was unable to identify cases of discrimination in her work place, the beginning of the interview concentrated on her experiences within the migration system and bureaucratic discrepancies between different Swedish public authorities. She highlighted the challenges some of her migrant friends encountered when trying to follow her steps:

“They have their degree from their country that are not being accepted in the Swedish school system, and they are being asked to show their high school courses and told that they need to study, in Komvux....and to complete their high school degrees. And then study their bachelor’s degree again here, you know the time, that is very... (deep breath) demotivating, very demotivating.”

The previous research section in this thesis demonstrates that ethnic discrimination on merits evaluation is institutionalised, the argument being that it is more difficult to judge the quality of education at foreign institutions (Bursell, 2012). Based on the theory of decoloniality, we can establish that university degrees from foreign educational institutions (outside the Western world) are not viewed as equal, in part based on the hegemonic imperialism of Western countries. Moreover, this is representative of the aim to control scientific knowledge and cultural pluralism, leaves educational, professional, and individual merits acquired in countries belonging to an old colonial geopolitical order undervalued (Mohanty, 2003; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). I was interested to learn how Informer 02 navigated this discrimination. As suggested

by Maldonado-Torres (2016), migrants find creative ways to navigate discriminatory structures. Informant O2 noted:

“I am more like a person who solves problems, if I encounter something.

They just said that it was only for European Union countries, then I might think, I can't apply. But I applied anyways. You know, I am that type of person, like, you need to be really, just continue trying and be strong...But, sometimes I feel that I might not be that strong all the time, not fight all the time... I am a fighter type... but maybe I won't have that energy all the time to fight for all this thing.”

Once again, just as in my previous interview, the attitude towards obstacles repeats itself. In Informer O2's case, she relied on her attitude of questioning the system, trusting her competence and fighting for her professional interests. These are also experiences of discrimination in her professional life. For many individuals, resisting requires a lot of energy (Schmauch, 2006) and working harder just to have the same grounds to compete (Mulinari, 2015). It is all-consuming. Informer O2's resistance may very well be connected to the fact that she, as a migrant woman, feels accepted and appreciated at her job and belongs to a working environment that inspires and offer her opportunities to grow. Informer O2 told me that her employers offers her the opportunity to continue specialising in her field.

When asked how being a migrant influenced her working environment, she responds positively. However, towards the end of the interview, she acknowledges that she sometimes feels like she is representing her whole country:

“...lately specially, I started to realise like it's a lot of questions all the time about, is this XX food I am eating, is it this? or that? I am with... my colleagues, I am happy. As a person that is coming from another country, I am being asked a lot about the politics in XX, every news item, that happens in XX... I am being asked, because people are curious to hear it from me. And I understand, but sometimes I am getting tired of it, to explain this. Because I don't represent the whole country. But I am getting that role, a little bit, representing the whole country and explaining everything and so on... and that feels a little heavy, sometimes in the working environment.”

According to Mulinari's (2017) research of embodied practices of discrimination, repetitive questioning regarding belonging or the repetitive associations with one's country of birth are ways discrimination manifests itself. Using Informer 02's comments as an example, such as questions about the food one she is eating, or the clothes she is wearing offer further examples. Marking someone as "exotic" by repeatedly asking about culture, news, or politics creates a national boundary, affirming the questioned individual's otherness. When colleagues ask such questions, even if they are unaware of it, it may contribute to creating a certain distance. I did not have the chance to discuss if Informer 02 had any strategy to avoid these situations, but she did mention that she used being exotic positively. She connected this with her competence, positive assessments, and the fact that she brings different know-how to her field, and an alternative perspective from her home country (Mohanty, 2003, p.199). When asked about what strategies a migrant should use to help them avoid discrimination in their work environment and to succeed in their professional life, Informer 02 simply responded, "Make yourself flexible."

6.3 Informer 03

The third informer is a male who moved to Sweden with his native Swedish wife and, at the time of the interview, had lived in Sweden for more than 15 years. He has a higher education degree acquired at a Swedish university. Nevertheless, he works full time in an unrelated job. In his work, Informer 03 has a lot of contact with clients and other professionals in his area. When asked what he thinks is important in getting access to the Swedish labour market, he responded: "Language, ethnicity, luck, and definitely not the *Arbetsförmedling*." This was a clear indication that Informer 03 had suffered from discrimination in his professional life. The fact that he is mentioning ethnicity and luck demonstrates how diverse factors intersect to provide him with access to the labour market and how facts outside of his professional competence shape the way he needs to reconstruct his professional identity (Collings and Bilge, 2016, p.193). The DO (2016) reports a lower trust in institutions like *Arbetsförmedling* by individuals who experienced discrimination, and may also explain why he cites ethnicity and luck as important factors. By naming non-qualified,

non-merit measurable factors to market access, Informer 03 contests the support that job agencies in Sweden and institutional power structure provide (De Los Reys and Mulinari 2007). When I asked him for strategies he used to improve his chances in the labour market, this became more clear. "I, well, I studied at the university, I cut my hair once." Individuals coming from other cultures who embody ethnic traits such as different hair compared to native Swedish men draw the "gaze of otherness" (Mulinari, 2017) and often lead to questioning of an individual's right to belong to a given place, or profession, based in this case on physical appearance. Making Informer 03 get a haircut to improve his professional standing resulted from others making him feel that his hair was making him exotic or different. Today, Informer 03 wears long dreadlocks which I assume show that he has learned to cope with embodied discrimination.

Even though he is not working in his field, Informer 03 enjoys his work and the freedom to include his academic knowledge in his work routines. He plans to continue to educate himself in a near future, and hopes that it may help him to grow in his professional life.

"Everybody I work with are foreigners. But the bosses are Swedish. So, everyone else is foreigner, except for the bosses...I think it's unfair. And I have tried and raised my voice to them, and said, you know, we need a bit of diversity in this work, especially in the leading positions. I said to them."

Informer 03 is used to raise his voice and to make sure people are aware of how they act. He has a deep understanding of discrimination and how it works. And when I ask if he uses to fight it at his work place, his answer is:

"All the time! You feel a sense of inferiority. Our pay is less and our working condition is not as good. We don't have the same opportunities to develop as they do. So, I do feel discriminated quite often."

Informer 03 is aware of how discrimination occurs in his work place. His experiences of power relations and inequality intersecting with the structure of his work place shows how intersectionality is happening in a specific context (Collins and Bilge, 2016, p.202). Just like the other informants in this research, he has a positive attitude and an active way of handling his career. It is a conscious fight, and by what he tells in his interview, something he spends a lot of energy on (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p.10).

Unlike the other informants, he sees that social structures may play a bigger role in resisting discrimination than him, as an individual. Still, he is very engaged at preventing discrimination in his work place, questioning dominant structures. When I ask what factors or experiences inspire him to act, he tells me that he has grown up in a political and social system ruled by racial segregation and draws energy from this.

6.4 Informer 04

The fourth interviewee is female and has lived in Sweden for more than 15 years. She was educated by a vocational training program and is studying now to become a supervisor at her work place.

Informer 04 has always worked in her field. She started her professional life working an unpaid internship and continued working and studying in the same area until today.

She notes:

“When you are from another country, dark skin. Come to a working environment with only Swedish people, it started because of my skin! I would go into a room and everybody would stop talking. I think that their silence was worse than if they said something mean. Everybody went quiet and didn’t talk to me. It’s stronger than words. If you would say: Oh Jesus! Are you like that? Or point at me... but when there is only silence, you get very sad. And they didn’t say, not even one word! I became very sad, and felt very bad, because of this.”

Racial inequalities form labour market exploitation of workers. It is an example of how the Westernized world uses ethnicity as a form of domination (Mulinari, 2017; Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Mohanty, 2003). The DO (2017b) reports that individuals who suffer discrimination experiences consequences including health issues. Throughout the interview, she repeatedly talked about the importance of communicating to each other. She used a confrontational strategy in dealing with her discrimination and reported to her boss and teachers about what was happening. Her experiences with racism stem from her being a black woman. The area in which she works is predominately female with many migrants. But instead of solidarity or inclusion, her work environment creates many barriers for her as a black woman. She

found race, gender, and her migrant status separating her from her colleagues (De Los Reys and Mulinari, 2007, p.57). Western feminism disengages with the challenges faced by black women (Mohanty 2003).

Informer 04 tells me that she found out that migrants have lower salaries than native Swedish co-workers do. The fact that she had a group of only Swedish co-workers worsened her situation as being the only "other" in the workplace. She was very upset when she talked about her experience:

"I mobilized my working place and Komvux, where I studied at that time. I talked to my rector and to my supervisor at work, and teachers but they decided not to follow with D.O. (to make a discrimination report). But today I really regret it. Because it happens all the time, and there are so many that get away with it. They don't dare to tell it like it is. And this is not good! For me, I really regret, deeply. Because, I wanted to report it to DO, it was important for me. But I didn't do it."

Informer 04 talks about her job with proudness, and sees her experience with discrimination as a reason for to become stronger and more goal oriented today. "I am a person who does not like injustice. I can get in situations that I dare to say, well, one should not be quiet, you should dare to say what is wrong." The experience of suffering discrimination to the point that she got sick and had stay at home, and the fact that she had to fight hard to get her health back, influenced her to change her attitude. She values communication and her relationship with her colleagues.

"My strategy is to create a good atmosphere and that everybody should talk to each other. Together! I usually say, we eat "fika" (Swedish coffee break) together and talk to each other about something cool, it is better... Today for me it is interesting, because I have a student that I am teaching, from Thailand. I work as supervisor now, it feels fantastic, to experience it. How does she feel, and what can we do? She can explain, and defend herself, say what she thinks, and I don't allow that anyone treat her bad. I am proud. Even if it means something bad happening to me."

Informer 04's change of attitude gave her power. Furthermore, her experiences and actions gave her the tools to control her work environment. By knowing and understanding the forms of exploitation, she not only regained her health but also a

position of more power in her profession. She could, by herself, re-establish her career by bringing up the discrimination she suffered and using her experience with racism (De Los Reys and Mulinari, 2007, p.130; Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p.26). Moreover, she uses these experiences and new attitudes towards discrimination to protect other migrant colleagues at her job.

7 Summary

The aim of this study was to try to identify and study strategies that migrants use to overcome discrimination in the labour market in Sweden by focusing on what strategies migrants use to overcome discrimination at workplaces, and what factors and experiences lead them to choose these strategies. I started the study by introducing the research problem based on actual reports from diverse institutions involved in integration, discrimination, and the workplace which discussed discrimination and its consequences to society and migrants. Previous research included a short history of how migration has expanded since the 1960s to become one of the greatest issues impacting Swedish society (Migrationsverket 2017). Migrants move to Sweden for several reasons. Yet, different research demonstrates that inequalities between native-born Swedes and migrants is increasing. Migrants are discriminated against on the labour market, and the growing extremism in Sweden is leading to an increasing risk of it becoming worse in the coming years (DO 2017a, p.52). There is already extensive research in Sweden about discrimination of migrants. Previous research has focused on the strategies used by migrants to stop discrimination. I chose to focus my thesis on discrimination in the labour market, because employment is essential for most migrants. My interviewees see work as the way to acquire economic independence and professional status in Sweden. The opportunities of interaction and integration with Swedish society and the feeling of contributing to it, the opportunity to develop not only a career, but feeling of self-worth and dignity all come with a job. Building on previous research (Bursell 2012, Mulinari, 2015, 2017 and Schmauch, 2006), I found facts and strategies used by migrants to fight discrimination. Using the theory of Decoloniality and an intersectional perspective as my point of departure to analyse my interviews, I considered how

discrimination against migrants in the labour market and their strategies of avoiding it may relate to greater ideas of Western dominance as well as their resistance to it. I found that through their rejection of discrimination in the workplace, they were working towards a more just reality where their professional skills are accepted as equal, independent of their race, ethnicity, gender, class, or age.

8 Discussion

In the sixth part of this thesis, I analyse the strategies of four migrants based on the empirical material collected from interviews during which informants shared their professional life details, specially focusing on discrimination and their strategies to combat it, but also focused on how migrants experience discrimination in their workplaces. What drives them to act and think the way they do? I analysed their interviews searching for aware and unaware responses regarding power and decoloniality.

The fact that I was only able to interview four migrants did not lead to a pattern or overall generalizability that can be discussed in other contexts. It therefore does not show any strategy or experience of a group as a whole. Nevertheless, it informs how individual actions based on individual challenges or opportunities respond to each other. It was interesting to observe that some of the informers could point out exact forms of discrimination and how it was happening while it was invisible or hidden from others. The informers' convictions and attitude towards their careers were the main form of combating discrimination. All the informers I talked to showed the same positive attitude and perseverance towards their career. They all think and plan their strategies on an individual level. For example, all the informers are currently studying, or have plans to educate themselves to a next level in order to have more opportunities in the Swedish labour market. Although the study doesn't show any major strategy, it opens up migrants' thinking and expertise on how best to contribute to Swedish labour market integration. This study shows that the strategies they are using to prevent discrimination at their work environment stem from the way they see their selves as individuals and the value and expectations they have of themselves. They were formed based on different migration patterns and different challenges in

Sweden based on their educational level, gender, and race. Their perspective is informed by their practises of acquiring power and status and refusing or accepting to be exploited or discriminated based on their non-Western background. They spoke about fighting, penetrating structural discrimination, and of time-consuming experiences they needed to acquire to achieve their career aspirations. Only one of my informants is currently working in the field she wants, while the other three learned to compromise and plan for the future in order to find a place in their chosen career field. Still, they all have very clear goals and plans for their professional lives. Focusing on their strategies through a decolonial lens and an intersectional perspective showed how mechanisms of domination and discrimination were experienced, but it also helped to uncover forms of discrimination.

9 Conclusion

Migrants have to utilize different strategies to fight for their rights and access in the work place which are often taken for granted for native-born Swedes. A persistent and positive attitude and innovative ways of reversing the rules established by a Westernized labour market really influence the ways these individuals tackle adversity. The informers' confident attitudes and persistence together with their goals for the future and the imagination to see past present adversities empower them to succeed. A greater sample size with more informers would likely show a more complex analysis of experiences, strategies and attitudes, and further development, but also connections between each other.

Because discrimination is not always visible and because injustice happens mostly in structural levels, migrants may not always have ways to avoid it. They choose to separate themselves, work hard individually, rarely see themselves as a united group, and thus disperse based on different languages, religions, ethnicities, or their reasons for migrating to Sweden. One potential research question raised through this research is how attitudes and strategies towards labour market discrimination may vary depending on certain migration conditions. Migrants are an alienated group that if mobilised collectively would be able to transform their personal strategies into social change by sharing their experiences and building solidarity amongst each other.

Decoloniality re-humanises the world as it calls for new points of departure, unmasking discrimination. It looks for new realities, like new careers and life developments shared by the informers in this thesis, who were required to adapt to their new professional lives as migrants in Sweden. Finding new forms of understanding and reacting, to stop hierarchies of domination and discrimination, remains a relevant topic to study.

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11 Appendices

Appendix A – Interview Guide

Interview Guide

<p>General information Tell me about yourself:</p>	<p>Name, age, gender, country, When did you move to Sweden?</p>
<p>Education</p>	<p>Education level. Education in Sweden? Would you like to continue to educate yourself? Do you have the opportunity to specialise, and develop professionally within the organization where you currently work?</p>
<p>Professional information</p>	<p>How did you start your professional life in Sweden?</p> <p>Please tell me your profession, position in the organization, and number of years employed.</p> <p>How would you describe your work environment?</p> <p>Do you have any career aspirations? What circumstances may contribute to or hinder your plans?</p> <p>How do you think being a migrant influences your professional life?</p>
<p>Labour market</p>	<p>Opportunities and challenges of the Swedish labour market?</p> <p>Which factors do you think are important in getting access to the Swedish labour market.</p> <p>In your opinion, what should public authorities (involved in helping migrants to a get job) focus on? Why?</p>

	Anything special that you personally have done that improved your chances?
Public authority	Was/ Is there any public initiative from the Swedish authorities that you consider helped or improved your chances in the labour market?
Labour environment	How do you think that being a migrant influenced your work environment and your relationships with your colleagues? Is there something you would like to change? What? Why?
Labour environment discrimination	<p>Do you have any experience of discrimination at your work place?</p> <p>(Do you think it was due to you being a migrant or any other aspect of your identity?)</p> <p>Have you done or do you believe you can do something to stop this type of discrimination?</p> <p>What do (did) you do (or think you could do) to stop migrants being discriminated?</p> <p>How do you think your workplace/ organization or authorities can support you? Do you believe that you have this support today?</p> <p>How much do you think it is up to you to stop discrimination? And how much is it the authorities' or the workplace's responsibility? In your opinion, how does it work, in general, today in Sweden?</p>

	<p>What in your opinion are the biggest challenges for migrants to integrate within the labour environment?</p> <p>What strategies do you use to stop discrimination at your work place? What experiences or facts lead you to act this way?</p>
	<p>Do you have anything else you would like to add to this interview or anything that you would like to ask me?</p>

Appendix B – Information Letter

Informationsbrev

Inbjudan till deltagande i studie om:

Migraters strategier mot diskriminering i arbetslivet.

Hej

Mitt namn är Helga Juno och jag är sociologistudent vid Mittuniversitetet i Sundsvall. Jag håller just nu på mitt examsarbete i Sociologi, och är intresserad av migranterstrategier för att kämpa emot arbetsplatsdiskriminering. Syftet med min C uppsats är att titta närmare på hur invandrare som utsätts för diskriminering, har reagerat eller stoppat det från att hända. Fokus ligger på strategier som används av sådana personer och vilka kunskaper, eller erfarenheter som leder dem att agera mot det. Dessa fall kan bidra till att berika studier av integration genom att visa hur invandrares egna lösningar skapas och används.

Därför just nu söker jag några personer som vilje delta i enskild intervju.

Jag är väldigt tacksam om du skulle vilja dela med dig av dina erfarenheter av den Svenska arbetsmarknaden och arbetsmiljön. Intervjun kommer att vägledas av teman och tar ca 60-90 min. Intervjuntillfällena sker under vecka 17 och 18 och tid och plats för intervjun kommer vi tillsammans överens om. Samtalet spelas in på digital diktafon och skrivs sedan ut. Studien är förstås frivilligt att delta i, och du kommer att få vara helt anonym om du väljer att delta. Uppgifter om vem du är och var du arbetar kommer att avidentifieras. Du kan när som helst avbryta ditt deltagande utan närmare motivering.

Hör gärna av dig om du är intresserad av dela med dig av dina erfarenheter, eller om du har frågor om undersökningen.

Tack på förhand och hoppas att vi får möjlighet att träffas.

Helga Juno

Student på Samhällsvetareprogrammet Mittuniversitetet

Mobilnr: 070 980 0260

E-post: hebe0605@student.miun.se

Appendix C – Interview Agreement Document

Samtycket

Jag har informerats om projektet, fått tillfälle att ställa frågor om det och fått dem besvarade.

Jag har fått information om att intervjuerna spelas in och kommer att skrivas ut.

Jag har fått information om att de inspelade intervjuerna och de utskrivna intervjuerna kommer förvaras i ett låst utrymme som bara de deltagande forskare har tillgång till.

Jag har fått information om att vid rapportering av intervjuerna kommer det som sagts under intervjuerna vara anonymiserat.

Jag har fått information om att deltagandet är frivilligt och att jag när som helst, och utan särskild förklaring har rätt att avbryta mitt deltagande.

Jag samtycker till att delta i projektet.

Datum

Underskrift