Barriers to the Integration of Refugee and Immigrant Women from non-Western Backgrounds into the Danish Labor Market: A "What's the Problem Represented to Be?" Analysis of KVINFO's Mentor Network approach.

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Abstract

The integration of refugee and immigrant women from non-Western backgrounds into the Danish labor market presents significant challenges, influenced by various structural, cultural, and policy-related factors. This thesis aims to explore these barriers through an in-depth analysis of the KVINFO Mentor Network using the "What's the Problem Represented to Be?" (WPR) framework developed by Carol Bacchi. Established in 2003, the KVINFO Mentor Network seeks to support immigrant and refugee women by pairing them with mentors who provide guidance and help navigate the Danish labor market. However, the effectiveness of this initiative in overcoming the complex barriers to integration remains underexamined.

Employing the WPR framework, this research critically 'deconstructs' how the KVINFO Mentor Network frames the problem of integrating non-Western immigrant and refugee women into the labor market. The analysis reveals the underlying assumptions, values, and ideologies that shape the network's approach and identifies what is left unproblematic or 'silenced' in its representation. The study also investigates alternative ways the problem could be conceptualized, offering a broader understanding of the issues at hand.

Key findings highlight that language barriers, lack of professional networks, and limited knowledge of the Danish labor market are significant obstacles identified by the KVINFO Mentor Network. Despite these insights, the analysis suggests that the program's approach may unintentionally perpetuate certain stereotypes and overlook deeper systemic issues. These findings have practical implications for policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and stakeholders involved in integration efforts, emphasizing the need for more holistic and inclusive strategies.

The study concludes by discussing the limitations of the research, including potential biases in data interpretation and the scope of analysis. Recommendations for future research include longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term impact of mentorship programs and comparative analyses with other integration initiatives in different cultural contexts. This thesis contributes to the ongoing discourse on immigrant integration and offers valuable insights for enhancing the effectiveness of support programs for non-Western immigrant and refugee women in Denmark.

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Glossary and List of Abbreviations

Immigrant - An immigrant is defined as a person born abroad whose parents are both (or one of them if there is no available information on the other parent) foreign citizens or were both born abroad (Statistics Denmark, 2024)

Immigration – the action by which a person establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country. (Buzek & Szupnar, 2011)

Integration - In the *EU context*, a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all **immigrants** and residents of EU Member States. (Buzek & Szupnar, 2011)

Globalization - the growing interdependence of the world's economies, cultures, and populations, brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and flows of investment, people, and information (Kolb, 2018).

EU – European Union

IGU - basic integration education

KVINFO - The Danish Centre for Information on Women and Gender

MENAPT - Middle East, North Africa, Pakistan and Türkiye

'Non-Western Immigrants' - both (foreign-born) immigrants and their (Danish-born) descendants. A descendant, according to Statistics Denmark, refers to a person born in Denmark to non-Danish born parents (when neither of the parents is a Danish citizen born in Denmark). (Authors, 2020). In the Danish context, 'Western countries' are understood to be all EU countries plus Andorra, Australia, Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, San Marino, Switzerland, United Kingdom, the United States and the Vatican. Those from any other country are defined as 'non-Western'. (Bendixen, 2023).

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OSCE - The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Refugee - In the *EU context,* either a third-country national who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it. (Buzek & Szupnar, 2011)

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WPR – 'What's the Problem Represented' to be?

1. Introduction

Denmark became a main immigration destination relatively late compared to other countries. Immigration became a sizable phenomenon in the late 20th century, recruiting immigrants from Turkey, Pakistan, Morocco, and Eastern Europe to work in the manufacturing sector after WW2 during the economic and demographic boom. However, immigration slowed when the first oil crisis hit in the early 1970s due to residency permit restrictions and the labor migration stop in 1973. The following migration was mainly determined by major conflicts and refugee crises from e.g. Somalia and Bosnia, characterizing the second wave of immigration in the 1990s, "resulting in almost 40% of Denmark's Muslim population being descended from refugees" (Daemmrich & Kramarz, 2016, p.5-6). With a domestic fertility rate of 1.7, Denmark relies today on immigration for population growth and to fill unattractive occupations, such as care work and manual employment (Daemmrich & Kramarz, 2016, p.5-6).

In Denmark, employment is pivotal in offering personal and financial freedom. This makes integration measures implemented by the Danish government, such as language and education attainment crucial indicators in supporting refugee progress within the labour market. In recent years and especially since the 2015 "refugee crisis", one of the major issues concerning immigrants is employment. According to Bloch (2008, p.3), one of the most contributing factors to the integration of immigrants is participation in the labor market, which it is argued can open for interaction and following integration within the host society.

According to Daemmrich & Kramarz (2016, p.5-6), successful integration builds stronger economically and more socially and culturally inclusive communities. In terms of integration, it has been argued that Denmark, through its assimilationist approach, strengthens the integration process for newly arrived foreigners and foreigners who - despite having lived in Denmark for a long time - are still not self-supported (Integration, 2022, p.64). More specifically, the Government and other NGOs aim to reduce tendencies towards societal segregation and increase the active participation of foreigners – in the labor market and society in general- through integration programs that enable foreigners to assimilate into Danish society by, for example, learning the Danish language and about the society.

This paper aims to criticize one of Denmark's integration initiatives, KVINFO Mentor Network, to find out if their approach works. KVINFO mentoring network is aimed at women with a refugee and immigrant background, with little or no work experience in Denmark (kvinfo.dk, 2023). The purpose is to support the women in getting a job or education. This is done by matching them with a mentor - and it works according to the organizers (kvinfo.dk, 2023). Research shows that many women with refugee and immigrant backgrounds experience several barriers (kvinfo.dk, 2023). This could be, for example, insufficient knowledge of Danish, a lack of networks and a lack of knowledge about the Danish labour market. Together, mentee and mentor work so that the mentee can break these barriers (kvinfo.dk, 2023).

One of the reasons why KVINFOs Mentor Network will be under scrutiny in this paper is because I find the approach unique, as KVINFOs Mentor Network offers a distinctive approach to integration

compared to other initiatives in Denmark. By focusing on *mentorship* as a means of supporting immigrant women in their integration process, KVINFO may provide a different approach of mentorship as compared to other initiatives that address the issue of integration of immigrants into the Danish labor market such as the IGU Course, whose model entails "an ordinary employment relationship between a company and a refugee or a family reunified person, and whose purpose is to secure work and upskilling for those concerned" (The Ministry of Immigration and Integration, 2024). The course also includes a paid internship and education for two years" (The Ministry of Immigration and Integration, 2024). The education "provides the foreigner with language skills, vocational qualifications, competences and prerequisites for continued work and will be able to form the basis for continuing in a vocational education" (The Ministry of Immigration and Integration, 2024). For this reason (and others that will be highlighted in the methodology), I find KVINFOs Mentor Network approach unique and it warrants further academic inquiry.

Considering the KVINFOs Mentor Network approach, this paper considers the below problem formulation:

1. How does the framing of the 'problem' of unemployment by KVINFOs Mentor Network from 2003 help its participants to break the barriers that immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds face when participating in the Danish labour market?
2. How can this problem of unemployment be approached differently?

The problem formulation will be answered through 4 research questions derived from Carol Bacchi's 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' approach as follows:

Q1. What is the problem of unemployment represented to be in KVINFOs Mentor Network initiative from 2003?

Q2. What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of unemployment in the KVINFO Mentor Network from 2003?

Q4. What is left unproblematic in this representation of unemployment in the KVINFO Mentor Network initiative from 2003? Where are the 'silences'? Can the problem of unemployment be conceptualized differently?

Q6. How and where has this representation of unemployment been produced, disseminated, and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted and replaced?

Step 7. Self-problematization

The 'mentoring' approach, according to KVINFO works according to its aims and goals. However, my critique will reveal how differently the issue of unemployment can be approached, by revealing underlying issues and presumptions that are left 'unproblematic' by this approach.

2. Background to the research

This section will briefly address a few areas of interest that previous authors have previously discussed regarding the topic of integration of immigrants into Danish society in general, and specifically into the Danish labor market.

One of the main concerns facing immigrants in recent years, particularly in light of the "refugee crisis," is employment. The Danish integration policy is centered on labor market participation because it is considered the primary channel of integration, according to the European Website on Integration (2024). However, since 2019, there has been a paradigm shift concerning recipients of international protection: the Danish government has tightened its integration policy to prioritize their return (as soon as circumstances permit) over their integration (European Website on Integration, 2024).

Academics have written a great deal on this subject, focusing, for instance, on the policies implemented to help immigrants integrate into Denmark. According to Hamilton (2023), "a lack of Danish language skills hinders cooperation with nursery facilities, schools, and healthcare, and this will limit participation in association life and the local community." This emphasizes the necessity of learning the Danish language. "Having poor skills in the host country language is a substantial hurdle for immigrants' labor market integration," according to Carlsson et al. (2023) in their study on language competency and hiring of immigrants. "The fact that language skills are found to be important in many typical immigrant entry jobs, such as cleaners, warehouse staff workers, and waiters" was identified as one of the problems." (Carlsson et al, 2023). "Several indicators of language skills, including results from the PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies conducted by the OECD), show that a large share of immigrants to the EU have very low language skills" (Brell et al., 2020).

The importance of oral and written language skills has increased, even for lower-skilled jobs, according to Pace & Bennetzen (2023), and immigrants—who frequently arrive in their new country with little proficiency in the language of the host nation—are likely to be disproportionately impacted by these requirements. Furthermore, prior research has concentrated on the pre-immigration capabilities of immigrants and their worldwide transferability. "Numerous studies have demonstrated that language skills and low competencies are the main barriers for migrants in accessing the Danish labor market," unions in Denmark stress (Bendixen, 2023). The Danish labor market requires professional and trained individuals, especially those who have been educated and have prior job experience in Denmark, according to Bendixen (2023).

According to the International Migration – Denmark Report to OECD, November 2023;

"(...)The proportion of immigrants, descendants, and persons of Danish origin in the 25-39 age range, who have completed a Danish education leading to vocational/professional qualifications. These educations include vocational training, short-cycle, medium-cycle, and long-cycle higher

education and bachelor's programs." Especially the educational attainment of immigrants and descendants of non-Western origin has increased since 2010."

The same report finds that:

"The proportion of men with non-Western origin, who have attained vocational/professional qualifications through education, has increased from 39 % in 2010 to 51 % in 2021. The proportion of women has increased by 17 percentage points, so 70 % of women of non-Western origin have completed a Danish education leading to vocational/professional qualifications in 2021. This proportion is almost on the same level as men of Danish origin, but still 11 percentage points lower than for women of Danish origin."

These results suggest that, in comparison to other immigrant groups, women from non-Western origins are the immigrants with the highest enrollment rates in Danish schools and the highest level of qualifications. On the other hand, research indicates that in 2021, "African immigrants had the highest unemployment rate among foreigners in Denmark, at 8.8%." With 7.5 percent, Asians had the second-highest jobless rate, followed by EU citizens. Oceanians, on the other hand, had the lowest percentage—just 2.2%—Dyvik, 2023. This implies that, despite their pertinent credentials, there may be "silent" elements that contribute to the difference in employment between women and non-Western immigrants.

Since integration became a policy area with its own ministry and law, apart from social affairs, as was previously said, 1999 is recognised by Denmark as the "reference year for integration in Denmark" (European Commission). As a result, the Integration Act—which describes Denmark's immigration and integration policies—was approved. Because of the "sensitivity of the issue and the divided political views," the Act has undergone multiple amendments over time (Andersen, p. 10, 2021). The Act also mandates that towns uphold the approved policy and outlines the rights and obligations of all refugees and immigrants in general.

"(...) Thus, according to the Danish Integration Act (1999), the aim of integration in Denmark is twofold: to contribute to the newly arrived migrant's possibility for participation on an equal footing with other citizens in the political, economic, work-related, social, religious and cultural life of society; and to induce economic self-reliance. But at the same time, the aim is also to provide the individual immigrant with an understanding of the fundamental values and norms of Danish society (...)(Integration Act: §1, quoted by Mouritsen & Jensen, p.8, 2014).

This goes to show that the Integration Act is the foundation for all the Immigration and Integration policies in Denmark. In this paper, the labor market participation of different groups of refugee and immigrant women from non-Western backgrounds will be considered. Some of the issues that will be addressed include; different types of discrimination refugee and immigrant women may be facing in Danish society that might be a barrier to their integration into the labor market, gender and other family roles assigned to refugee and immigrant women from non-Western origins that might contribute towards their lack of participation in the Danish labor market such as taking care of kids,

among other issues. This will be done to provide an understanding of the disparities in the participation of different immigrants in the Danish labor market.

Therefore, this paper will largely contribute to the already existing body of knowledge on the integration of refugee and immigrant women into the Danish labor market by using a different approach or method, which is looking into the KVINFO Mentor Networks integration approach, and the 'problem(s)' they represent or address. The method used will "instigate a process of continuous interrogation of conceptual premises" (Bacchi, p.62-63, 2010), which allows a different and unconventional approach to this topic.

3. Methodology

In this section, I discuss of research paradigm, approach, and methods that characterize the thesis' approach to the research topic. This includes the procedures which help to identify, choose, process, and analyze information and data.

The thesis investigates the barriers to the integration of 'non-Western' immigrant women face in their efforts to participate and integrate themselves into the Danish labor market according to the KVINFO Mentor Network. I will first start with the part of the methodology that refers to the rationale of the research approach and concerns about the selected theories, or principles behind it (Della Porta & Keating, 2008, p.28; Jackson, 2011, p.26). I then proceed to my methods, referring to the means of data collection, including "what are the tools and data collection strategies" (Della Porta & Keating, 2008, p.28). By describing the rationale of the research process, the methodology has an essential role in establishing a connection between the theories and methods. In this chapter, I will explain how the research has been conducted, as well as present certain methodological choices I have made by further explaining the 'WPR' approach by Carol Bacchi complemented with thematic analysis as my chosen approach for conducting my research. I will also provide limitations to my methodology by explaining different considerations I made throughout my research process.

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Structure of analysis

The "backbone" of this research design is qualitative research often characterized by iterative reasoning. This type of research aims at understanding the social reality of individuals or groups and is therefore exploratory, as it intends to explain how or why a certain phenomenon exists or operates in a certain context (McLeod, 2019). Empirical observations from reports by KVINFOs Mentor Network, from data from interviews conducted by the Network to its participants since 2003 (as secondary sources), and from data external to KVINFO Mentor Network identify the barriers to the integration of non-Western refugee and immigrant women in the Danish labor market as insufficient knowledge of Danish, a lack of networks and a lack of knowledge about the Danish labor market (kvinfo.dk, 2023). The qualitative interpretative research provides tools more relevant to analyzing social meanings attached to immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds,

perceiving theory as statements for understanding (Lamont, 2015, p. 43-44) hence its appropriateness in this thesis.

3.1.2 Why KVINFO Mentor Network?

KVINFO Mentor Network is the integration initiative that I will analyze to identify the "problems" it sets out to solve. KVINFO roots go back to 1964, when an employee at the Royal Library, author, engineer, and later honorary doctor at Roskilde University Nynne Koch, began to register women-relevant literature separately (kvinfo.dk, 2023). It became the cornerstone of the unique research overview that the KVINFOs library provided space for in many years. In 1987, KVINFO was established as a self-governing institution under the Ministry of Culture and with its board, and out of the library grew many activities with the dissemination of knowledge about gender and equality as a focal point (kvinfo.dk, 2023).

Elisabeth Møller Jensen was KVINFO director from 1990 until 2014. During this period, KVINFO was put on the map, when it comes to bringing gender equality into public conversation. At the same time, KVINFO began to collaborate with partners internationally and built a mentor network that supports women with ethnic minority backgrounds in entering the Danish labor market (kvinfo.dk, 2023). The mentor network was established in 2002 and has over the years spread to several parts of Denmark, just as the method itself is used in many other countries (kvinfo.dk, 2023). The idea was to create synergies between often highly educated KVINFO users and ethnic minority women, who require support to realize their potential in the job market and to be better integrated into Danish society (European Website on Integration, 2016). Many of these have limited knowledge of Danish and lack social networks and knowledge of rules and own rights.

The dual goal has therefore been to strengthen mentees' self-confidence, as well as strengthening the voluntary integration effort by mobilizing well established women in the civil society for mentor work. KVINFO Mentor Network received the "Alt for Damernes Womens" Award as well as the Integration Award in the Public Danish Job Market, in 2004 (European Website on Integration, 2016). In 2005, the initiative was one of two Danish nominees to the European Integration Award. It received an honorable mention by the OECD in 2007. The same year, the network grew to one of the world's largest of its kind (European Website on Integration, 2016). In 2009, the network conducted a pilot project, which paved the way for 15 minority women's participation in Danish and European politics, by pairing them with Danish women politicians, spokeswomen, and EU parliamentarians. Since its inception, more than 7000 women and men have participated in the network and more than 3200 mentor processes have been concluded (European Website on Integration, 2016). In addition, out of the mentoring courses evaluated in 2021, 44 percent of the women found employment, 25 percent entered education, and 79 percent experienced better Danish skills (kvinfo.dk, 2023).

KVINFO (the Danish Centre for Information on Women and Gender) is Denmark's knowledge center for gender and equality, and its vision is a free and equal society, meaning equal opportunities and rights to participate equally in society, regardless of gender. It creates an overview of research and knowledge in the field and brings this knowledge into play for decision-makers, media, companies,

organizations, and the public in Denmark and internationally by translating knowledge into change by developing tools and solutions to specific challenges related to gender (kvinfo.dk, 2023). KVINFO believes that "the importance of gender is also dependent on other parameters, such as age, ethnicity, age, nationality, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background" (kvinfo.dk, 2023). KVINFO works with this intersectional starting point and sees interactions between gender and, for example, racism and sexism. In addition, it emphasizes that gender is considered in work with, for example, democracy, human rights, poverty, and welfare.

KVINFO is an independent institution with its board and is financed with a financial law grant from the Ministry of Culture. KVINFO strives to give women from *ethnic minorities* who reside in social housing communities the chance to engage equally with other women in the workforce and society at large. With its distinctive and multi-award-winning mentoring technology, the KVINFO mentor network enhances employment initiatives in social housing redevelopment plans and job centers. By helping women define their competencies and get ready for the workforce, the mentorship program helps them enter the workforce (2021, p.5). KVINFO established a Mentor Network in Copenhagen in 2003, a program that pairs refugee and immigrant women with women who are firmly established members of the Danish workforce. Under this program, women immigrants are known as "mentees", and the established women are their mentors. According to them, "mentees are women with great potential, but they lack professional and social networks" (kvinfo.dk, 2023).

I have specifically chosen this initiative over others such as the Integration Programme (IGU) for a few reasons. First, I chose the KVINFO Mentor Network as I find their work intriguing and would therefore enable me to fulfill my interest in gaining knowledge about how mentorship contributes to the empowerment of marginalized groups and fosters social inclusion. My other reason for choosing this specific initiative is the gender perspective. As a student studying International Relations with my major being Global Gender Studies, KVINFO Mentor Network aligns well with my academic interests. The mentorship program specifically targets immigrant women in Denmark, allowing for an *in-depth analysis* of gender dynamics within the integration process.

In addition, I chose KVINFO Mentor Network due to the accessibility of resources as KVINFO also serves as the Danish Centre for Information on Gender, Equality, and Diversity, and because I feel like engaging with a well-established organization like KVINFO Mentor Network that was established in 2002 enhances the credibility and impact of my research findings. Finally, researching the KVINFO Mentor Network allows me to examine real-world integration practices and their effectiveness, which also aligns with my career goals in this field, and my findings may have practical implications for policymakers, NGOs, and other stakeholders involved in integration efforts, both in Denmark and beyond.

3.1.3 Why Denmark?

I chose Denmark as my case study country because I am intrigued by its progressive policies in areas such as gender equality, which is central to my research. According to Dyvik, the five Nordic countries Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden are often regarded to be some of the most

gender-equal countries worldwide, with their welfare and gender regimes and legal and political frameworks encouraging gender equality and women's rights (2024). Moreover, the United Nations ranked Denmark as the most gender equal country in the world, with Norway and Sweden in second (Dyvik, 2024).

In addition, I wanted to also explore how Denmark, which traditionally has not regarded itself as a country of immigration due to its relatively homogeneous population with a strong sense of national identity, and the fact that, until recently, immigration flows were moderate, navigates new developments whereby due to reasons such as conflicts and hard economic times, has seen immigrants from these areas of conflicts migrate to Denmark (Hedetoft, 2006). They are especially from the Middle East and North Africa, Pakistan, and Turkey regions (MENAPT), and have unique and distinctive cultural and ethnic differences such as race, religion, class, and language. This is "new" to Denmark as previously, most immigrants in Denmark came from other Nordic or Western countries from the West, whose cultures and ethnic backgrounds were not so different between and among each other, and the country experienced more emigration than immigration (Hedetoft, 2006). Choosing Denmark as the focus of my study also enables in-depth research on integration issues specifically faced by immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds in Denmark.

The thesis's search for meaning is centered around understanding and analyzing non-Western refugees' and immigrant women's challenges with integration into the Danish labor market by applying relevant theory. This delimitation facilitates access to relevant data sources including governmental statistics like Statistics Denmark, reports such as the KVINFOs report on barriers for women with immigrant and refugee backgrounds in the Danish labor market, the International Migration – Denmark Report to OECD, and qualitative research studies, which are essential for conducting empirical research. This enhances the feasibility of the research project and ensures the availability of different opinions from different sources such as KVINFOs Mentor Network mentors and mentees, and from other researchers who might have differing opinions on this issue of framing "unemployment". In addition, being an immigrant woman in Denmark, I hope to acquire a better understanding of challenges refugee and immigrant women from non-Western backgrounds encounter in their attempts to integrate into the Danish society, particularly into the labour market.

3.1.4 The WPR Approach and Thematic Analysis

To conduct my analysis on the KVINFOs Mentor Network, I will primarily be using Carol Bacchi's method 'What's the problem represented to be' (Bacchi, 2009, p. 1). According to Bacchi, "what one proposes to do about something reveals what one thinks is problematic (needs to change)" (Bletsas & Beasley, 2013, p.21). Following this thinking, policies, and policy proposals contain implicit representations of what is the 'problem' ('problem representations'). For example, "if training courses are offered to women as part of a policy to increase their representation in better-paid occupations or positions of influence, the 'problem' is represented to be women's *lack* of training" (Bletsas & Beasley, 2013, p.21). The goal of WPR is to intervene to challenge problem representations that have these deleterious effects, and to suggest that issues could be thought about in ways that might avoid

at least some of these effects. (Bacchi, 2009, p. 44). For Bacchi (2009, p.16), WPR 'mounts a challenge to the current dominant intellectual paradigm that focuses on solving "problems"' and the 'what works' agenda.

Perspectives from mentees will be considered, through data collected from previously conducted interviews on mentees over time and have been published online through KVINFOs Mentor Network reports such as 'The Mentor Relationship: An Entrance to The Danish Labour Market' by KVINFOs Mentor Network, KVINFOs YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/@KVINFO), and on KVINFOs mentees section of its website (https://kvinfo.dk/moed-fire-mentees/), since the initiative's inception in 2003. Similarly, perspectives from their mentors will also be considered. These statements will be included in the 'appendix' chapter of this paper to reveal their opinions on how the mentor-mentee relationship works. The mentees express their experiences in Denmark before and after participating in the Mentor Network, mainly highlighting their improvement in Danish language skills, and their gaining of confidence and motivation to seek jobs and enroll in education. It is established that the desire to get into work is often closely linked to other issues, such as the desire to break with social isolation, create a network, improve Danish, or strengthen self-confidence. The issues divert and interfere with each other and can therefore rarely be solved and overcome individually and in isolation (KVINFO, 2008, p.58).

The findings indicate that the Mentor Network is quite successful in breaking the barriers it states as those that prevent immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds from integrating into the Danish labor market. A statement from KVINFO official website states that "out of the mentoring courses evaluated in 2021, 44 percent of the women found employment, 25 percent entered education, and 79 percent experienced better Danish skills" (kvinfo.dk, 2023).

I will use 'WPR' to analyze KVINFOs Mentor Network from a critical point of view and uncover the "problems" implied in these initiatives (Bletsas & Beasley, p.22, 2013). This will be done by focusing on the underlying assumptions behind the initiatives. The 'WPR' approach has six interrelated questions namely:

1. What's the 'problem' (for example, of 'problem gamblers', 'drug use/abuse', 'gender inequality', 'domestic violence', 'global warming', 'sexual harassment', etc.) represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?

2. What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the 'problem'?

3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?

4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the 'silences'? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?

5. What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?

6. How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated, and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted, and replaced?

(Bletsas & Beasley, p.21, 2013)

The first question (Q1) focuses on the clarification of the "problem". The 'WPR' method assumes that all initiatives or policies (in my case, KVINFO Mentor Network) are "problematizing activities" and therefore have "problem" representations that are implicit (Bacchi, 2009, p. 2-3). How one feels about a specific "problem" will determine how one decides to handle the "problem". So 'WPR' suggests working backward from the specific policies or proposals to see what is represented in the "problems" that are in the policies and proposals (Bacchi, 2009, p. 3).

The second question (Q2) deals with the presumptions or assumptions that implicitly reside within the "problem" representation that is identified (Bacchi, 2009, p. 5-10). This means looking at the background knowledge that may be taken for granted, which for example can be cultural values, world view, 'common sense', binaries, key concepts, and categories that involve people and the impact on their behavior, self-perception, and perception in general (Bacchi, 2009, p. 4-9).

The third question (Q3) has two interconnected purposes. The first purpose reflects on specific developments and decisions (non – discursive practices) that add to the creation of the identified "problem" representations (Bacchi, 2009, p. 10). The second purpose is to identify competing "problem" representations that both exist over time and space and therefore could have developed differently. So, the genealogy is important to follow here instead of making assumptions (Bacchi, 2009, p. 10). So, it is important here to trace the history and look at the conditions and power relations as "problem" representations are unforeseen and as mentioned earlier can develop and/or change over time and space (Bacchi, 2009, p. 10-12).

The fourth question (Q4) considers the limits within the underlying "problem" representations. Here the elements that are not problematized are looked at, along with the things that are not mentioned (Bacchi, 2009, p. 12-14). The main issue here is not the fact that there is another way of thinking about the "problem", but that specific policies are constrained because of the way they represent a "problem". So, the aim is to discuss issues and perspectives that are silenced in the acknowledged "problem" representations. This means investigating whether there are competing representations, contradictions, and tensions. Such as circumstances/ situations that lead to dominance and/or silencing, cross-cultural comparison, and the focus on binaries (Bacchi, 2009, p. 12-14).

The fifth question (Q5) focuses on the effects that come with a specific "problem" representation. This is due to the presumption that some "problem" representations can create issues for people who are part of a specific group more than members belonging to another group (Bacchi, 2009, p. 15). However, it does not state that the difficulties create a standard and a predictable pattern. Therefore, the problematizations need to be looked at and one's own presumptions, to see how and where the issues harm some while benefitting others, and what there can be done about this (Bacchi, 2009, p. 15). Three types of effects that overlap, and interconnect need to be identified. This is to potentially

compare and hold them up against each other to see which has a greater effect. They are discursive effects that have to do with dominant representations that make it hard to think differently (Bacchi, 2009, p. 15-16). Subjectification effects are where policies create social relations and subject positions (Bacchi, 2009, p. 16-18). They divide practices, stigmatize a specific group to encourage a certain behaviour or make a specific group responsible for a specific problem, and lived effects which include material impact (Bacchi, 2009, p. 16-18).

The sixth and final question (Q6) can be seen as an extension to Q3, which highlights processes and practices that permit specific "problem" representations to dominate (Bacchi, 2009, p. 19). Here it is important to investigate which "problem" representations reach the intended audience and thereby gain legitimacy (Bacchi, 2009, p. 19). The emphasis here is on which groups or classes have access to the different, complex, and sometimes contradictory discourses and what role media plays in informing these discourses to the audience (Bacchi, 2009, p. 19). Also, how media potentially supports and maintains these "problem" representations. The resistance is also important to investigate as discourses can be used as resources to re-problematize different "problem" representations (Bacchi, 2009, p.19).

In addition, Carol Bacchi added a 7th Step to what was previously a 6-step WPR procedure; 'Apply this list of questions to your problem representations'. This step suggests that self-problematization, which means putting one's own proposals under scrutiny by applying the initial six questions in WPR to them (Bacchi, n.d). So, one needs to ask – "If this is my proposal, what is the "problem" represented to be"? And so on. This task, according to Bacchi, is important because there is a need to see to what extent a researcher may be operating with assumed, unquestioned knowledge or within specific governmental rationalities that may, in the researchers' judgments, have deleterious consequences (Bacchi n.d).

According to Bacchi, it is not necessary to address explicitly each of the questions (n.d). The point of the analysis will determine which questions are foregrounded. At the same time, it is useful to consider one's research project through the lens of each question, as this practice might produce unanticipated insights (2009, p.101). For this reason, since my thesis is about the barriers to the integration of immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds, I begin with Question 1 to identify these barriers according to the KVINFOs Mentor Network, which can also be termed as "problems". Next will be Question 2 to identify background knowledge that may be taken for granted, the categories that involve them, and the impact on their behavior, self-perception, and perception in general.

The second part of my analysis will involve Questions 4 and 6. In this section, I will criticize the approach by the KVINFO Mentor Network by identifying the 'silences' around these problem representations which are areas that are left unaddressed by the Network. In Question 4, these 'silences' will be identified as barriers to the integration of refugee and immigrant women from non-Western backgrounds into the Danish labor market, which will be tackled as themes identified through the Thematic Analysis of external data to KVINFO Mentor Network. Question 6 will tackle

how or where this representation of the "problem" has been produced, disseminated, and defended and how it has been (or it could be) questioned, disrupted, and replaced.

These questions are most relevant to my research and in addition, instead of treating them as explicit questions that might cause repetition as the questions are interconnected, I will treat the analysis as an integrated process whose goal is to provoke a way of thinking differently about the barriers to the integration of non-Western immigrant and refugee women into the Danish labor market (Bacchi, 2023). I finalize with Step 7 by Carol Bacchi, which is about self-problematization. According to Bacchi (2023), this approach encourages a deep reflection on one's role as a researcher and the potential biases one might bring to the study.

Thematic Analysis

To complement the 'WPR' approach, another approach to be used is Thematic analysis. This method allows a close examination of qualitative data to identify common themes – topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly (Caulfield, 2023). The aim of this approach is to identify themes that provide insight into a particular group or culture (ATLAS.ti, 2024), and has been chosen because the focus of my study is on individuals' experiences, views, and/or perceptions. Thematic Analysis will particularly be used in the critique section of my analysis which analyses my second research question: 'How can this problem of unemployment be approached differently'? This will specifically be through Question 4 of my analysis previously highlighted as 'What is left unproblematic in this representation of unemployment in the KVINFO Mentor Network initiative from 2003? Where are the 'silences'? Can the problem of unemployment be conceptualized differently?' Thematic Analysis is necessary as I will use it to identify barriers to the integration of refugee and immigrant non-Western women into the Danish labor market from data external to the KVINFO Mentor Network.

According to Braun & Clarke (2013, p.3), the thematic analysis allows a step-by-step process which is necessary in this research and particularly in organizing the different themes and patterns that will be addressed in Question 4 of my analysis such as education, employment, knowledge of Danish language among others that provide understanding on the barriers to non-Western immigrant and refugee women integration into the labor market. The qualitative data will be analyzed inductively to generate themes using a well-established step-by-step approach which will involve six steps namely:

1. Familiarization with data,

2. Coding,

3. Searching for themes,

4. Reviewing themes,

5. Defining and naming themes, and

6. Writing up (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.3-4).

According to Caulfield, following this process can also help one avoid confirmation bias when formulating the analysis (2023).

In addition, the method is suitable for my analysis as it allows a lot of flexibility in interpreting the data and allows an easier approach to large data sets by sorting them into broad themes (Caulfield, 2023). In this paper, secondary data from articles, documents, and reports will be the source of data.

Below is my theme generation using the six-step approach as described above:

1. Familiarization with data

This step involves one immersing oneself in and becoming intimately familiar with the data by reading and re-reading the data and noting any initial analytic observations (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.3). In this thesis, some sources of data to be used, which are external to information from the KVINFO Mentor Network, include Cheralyn Mealor's report titled 'Barriers for women with immigrant and refugee background in Danish labor market'. This report has been chosen as it is inspired by the work that KVINFO's mentoring network does in supporting women with minority backgrounds in their efforts to gain a foothold in the Danish labour market (Mealor, 2020). Other sources of data that will be used in the critique include 'Integration among non-Western immigrants' by Jens Bonke, Marie Louise Schultz-Nielsen, and the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit which analyzes the everyday life, work, and consumption patterns of non-Western immigrants, which different ways have an impact on their integration into Danish society, specifically in terms of learning Danish language. Another source of data to be used is Dahl's and Jakobsen's article published by VIVE titled 'Gender, ethnicity, and barriers to integration', among others.

2. Coding

This involves generating short labels for important features of the data of relevance to the (broad) research question guiding the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.3). It is a way of organizing data into meaningful groups. In this paper, the coding process will take an inductive approach, whereby new themes or patterns will emerge directly from the data. Given the topics' focus on barriers to the integration of immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds into the Danish labor market, codes may include factors such as language barriers, cultural differences, discrimination, access to education and training, and childcare responsibilities, among others. Codes will be applied systematically across the entire dataset, ensuring consistency and transparency in the analysis. This will involve creating a coding framework or codebook to organize and categorize the codes. (The codebook will be included in the appendix). Throughout the coding process, there will be constant comparison, comparing new data to previously coded segments to refine and expand the coding scheme as needed.

3. Searching for themes

After generating initial codes, this next step will involve searching for overarching themes or patterns within the data. According to Braun and Clarke, searching for themes is a bit like coding my codes to identify similarities in the data (2013). Themes represent higher-order constructs that capture central ideas or concepts. In this context, themes may emerge related to the challenges and barriers encountered by non-Western immigrant women in their efforts to integrate into the Danish labor market.

4. Reviewing themes

This step involves checking that the themes 'work' about both the coded extracts and the full dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.3-4). Here, I reflect on whether the themes tell a convincing and compelling story about the data and start to define the nature of each theme and the relationship between the themes. There might be a necessity to collapse two themes together to split a theme into two or more themes, or to discard the candidate themes altogether and begin again the process of theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.3). This is done to ensure the themes are useful and accurate representations of the data. In addition, this step is important as I will check if anything was missed and adjust to make the themes work better (Caulfield, 2023). Therefore, themes will be reviewed to ensure they accurately reflect the diverse perspectives on the barriers to the integration of non-Western immigrant women into the Danish labor market.

5. Defining and naming themes

After having a final list of themes, each of them will now be named and defined. Defining themes involves formulating exactly what I mean by each theme and figuring out how it helps me understand the data. Naming themes involves coming up with a brief and easily understandable name for each theme (Caulfield, 2023). This is done to reflect their content and relevance to the research question. Here, each theme will sum up a distinct aspect of the barriers to integration faced by non-Western immigrant women in the Danish labor market. Braun & Clarke suggest that "the researcher should ask what story a theme tells and how that theme fits into the overall story about the data" (2013, p.4). Regarding my research question, the themes identified include Education and Employment, Danish language skills, Industry distribution, Discrimination, Social Control, and Healthcare.

6. Writing Up

This is an integral element of the analytic process in Thematic Analysis (and most qualitative research). According to Braun & Clarke, "Writing-up involves weaving together the analytic narrative and (vivid) data extracts to tell the reader a coherent and persuasive story about the data and contextualizing it concerning existing literature" (p.4).

3.2 Choice of theory

This thesis will incorporate a diverse range of theoretical concepts and frameworks to address the problem formulation. Rather than relying on a single theoretical paradigm, the selected theories will be utilized to respond to the various research questions posed. Essentially, the thesis will primarily employ the WPR approach as its methodological foundation, with the theories serving to elucidate aspects of the different research questions.

The different theoretical concepts to be applied include concepts and theories such as Assimilation Theory, Feminist Theory, Dual Labor Market Theory, and the concept of street-level bureaucracy. These different approaches to the understanding integration of refugee and immigrant women from non-Western backgrounds into the Danish labor market will be applied to analyze how KVINFO

Mentor Network approaches the issue of unemployment. First, the Assimilation Theory will be applied to understand whether Danish is open to immigrants and foreigners in terms of integrating them into its Society. It will emphasize how refugee and immigrant women from non-Western backgrounds are required to make the effort to ensure their participation in the labor market as it is seen as the principal channel of integration (Governance of migrant integration in Denmark, 2024).

The second theory to be applied will be Feminist Theory, which according to Arinder (2020), will enable an understanding of the complexities and changes in the gendered division of labour. Dual Labour Market Theory will be applied in the analysis to show how the labor market is segregated into two sectors; the primary sector which according to Michael Piore and Peter Doeringer consists of well-educated, blue-collar men. Primary sector white- and blue-collar careers include medical professionals, lawyers, teachers, computer programmers, engineers, plumbers, electricians, and carpenters while secondary (Dual Labour Market, 2024). In contrast, the secondary sector was predominantly women, migrant workers, and other underrepresented people—often with less education. Emphasis will be placed on how immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds are often overrepresented in the secondary sector, despite their educational background.

The theory of Human Capital Theory first put forth by Adam Smith and developed by Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz in the 1950s and early 1960s will also be applied to show how investing in the education, skills, and professional networks of immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds enhances their productivity and employability. Finally, the concept of Street Level Bureaucracy by Michael Lipsky will be used to provide an understanding of how street level bureaucrats such as mentors from KVINFOs Mentor Network are required to "play by the rules" of their organization. These are described as Mentoring their mentees to break the barriers they face when participating in the Danish labor market as strictly described by the organization. This often prevents them from being flexible to accommodate their mentees' specific needs. In addition, this concept will be used to show how street-level agencies often go through challenges in terms of a lack of resources to sponsor their activities, therefore straining their agency (Lipsky, 2010, p.29).

3.4 Choice of empirical data

This thesis will exclusively rely on qualitative data which is understood as descriptive data relating to observed phenomena which are mostly found in the form of text (McLeod, 2019). As this thesis sets out to do an in-depth analysis of the KVINFO Mentor Network from 2003, its reports will be the main source on which the analysis will be based, as research questions one and two will provide an understanding of the problem representation of unemployment and the underlying assumptions of this within the Network's 'mentoring' approach. As for questions 4 and 6 which will criticize the KVINFO Mentor Network approach, data external to the Networks' such as Cheralyn Mealor's report titled 'Barriers for women with immigrant and refugee background in Danish labour market' will be used. The document draws a picture of several patterns that apply concerning non-Western female immigrants and refugees' participation in the Danish labor market which are both individual and structural, are more numerous and significantly greater than for other population groups (Mealor, 2020, p.95).

Other sources of data external to KVINFO that will be used in the critique include 'Integration among non-Western immigrants' by Jens Bonke, Marie Louise Schultz-Nielsen, and the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit which analyzes the everyday life, work, and consumption patterns of non-Western immigrants, which in different ways have an impact on their integration into Danish society, specifically in terms of learning Danish language. Another source of data to be used is Dahl's and Jakobsen's article published by VIVE titled 'Gender, ethnicity, and barriers to integration' which among other issues, talks about discrimination in the Danish labor market.

Concerning the time for the data, the aim is to analyse more current data from the period of 2019 to 2021, as this thesis aims at analysing KVINFOs Mentor Network from 2003 to investigate how their representation of unemployment and their mentoring approach works. However, as the Network has been in place since 2003, the scope of the research will inevitably include data produced before 2019. In addition, the KVINFO Mentor Network has used the same approach since its inception in 2003; mentoring immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds to break the barriers to their integration into the Danish labor market which are: insufficient knowledge of Danish, a lack of networks and a lack of knowledge about the Danish labor market (kvinfo.dk, 2023). This approach has been used since 2003 and spans over a larger time frame thus the data collection will include data from the years between 2003 and 2021 which is the final year which has its success rates numbers published by KVINFO Mentor Network.

3.5 Limitations, validity, and generalizability

In the elaboration of this thesis, certain limitations and delimitations have been set from the start. These are important to highlight as the choices made for the problem formulation and the research strategy have been shaped, to a certain degree, by these limitations. In terms of the data collected, it has been limited to that of secondary sources. Therefore, the research on how the representation of unemployment by KVINFO Mentor Network has, to some degree, relied on the results of various research articles, in which the research topic differs slightly from the problem formulation that this thesis sets out to answer. Furthermore, the research articles chosen as relevant to my problem have not all provided a view of the current situation, as several of the articles rely on observations gathered more than five years back. In addition, another limitation is the fact that secondary data from interviews conducted years back indicate that the mentees often answer very favorably according to what the conductor expects of them to answer, and not according to how they feel (International Alert, 2018, p. 12-13). Therefore, the sources may contain errors, omissions, biases, interpretations, or outdated information that can affect the quality and validity of the research through for example misquoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing a primary source in a way that changes its meaning or context (2023). For this reason, the secondary data from these interviews will be excluded from my analysis.

Some might perceive that a simple thematic analysis is disadvantaged as it does not allow a researcher to make claims about language use (Braun & Clarke, 2013). While thematic analysis is flexible, this flexibility can lead to inconsistency and a lack of coherence when developing themes derived from

the research data (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Consistency and cohesion can be promoted by applying and making explicit an epistemological position that can coherently underpin the study's empirical claims (Holloway & Todres, 2003). In this research, my position on the KVINFO Mentor Network approach works only in achieving what it set out to achieve. However, I believe there are 'silences' around the Network's framing of unemployment such as discrimination, mental and other health issues, and negative social control, among other deeper challenges that prevent refugee and immigrant women from non-Western backgrounds from participating fully as members of the Danish society and specifically into the Danish labor market.

In addition, highly relevant to my goal of investigation would be a research design of collecting empirical data through interviews or surveys with stakeholders and refugees' or immigrants' experiences in their seeking to participate in the Danish labor market. This would have increased the validity which concerns "appropriateness" of the tools, processes, and data (Leung, 2015, p. 325)." The research design would have been more "appropriate" for my desired outcome and answering the research question 'How can this problem of unemployment be approached differently?' as it would have provided in-depth, direct, and valid answers to what they believe the barriers are. However, this method has been chosen due to time and access constraints, as the drafting of questionnaires, sending them out, and receiving feedback would have been a lengthy process. However, I am of the conviction that the sources of data chosen, are almost as valid data for the desired outcome and goal of investigation. They are substantial, detailed, and official statements on the barriers to the integration of non-Western immigrant and refugee women into the Danish labor market.

This study, in terms of analytical generalizability which concerns the degree to which my conclusions can be generalized to another study under similar theoretical, methodological conditions as well as the time, place, and social context (Leung, 2015, p. 326). It is my conviction that the conclusions of this study can be found if conducted under a similar research design. For instance, similar conclusions could be found by analyzing the different perspectives on the barriers to the integration of non-Western refugee and immigrant women in another Western country. Finally, the collection of data has been limited by a language barrier, since some articles were in Danish. However, I was able to overcome this by using software that converts documents from Danish to English.

Using Carol Bacchi's WPR (What's the Problem Represented to Be?) approach to analyze the barriers faced by non-Western refugee and immigrant women integrating into the Danish labor market through the KVINFO Mentor Network presents several limitations. For instance, the WPR approach heavily depends on the researcher's interpretation of policy texts and representations. According to Bacchi's 7th step, this subjectivity can introduce biases based on the researcher's perspectives, experiences, and cultural background, potentially impacting the objectivity of the analysis (Bacchi, 2023). Also, WPR focuses mainly on discourse and how problems are represented in initiatives, which might lead to overlooking material conditions and structural factors that are also crucial in the integration process (Bletsas & Beasley, 2012). For instance, economic conditions, institutional practices, and labor market dynamics might not be fully addressed.

In addition, while WPR is effective in deconstructing and questioning problem representations, it may provide limited practical recommendations for policy improvement or actionable steps for organizations like KVINFO to enhance their initiatives (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). Also, the critical nature of the approach might lead to an overemphasis on identifying flaws and assumptions in problem representations without adequately acknowledging the positive aspects or successful outcomes of the initiatives under analysis (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010). Findings from a WPR analysis are also often context-specific and may not be easily generalizable to other contexts or populations, limiting the broader applicability of the research outcomes (Bacchi, 2023). As a non-Western immigrant woman, I might have inherent biases that could influence the interpretation of data and the representation of problems, possibly skewing the analysis toward personal experiences and perspectives (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010).

Acknowledging these limitations is crucial, and therefore, as a researcher, I mitigated them by triangulating WPR findings with other methodologies such as Thematic Analysis, seeking peer reviews whereby I had a fellow student go through my paper, and importantly maintaining reflexivity throughout the research process, which will be addressed in the 7th WPR step of "self-problematization" in the analysis.

Using Thematic Analysis (TA) as a complementary method to the WPR (What's the Problem Represented to Be?) approach may present several limitations as well. For example, both Thematic Analysis and WPR rely heavily on the researcher's interpretation, which can introduce subjective biases. This may affect the consistency and reliability of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher's perspectives and preconceptions can influence the identification and interpretation of themes, potentially overlooking or misrepresenting certain aspects of the data.

In addition, Thematic Analysis may not fully capture the deeper contextual and structural factors influencing integration barriers, such as economic conditions, institutional practices, and social dynamics (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This can limit the understanding of how broader systemic issues contribute to the barriers faced by immigrant and refugee women. Also, Thematic Analysis tends to focus on identifying common themes across the data, which might overshadow unique or minority perspectives that are equally important in understanding integration barriers (Nowell et al., 2017). This could result in an incomplete picture of the diverse experiences of non-Western immigrant women.

Thematic analysis may also struggle to capture nuanced meanings and subtle differences in how barriers are experienced and understood by different individuals (Clarke & Braun, 2014). This can limit the depth of insights into specific challenges faced by various subgroups within the broader population of non-Western immigrant women. Once identified, themes in Thematic Analysis can become static categories that may not fully account for the dynamic and evolving nature of the barriers and experiences over time (Terry et al., 2017). This can be a limitation when analyzing ongoing integration processes and changing policy landscapes.

While Thematic Analysis can complement WPR by providing detailed insights into how barriers are perceived and experienced, integrating the two approaches can also be challenging due to their differing epistemological foundations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). WPR's focus on problem representation and discourse analysis may not always align seamlessly with the thematic patterns identified through Thematic Analysis.

To mitigate the above limitations, I will specifically use Thematic Analysis to identify the 'silences' around my topic which is the 'Barriers to the integration of refugee and immigrant women from non-Western backgrounds into the Danish labor market' in Question 4 of the analysis. In addition, the KVINFO Mentor Network approach of networking and definition of these barriers has remained constant since 2003, this mitigates the issue of the themes being static categories that may not fully account for the dynamic and evolving nature of the barriers and experiences over time. Also, using this method with WPR helps triangulate findings, and engaging with theories such as feminist theory provides a conceptual lens for interpreting the data (Charmaz, 2014).

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Assimilation Theory

Assimilation theory provides a useful lens for understanding the integration challenges faced by immigrants and refugees from ethnic minority backgrounds in Denmark. This theory, which focuses on the process by which individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds come to adopt the norms, values, and behaviors of the dominant society, highlights the inherent difficulties in achieving full integration in a homogeneous society like Denmark (Berry, 2005).

Overall, assimilation theory helps to elucidate how Denmark integrates immigrants into its labor market by emphasizing language acquisition, education, skills development, employment policies, social support networks, and principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination. Classic assimilation suggests that "the first step, *acculturation*, or behavioral assimilation, entails adapting norms such as language, workplace etiquette, respect for the rule of law, and individual liberties" (Berry, 2005). Acculturation refers to *the acquisition and adaptation to the cultural values, attitudes, and practices of the majority* culture (Berry, 2005). In Denmark, the emphasis has been on both trying to acculturate immigrants as speedily as possible through public control and regulation and on extending egalitarian universalism to cover "old" citizens as well as newcomers" (Berry, 2005).

In Denmark, most of the non-native population comes from non-Western countries. Of the total number of immigrants plus descendants of immigrants, 64 % originate from non-Western countries. The percentage of migrants without descendants is 11 % (Statistics Denmark, 2021. The rate of increase in non-Western incoming population is higher than that from Western countries and becomes a cause of great state concern for different governments because of the challenge it poses to Danish cultural homogeneity, and because it could be seen as a threat to the Danish welfare system. The low education level makes their integration difficult in comparison to the preceding immigrant population from Western countries. From 1980s, different governments tried to implement policies to attract skilled labor and to activate Labour - integration - migration in general, but the most changes were

seen with the election of the liberal-conservative government in 2001, a milestone in migration and immigrant integration.

Denmark is often characterized as a homogeneous society with a strong sense of national identity and cultural cohesion. This homogeneity manifests in a shared language, common cultural practices, and widely held societal values (Hedetoft, 2006). For immigrants and refugees from ethnic minority backgrounds, assimilating into such a society requires significant adjustments, including learning the Danish language, understanding, and adopting Danish cultural norms, and fitting into social and professional networks that are often tightly knit (Hedetoft, 2006). Both overt and subtle forms of discrimination persist in the Danish labor market. Employers might harbor biases against ethnic minorities, leading to fewer job opportunities and career advancements for these groups (Mealor, 2020, p.90). Studies have shown that individuals with non-Danish names or appearances face higher rates of rejection when applying for jobs.

Regarding acculturation, the wearing of face-masking garments in public, widely referred to as the 'burqa ban', came into effect in Denmark on August 1st, 2018, imposing a fine of 1,000 kroner (134 euros) for the first offenses on individuals wearing garments including the burqa, which covers a person's entire face, or the niqab, which only shows the eyes" (The Local Denmark, 2019). According to the European Website on Integration, "Hijabs are often seen in Danish society as a symbol of 'failed' integration, of the oppression of women and girls" (Bendixen, 2022). Research has also found that wearing the hijab can be a barrier to employment for women in Denmark, indicating a certain amount of suspicion or prejudice against the hijab on the part of employers" (Bendixen, 2022). Some politicians in Denmark also emphasize this opinion, while also suggesting that practicing Muslim women who wear headscarves are still not 'good enough' in the society regardless of their commitment to integrating into Danish society by learning the language and committing to other Danish values. For example, Martin Henriksen formerly of the Danish People's Party made comments aimed at the idea of a multicultural Denmark:

"We hope to achieve that some of the people who are here and have been living here for many generations, maybe they will start to turn away from the culture of their parents and grandparents," he said. He said he would not consider any practicing Muslim woman who chose to wear a headscarf Danish, regardless of her home, language, or commitment to Danish values. "First you should take off your headscarf," (Graham-Harrison & Rasmussen, 2018).

In addition, after the government proposed the ban to the parliament in February, former Justice Minister, the late Søren Pape Poulsen, said in a statement that the face veil is "incompatible with the values in Danish society and disrespectful to the community." (Bahgat, 2018)

However, refugee and immigrant women especially those from MENAPT countries are required to cover themselves with these garments as per their religion of Islam. Muslim women from immigrant and refugee backgrounds in Denmark have expressed that the ban exacerbates their feelings of alienation and marginalization within Danish society. They argue that such bans infringe upon their religious freedom and identity, making it harder for them to integrate and feel accepted in the broader

community. "The headscarf is a part of my identity and my faith. Being told that I cannot wear it makes me feel like I have to choose between my religion and being accepted in Danish society. It's an impossible choice and makes me feel like I will never truly belong here" (Klausen, 2009). According to Klausen (2009), such bans not only violate personal freedoms but also signal to Muslim women that their cultural and religious practices are not welcome, thereby deepening their sense of exclusion and alienation.

4.2 Feminist Theory

The purpose of using a feminist lens is to enable the discovery of how people interact within systems and possibly offer solutions to confront and eradicate oppressive systems and structures. Feminist theory considers the lived experience of any person/people, not just women, with an emphasis on oppression. While there may not be a consensus on where feminist theory fits as a theory or paradigm, disruption of oppression is a core tenant of feminist work (Arinder, 2020). The core concepts in feminist theory are sex, gender, race, discrimination, equality, difference, and choice. There are systems and structures in place that work against individuals based on these qualities and against equality and equity. Research in critical paradigms requires the belief that, through the exploration of these existing conditions in the current social order, truths can be revealed. More importantly, however, this exploration can simultaneously build awareness of oppressive systems and create spaces for diverse voices to speak for themselves (Egbert & Sanden, 2019).

In the analysis, feminism will be reflected upon with the constructs of intersectionality, dimensions of social life, social inequality, and social transformation. Through feminist research, lasting contributions have been made to understanding the complexities and changes in the gendered division of labor (Arinder, 2020). Men and women should be politically, economically, and socially equal and this theory does not subscribe to differences or similarities between men, nor does it refer to excluding men or only furthering women's causes (Arinder, 2020). The theory will be used to support understanding by acknowledging the need to reveal power relationships and oppression, to transform these.

According to Nira-Yuval Davis, although there have been feminist political projects focusing on all major political projects of belonging – citizenship, nationalism, religion, and cosmopolitanism (Yuval-Davis, 2011) she considers 'ethics of care' to be more specifically a feminist political project of belonging. It relates more to the ways people should relate and belong to each other rather than to what should be the boundaries of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Nevertheless, she states that the question of boundaries cannot be avoided once "we start questioning who cares for whom and what are the emotional and the power relations which are involved in this interaction" ((Yuval-Davis, 2011)

Therefore, in this paper, feminist theory and intersectionality will be used in the analysis to explain how non-Western female immigrants face intersecting oppressions based on gender, ethnicity, immigration status, and possibly other factors such as religion or socioeconomic status. The term 'intersectionality' also refers more broadly to an intellectual framework for understanding how

various aspects of individual identity—including race, gender, social class, and sexuality—interact to create unique experiences of privilege or oppression (Samie, 2023). These intersecting identities compound the challenges they face in accessing employment opportunities, as they navigate both gender-based discrimination and systemic barriers associated with their immigrant status (Samie, 2023). Other factors such as structural barriers, and lack of support structures will be considered in the analysis to explain this disparity in unemployment.

Female migratory movements are characterized by two main features, namely the invisibility and general lack of protection experienced in host countries and their systems (Ortega-Gaspar, & Juarez-Peña (2022). These barriers reflect gender differences that exert an influence on the labor and social process of integration. There is a consensus among researchers about the greater difficulty skilled immigrant women must access the labour market compared to their male counterparts (Ortega-Gaspar, & Juarez-Peña (2022). This is attributed to institutionalized discriminatory gender and ethnic processes that result in a series of barriers for women accessing the labor market.

According to (Ortega-Gaspar, & Juarez-Peña (2022), among the most common difficulties are: the difficulty in transferring degree titles, the privilege of predominantly male immigration camps and the corresponding de-feminization, the lack of local work experience and the devaluation of experience acquired abroad, the lack of social networks for women, the corresponding domestic responsibilities, and gender, race/ethnicity discrimination and immigrant status, in other works the pressure of the intersectionality (Ortega-Gaspar & Juarez-Peña, 2022). These issues will all be considered as 'silences' or what is left 'unproblematic' in the analysis chapter.

4.3 Dual Labour Market Theory

To use the term terminology of dual market theory, it is noted that the primary and secondary segments are differentiated mainly by stability characteristics. "Primary jobs require and develop stable working habits; skills are often acquired on the job, wages are relatively high, and job ladders exist. Secondary jobs do not require and often discourage stable working habits; wages are low, turnover is high, and job ladders are few (Reich et al., 1973, p.359-360). The secondary sector was predominantly women, migrant workers, and other underrepresented people—often with less education (Piore & Doeringer, 1971).

In the early 1970s, American economists Michael Piore and Peter Doeringer observed that the primary sector mostly consisted of well-educated, blue-collar men. Primary sector white- and blue-collar careers include medical professionals, lawyers, teachers, computer programmers, engineers, plumbers, electricians, and carpenters while secondary (Dual Labour Market, 2024). Piore and Doeringer define the jobs in the primary sector as "good jobs" characterized by high wages, job security, substantial responsibility, and ladders where internal promotion is possible (1971).

As observed by Piore and Doeringer, "Secondary workers are often barred from entering the primary sector because of institutional restraints, such as discrimination or a lack of primary job openings. Because of this divide, most secondary sector workers are underemployed which include fast-food workers, retail workers, landscapers, yard workers, dishwashers, cleaners, waiters, among others

(1971). They deemed this division the "dual labor market." As highlighted earlier, this theory will be used to show how immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds are often overrepresented in the secondary sector of the Danish labor market, despite their educational backgrounds.

Statistics Denmark "divides employees into five main socio-economic groups according to skill level: 1. Management work (i.e. at the highest administrative level; decision-making, planning, and management work); 2. Earners at the highest level (for example doctor, lawyer, architect, accountant, librarian); 3. Mid-level wage earners (for example, laboratory technician, programmer, nurse, kindergarten teacher, police officers); 4. Wage earners at a basic level (for example office work, customer service, artisanal work, agricultural work, operation of machines); 5. Other wage earners (for example cleaning work, delivery service, guard work, packaging and transport work)" (Mealor, 2020, p.30-31). Mealor observes that in Denmark, "some industries are characterized by physically demanding work, low hourly wages, part-time work and irregular working hours, and others by highly skilled labor, high-paid positions, and more promotion opportunities" (2020, p.32). In 2018, among all 16-64-year-old non-Western immigrants in employment, 10.8 percent of men and 15.9 percent of women worked within the industry group defined as 'Travel agencies, cleaning and other operational services' (Statistics Denmark, www.statistikbanken.dk/ RAS308).

The proportion majority (16-64 years) of women of Danish ethnicity with management work or work at the highest level was 35.9 percent in 2018, while for Western and non-Western female immigrants it was respectively 31.3 and 18.7 percent (Danmarks Statistik, www.statistikbanken.dk/RAS308). Danish women were strongly over-represented in the top three categories. For entry-level wage earners, there was a slightly higher proportion among Danish women (41.1 percent) than among non-Western women (36.7 percent), and for Western immigrant women, the proportion was significantly lower, at 28.5 percent. In the lowest category, 'other wage earners', there was a high over-representation of non-Western immigrant women: 26.6 percent compared to 19.5 percent for Western and 6.2 percent for Danish women (Danmarks Statistik, www.statistikbanken.dk/RAS308, own calculations; Mealor, 2020, p.30-31)

According to Pace & Bennetzen, in the current environment, 'non-Western' migrants (and women refugees particularly) rarely hold work positions that reflect their qualifications and skills – even if their education is obtained in Denmark (2023, p.41). This tendency arguably indicates a form of structural racism that builds on preconceived notions of 'non-Western' people and their skills and abilities (Pace & Bennetzen, 2023, p.41).

The Danish labor market, as described by dual labor market theory, exhibits a clear divide between its primary and secondary sectors. The primary sector, which offers stability, higher wages, job security, and advancement opportunities, is predominantly occupied by well-educated Danish-born individuals and Western immigrants. Conversely, non-Western immigrant and refugee women are frequently confined to the secondary sector, characterized by low wages, high turnover, and limited

advancement opportunities, including jobs such as cleaning, retail, and other low-skilled positions (Reich et al., 1973; Piore & Doeringer, 1971).

Despite their qualifications and efforts to integrate, non-Western immigrant women face considerable obstacles in accessing the primary sector. Mealor (2020) highlights the significant over-representation of these women in demanding, low-wage jobs with irregular hours, emphasizing the stark employment disparities. Data from Statistics Denmark (2018) reinforces this point, revealing that only 18.7 percent of non-Western female immigrants held management or high-level positions, compared to 35.9 percent of Danish women.

According to Bennetzen, these structural inequities can be attributed to institutional barriers and discrimination, which hinder non-Western immigrant women from securing jobs that align with their skills and qualifications (2023). Pace and Bennetzen (2023) argue that this scenario reflects structural racism, where preconceived biases about non-Western individuals perpetuate their marginalization in the labor market, despite their educational achievements. The Danish labor market's dual structure systematically disadvantages non-Western immigrant and refugee women, relegating them to the secondary sector and restricting their opportunities for advancement and equitable employment. Addressing these issues requires recognizing and dismantling the structural barriers and discriminatory practices that underlie these disparities.

4.4 Human Capital Theory

The human capital theory, first put forth by Adam Smith, contends that each worker possesses a set of abilities and skills that can be enhanced or increased through training and education. Nonetheless, Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz were two other economists who helped to refine the concept (study.com, n.d). KVINFO Mentor Network approach can be understood through the lens of human capital theory, which suggests that investing in education, training, and skills enhances individuals' productivity and economic value (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961). This initiative aims to support immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds by increasing their human capital, thus helping them overcome barriers to integrating into the Danish labor market.

The Mentor Network pairs these women with mentors who guide navigating the Danish job market. This mentorship helps them develop crucial skills such as language proficiency and cultural understanding, which are key components of human capital. By improving these competencies, the program boosts their employability and productivity, aligning their skills with the needs of the Danish labor market (Becker, 2009). Beyond language skills, the KVINFO Mentor Network also helps participants build professional networks and gain industry-specific knowledge. This addresses the isolation that often hinders their job prospects. Access to these networks enhances their social capital, which complements human capital in achieving economic success (Granovetter, 1973).

The program's individualized mentorship aligns with Schultz's (1961) idea that targeted educational investments are crucial. Personalized support ensures that the guidance is tailored to each participant's unique needs, maximizing the effectiveness of the investment in their human capital. For example,

the mentees are assisted in tweaking their CVs and application letters to standards that are preferred by Danish employers, assists them in the interview process, among others.

Additionally, the Mentor Network helps these women overcome systemic barriers like discrimination and the non-recognition of foreign qualifications. By boosting their locally relevant human capital, the program enables them to compete more effectively in the Danish labor market (Mincer, 1974). For instance, in 2008, the KVINFO Mentor Network continued and expanded the collaboration with Janus Integrator on a project to upgrade self-supporting refugees and immigrants to the SOSU area in Copenhagen whereby it matches the course participants with a personal mentor, all of whom have a health education (KVINFO, 2008, p.20). These are women in the age group 18 to 50 who do not meet the normal entry requirements for social and health education.

In summary, the KVINFO Mentor Network aligns with human capital theory by investing in the education, skills, and professional networks of immigrant and refugee women. This investment enhances their productivity and employability, helping them overcome barriers to integration into the Danish labor market (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961).

4.5 Street Level Bureaucracy

Michael Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy, detailed in his seminal work "Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services," provides a framework for understanding the role and behaviour of public service workers who interact directly with citizens. These "street-level bureaucrats" include teachers, police officers, social workers, and other public employees who implement government policies and make decisions that affect individuals' daily lives. This theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the operational challenges that the KVINFO Mentor Network faces in its efforts to support the integration of immigrant and refugee women into the Danish labour market. According to Lipsky, street-level bureaucrats—those frontline workers who interact directly with citizens—play a crucial role in implementing public policies (Lipsky, 2010, p.30).

First, bureaucratic decision making takes place under conditions of limited time and information. Decision makers typically are constrained by the costs of obtaining information relative to their resources, by their capacity to absorb information, and by the unavailability of information (Lipsky, 2010, p. 30). Street-level bureaucrats work with a relatively high degree of uncertainty because of the complexity of the subject matter (people) and the frequency of rapidity with which decisions must be made. Not only is reliable information costly and difficult to obtain but for street-level bureaucrats force them to act without even being able to consider whether an investment in searching for more information would be profitable (Lipsky, 2010, p.29).

Limited resources can lead to mentors being overburdened, reducing their ability to offer personalized, in-depth assistance to each mentee. This can hinder the effectiveness of the mentorship program. KVINFO mentor network's work is challenged by the fact that the government grants under the Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI) will be halved in 2023. "We have

worked hard to get local authorities to co-finance the local projects, but unfortunately this has proved difficult. The situation now is that we therefore unfortunately must close our network in Odense at the end of the year and may have to scale back elsewhere," says Stinne Bech. Bech says that the network helps to get ethnic minority women into work, and in doing so, it is solving an important social challenge in Denmark (kvinfo.dk, 2023). She says that they hope that money can be found to secure the efforts in 2024, "so that we can continue to offer voluntary mentoring courses for women around the country" (kvinfo.dk, 2023).

Christian Larsen adds to Bech's view, by saying that they have to focus on the local co-financing so that the existing efforts can continue at the current level (kvinfo.dk, 2023).

"KVINFO comes with the method, project management, evaluation, and the organizational framework. Today we also cover the costs of the local coordinator's salary. But from 2023, co-financing is needed at the local level for the coordinator's salary and expenses for local activities. Here, together with the comprehensive plans, we want to get the local politicians and the municipality on board. Otherwise, we may have to close local efforts when our grant from SIRI for next year drops from four to two million," says Christian Larsen from the KVINFO mentoring network.

Street-level bureaucrats also encounter other significant challenges that can impact the effectiveness of their work. For instance, mentors in the KVINFO Mentor Network, have a significant degree of discretion in how they deliver services and support to mentees. This autonomy can lead to variability in the quality and consistency of support provided, depending on the individual mentor's interpretation of their role and the specific needs of each mentee (Lipsky, 2010, p.30). This variability can result in inconsistent outcomes for mentees. In addition, Lipsky points out that the face-to-face nature of these interactions means that street-level bureaucrats often must balance empathy and efficiency, potentially leading to practices that streamline processes at the expense of individualized attention (Lipsky, 2010, p. 58). Some may receive comprehensive support tailored to their unique circumstances, while others might experience gaps in service due to differing interpretations and approaches by mentors (Lipsky, 2010, p.30). Furthermore, street-level bureaucrats often work within rigid policy frameworks and organizational constraints that can limit their ability to respond flexibly to the needs of individuals. Policy and organizational constraints can limit mentors' flexibility, making it difficult to adapt their support to the specific circumstances of each mentee. This can reduce the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship and the mentees' ability to integrate into the labor market.

According to Lipsky, measuring the performance of street-level bureaucrats is also challenging due to the discretionary nature of their work and the qualitative aspects of service delivery (2010, p.78). Traditional accountability mechanisms may not capture the complexities of their tasks, leading to reliance on proxies such as case numbers or client throughput. Lipsky discusses how performance measurement systems can pressure street-level bureaucrats to focus on quantifiable outcomes rather than the quality of their interactions (Lipsky, 2010, p. 78). Regarding this, when reporting its success rates, the parameters measured by the KVINFO Mentor Network are the total number of mentees

who got into jobs, education improved their Danish language skills, and how many got motivated to get into jobs or education (kvinfo.dk, 2023).

Michael Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy provides a compelling lens through which to understand the challenges faced by mentors in the KVINFO Mentor Network as they help refugee and immigrant women from non-Western backgrounds integrate into the Danish labor market.

5. Analysis

Question 1. What is the problem of unemployment represented to be in the KVINFO Mentor Network initiative?

The first question of the 'WPR' method focuses on the implicit representations of the "problem" (Bacchi (a), 2009, p. 1). In the KVINFO Mentor Network initiative analyzed three "problems" were identified: Danish language skills, Education skills, and Networking.

According to Mealor, one of the biggest barriers to the integration of non-Western female immigrants and refugees into the Danish labor market is a lack of language skills (2020, p.79). In addition, a study by Dumont et. al. (2016) based on European survey data show that there is a large gap between refugees and immigrants from countries outside the EU in relation to language acquisition (Mealor, 2020, p.80). Dumont states that fewer than half of refugees report that their language skills are at a high level, compared to two-thirds of other immigrants. Furthermore, the importance of good language skills is especially great for refugees: "if they mastered the language as well as the natives, their employment rate would be 10 percentage points higher" (Dumont et. al., 2016, p. 25).

KVINFOs Mentor Network in its 'Results from KVINFOs Mentor Network in 2022' report explicitly states that the mentees who had insufficient Danish language skills experienced that they had improved in Danish during the mentoring course (KVINFO, 2023). In addition, out of the mentoring courses evaluated in 2021, 79 percent experienced better Danish skills (kvinfo.dk, 2023). Language skills, or lack thereof, play a rather big role in the KVINFO Mentor Network women mentees' stories. "Many have been used to being able to communicate at a high level in their home countries and find it both frustrating and humiliating to not be able to express themselves at the same high level in Danish" (KVINFO, 2008, p.53). In this sense, language proficiency is constructed as one of the major obstacles to achieving employment.

Another way the problem of unemployment has been framed is through education. The willingness to be educated is telling and indicates work motivation, but is also a good thing, because education – and especially a Danish education – demonstrably promotes the prospect of getting a job (kvinfo.dk, 2023). For these reasons, the KVINFO Mentor Network motivates its mentees, non-Western immigrant and refugee women, to acquire an education here in Denmark to improve their chances in getting employment here. In 2008 for example, KVINFO Mentor Network continued and expanded the collaboration with Janus Integrator on a project to upgrade self-supporting refugees and immigrants to the SOSU area in Copenhagen whereby it matches the course participants with a

personal mentor, all of whom have a health education (KVINFO, 2008, p.20). These are women in the age group 18 to 50 who do not meet the normal entry requirements for social and health education.

KVINFO mentoring network matches the course participants with a personal mentor. However, and quite interestingly, all have a background in health education (KVINFO, 2008, p.20). The KVINFO mentoring introductory course runs over 26 weeks and consists of two courses with an in-patient internship period whereby the mentees get the chance to work with in-patients in the hospital (see e.g. KVINFO, 2008, p.21). If the participants complete the course satisfactorily, they can be admitted to the social and health care assistant training on ordinary terms. In the first group, 15 students participated, all of whom had been interviewed to get a mentor (KVINFO, 2008, p.21). All the participants expressed that they had been happy with the course, that it had been a good experience to be on an internship, and that they had gained a good insight into their future work area. In the interviews, the course participants expressed great motivation to take a SOSU education (KVINFO, 2008, p.21). This goes to show KVINFO Mentor Network's commitment to human capital, by investing in their mentees through enrolling them in Danish educational institutions, with the view that they will gain skills that are relevant in the Danish labor market and make them more eligible for employment (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961).

Another way to construct the problem is presented through opening the mentees' professional and social networks. In this sense, the problem of unemployment of female refugee and immigrants from non-Western backgrounds is seen as due to their lack of networks. KVINFO Mentor Network matches women of a refugee and immigrant background with women who are firmly established members of the Danish workforce. The parties are called mentees and mentors, and matching is based on the mentee's education, profession, and personal wishes (Liversage, 2009). Through a one-on-one meeting of equals, mentors provide access to their professional networks, and provide appropriate advice regarding job applications, job interviews, workplace culture, reassessment of job possibilities, etc. (Liversage, 2009).

According to KVINFO, over half of all jobs in Denmark are estimated to be filled via personal networks, and a good network can thus help open doors to the labor market and Danish society (p.49). Conversely, it can be difficult to get a foothold in the Danish labour market without one. A report by KVINFO Mentor Network states that this is felt by the women who turn to the KVINFO mentoring network (KVINFO, 2008, p.49). This is because they have all left friends, family, and colleagues in their home country, and suddenly find themselves in a new country with a new language and have to establish themselves anew and applies both socially and professionally (KVINFO, 2008, p.49).

In addition, many immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds often feel socially isolated, and quickly bond with other foreigners who better understand and can familiarize themselves with the issues they face as "new" people in Denmark (KVINFO, 2008, p.49). The new friends fill a social void, but the women often miss and demand someone with whom they can discuss issues of a more professional nature. Many also express the desire to have a Danish friend - a person who can

introduce them to Danish society and whom they can ask for advice on more general issues related to life in Denmark (KVINFO, 2008, p.50).

Finally, according to kvinfo.dk, through its voluntary mentoring courses under the KVINFO mentor network, the women get to expand their network to get closer to more potential employers. It is very important in Denmark, where many positions are filled through networks instead of job postings (2023). The Mentor Network, whose approach is recognized by the Danish Ministry of Gender Equality, the EU, the OECD, UNESCO, and the OSCE, plays a big role in bridging the gap between mentees and future employers (kvinfo.dk, 2023). This approach is not only about networking but is holistic in that it equips refugee and immigrant women mentees from non-Western backgrounds with information about the Danish workplace culture, helps them in tweaking their CVs and application letters to standards that are preferred by Danish employers, assists them in the interview process, among others.

Question 2: What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of unemployment by the KVINFO Mentor Network?

This part will investigate the underlying assumptions of this representation of unemployment by examining the underlying meanings as well as the concepts and binaries used within the KVINFO Mentor Network approach to construct this representation of unemployment (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 21). To analyze the presuppositions or assumptions underpinning KVINFO Mentor Network's representation of the problems immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds face when integrating into the Danish labor market, I will consider how KVINFO frames these issues through this initiative.

First, in terms of cultural and social barriers, there is an underlying assumption that these women come from backgrounds with different cultural norms that may not align with Danish workplace expectations. The Mentor Network believes that understanding Danish workplace culture and societal norms is necessary for successful integration. This implies that non-Western women may not be fully aware of these cultural specifics, which hinders their ability to navigate the job market and work environments effectively. This suggests a need for cultural acclimatization and adaptation for successful integration. The Network therefore works by educating their mentees about Danish workplace culture (kvinfo.dk, 2023).

Second, in terms of networks and support systems, there is an assumption by the mentors that immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds lack access to professional networks and mentorship, which are crucial for finding employment and navigating the labor market. This suggests that their exclusion from these networks is a significant barrier to their integration into the labor market. According to kvinfo.dk, "Research shows that many women with refugee and immigrant backgrounds experience several barriers. This could be, for example, insufficient knowledge of Danish, a lack of networks, and a lack of knowledge about the Danish labor market" (kvinfo.dk, 2023). The assumption here is that the primary issue is a deficiency in social capital, so

the Mentor Network aims to provide these connections, indicating a belief that mentorship and networking can significantly overcome integration barriers (Schultz, 1961).

In addition, there is an assumption that there may be gaps in education and skills between immigrant and refugee women and the demands of the Danish labor market. It is assumed that the Danish labor market does not sufficiently recognize or value foreign qualifications and work experience. This means that even well-qualified non-Western women face difficulties because their credentials are not seen as equivalent or relevant by Danish employers (Mealor, 2020, p.44). This suggests that upskilling and education are necessary components of integration efforts. KVINFO's initiative might focus on bridging these gaps through training and educational programs that are recognized in the Danish labor market. For example, in its report from 2021 that was published in 2022 by KVINFO Mentor Network, 36% got into education (KVINFO, 2022).

There is also an assumption that empowering immigrant and refugee women by enhancing their self-efficacy and confidence is essential for their integration. This approach assumes that a significant part of the problem is these women's perceived or actual lack of self-confidence in navigating the labor market. Mentorship is seen to build this confidence and empower them to take proactive steps toward employment. For example, in its report from 2021 that was published in 2022 by KVINFO Mentor Network, 83% felt more motivated to get to work after the mentoring course (KVINFO, 2022).

Finally, there is an assumption that language proficiency is a critical factor in successful labor market integration. By addressing language barriers through language training or providing mentors who can help with language skills, KVINFO assumes that improving language proficiency is vital for effective communication and integration in the workplace. In its report from 2021 that was published in 2022 by KVINFO Mentor Network, 63% experienced that they had improved in Danish during the mentoring course (KVINFO, 2022).

By unpacking these presuppositions, we gain a deeper understanding of the frameworks guiding KVINFO's initiative and can critically assess their effectiveness and areas for improvement.

Q4 and Q6

This section of my analysis will be a critical approach to the problem representation of "unemployment" among non-Western immigrant and refugee women questioning whether the problem could be thought of differently and whether there is any ground for replacing the problem representation. Thus, this part will be based on data external to the KVINFO Mentor Network and will include coded themes that were identified as barriers to the integration of refugee and immigrant women from non-Western backgrounds into the Danish labor market. As mentioned earlier, the codebook will be included in the appendix of my paper. The themes are discrimination, industry distribution, education and employment, Danish language skills, healthcare, and social control. The question works well and suggests that future research may find it similarly helpful to capture not only the number of times each identified representation appears in a text as a way to assess the prominence

and dominance of presuppositions, but also the extent to which solutions are operationalized and expected to connect to practice, actors and actions.

Question 4: What is left unproblematic in this "problem" representation? Where are the 'silences'? Can the "problem" be thought about differently?

Assimilation theory posits that immigrant and minority groups should gradually adopt the cultural norms and practices of the host society to achieve full integration (Gordon, 1964). In Denmark, an assimilationist approach underpins many of its integration policies, emphasizing the necessity for immigrants and refugees to conform to Danish cultural and societal norms. Denmark's approach to integration heavily leans on the principles of assimilation, where the responsibility is primarily placed on the immigrants to adapt and conform to Danish norms and values (Hedetoft, 2006). This expectation is evident in various integration policies and programs, including language courses, cultural orientation, and job training that stress the importance of adopting Danish ways of life. The underlying assumption is that only by becoming "Danish" in their behavior, language, and values can immigrants and refugees be considered suitable for inclusion in the Danish labor market.

KVINFO Mentor Network can be seen as an initiative that aligns with the assimilationist framework, albeit with a supportive approach. The network aims to facilitate the integration of non-Western immigrant and refugee women by pairing them with mentors who guide them in understanding and navigating the Danish labor market (kvinfo.dk, 2023). This mentorship often includes learning about Danish workplace norms, improving Danish language skills, and building professional networks within Denmark (kvinfo.dk, 2023). The program implicitly assumes that the barriers faced by these women - such as language proficiency, education, and lack of professional networks - are best overcome by equipping them to better assimilate into Danish society (Andersen, 2012). The network's focus on mentoring reflects an effort to accelerate the assimilation process, aiding women in acquiring the cultural capital necessary for labor market success in Denmark.

However, this approach can have some significant limitations. It often overlooks systemic and structural barriers that prevent full integration, such as discrimination and biases in hiring practices (Andersen, 2012). By placing the onus solely on immigrants to adapt, there is a risk of neglecting the broader societal changes needed to facilitate true integration. For instance, even with improved Danish language skills and cultural understanding, non-Western women may still face prejudices that hinder their employment prospects. While the network provides essential support for these women to navigate the Danish labor market, it also underscores the assimilationist expectation that they must adopt Danish norms and values to be deemed fit for inclusion. For this reason, Question 4 will address these issues that are 'overlooked' by initiatives such as the KVINFO Mentor Network, which will be described as 'silences'.

Human capital theory posits that investments in education and skills development enhance an individual's productivity and, consequently, their employability and earnings (Becker, 2009). While this theory has been influential in shaping policies and initiatives aimed at improving labor market outcomes, it also has significant limitations, especially when applied to the context of the KVINFO

Mentor Network. This network operates on the assumption that providing Danish education and skill development to immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds will facilitate their integration into the Danish labor market. However, several limitations of human capital theory become evident in this context.

Human capital theory often overlooks the socio-cultural barriers and systemic discrimination that non-Western immigrant and refugee women face in the labor market. Studies have shown that even with equivalent education and skills, these women may still encounter significant discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and gender (Bleijenbergh, Peters, & Poutsma, 2010). This structural bias can limit their employment opportunities, irrespective of their human capital investments. The theory also places heavy emphasis on individual responsibility for economic success, which can obscure the structural and institutional factors that impede labor market integration. This can lead to policies that blame individuals for their unemployment or underemployment rather than addressing the broader systemic issues (Lundborg & Skedinger, 2016). As a result, initiatives like the KVINFO Mentor Network might not fully tackle the root causes of labor market exclusion.

Human capital theory assumes that education and skills are universally valued and recognized. However, non-Western immigrant and refugee women often face challenges in having their foreign qualifications and work experiences recognized in Denmark. Research indicates that the devaluation of foreign credentials is a significant barrier to employment for immigrants, leading to underemployment and job mismatches (Bauder, 2003). This misalignment highlights a critical limitation of human capital theory's applicability in this context. Similar to assimilation theory, it is crucial to address these limitations for a more comprehensive understanding of the barriers that immigrants and refugee actually face in their attempts to integrate into the Danish labor market.

It is important to look at the issues that fail to highlight different "problems". This includes issues that are silenced, not legitimized, and not acknowledged in "problem" representations (PR) (Bacchi, 2009, p. 12-14). The focus moves "more specifically to detecting what the problem representations do *not* say. It builds to some extent on WPR Q2 and allows the analyst to be inventive, to imagine a world where specific problems are reconceptualized and re-problematized and perhaps not thought about as problems at all" (Tawell & McCluskey, 2022). KVINFO Mentor Network, like other Danish integration initiatives such as the Integration Programme (IGU), addresses the major barriers to the integration of non-Western immigrant and refugee women (and their male counterparts). Although different initiative programs have different approaches, the overarching barriers are Danish language skills and education. All the "problems" identified that help break the barriers towards the integration of non-Western refugee and immigrant women into the Danish labor market emphasize that in Denmark, the main criterion for successful integration is attachment to the labor market (Bendixen, 2022).

KVINFO Mentor Network aims to address these multifaceted barriers by providing mentorship tailored to the unique needs of non-Western immigrant and refugee women. The network's approach considers the intersectional challenges these women face by offering guidance on navigating the labor

market, improving language skills, and building professional networks (KVINFO, 2019). However, the success of such initiatives depends on their ability to fully acknowledge and address the intersectional nature of the barriers (Bacchi, 2009, p.20). While KVINFOs efforts are commendable, the representation of the problem within their framework may still fall short if it does not explicitly address the compounded nature of discrimination faced by these women. An intersectional analysis reveals that initiatives must go beyond surface-level support and tackle the deep-seated biases and structural inequalities that persist in the labor market.

Therefore, with regards to Question 4 by Carol Bacchi, there are areas of silence in the reasons for unemployment of non-Western refugee and immigrant women and different ways that the "problems" can be thought of. One instance is the lack of any reference to the problem as being systemic discrimination. The problematization of the lack of participation in the labor market is predominantly considered an individual responsibility (or lack of same) and accountability. Other underlying issues / 'silences' around the barriers to the integration of refugee and immigrant women from non-Western backgrounds into the Danish labor market will be discussed below. These are themes that I identified from data sources external to KVINFOs Mentor Networks' and they include: Factors that contribute towards refugee and immigrant ethnic minority women failing to participate in learning Danish language, industry distribution, social control, healthcare, education, and employment.

> i. *Discrimination:*

Nielsen et al. (2001) show in their analysis that due to low employment rates in the first years in Denmark, the wage difference for men can be explained by lower qualifications and lack of work experience, while for women – who have an even looser connection to the labor market – there are signs of discrimination (Mealor, 2020, p.31). In Denmark, while gender equality is a societal value, non-Western immigrant women face additional layers of discrimination due to their ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Mealor, 2020, p.31). Studies have shown that immigrant women are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed compared to their male counterparts and native Danish women (Kofman et al., 2015).

Discrimination takes place in many ways: it can be either conscious or unconscious, and direct or indirect. Mealor quotes Becker (1957) and Phelps (1972) who stated that "in economic theory, a distinction is made between preference discrimination and statistical discrimination (2020, p.91). "Statistical discrimination occurs, for example, when the employer, based on insufficient knowledge and stereotypical ideas, expects that the applicant will be less productive because of their ethnicity, and preferential discrimination occurs when the employer allows their prejudices against certain groups to set conditions for employment" (Mealor, 2020, p.91). However, overall, "there is a lack of research into discrimination in Denmark and the Danish labor market and the real extent of discrimination is hard to measure" (Jensen, et. al., 2012).

According to Mealor, another form of discrimination occurs when there is an expectation or acceptance that the company's customers or other employees themselves have prejudices, and

applications from immigrants and ethnic minorities are sorted out because of these (Mealor, 2020, p.91). According to Wrench (2015), this is called 'societal' discrimination. As an example, "he refers to a Danish field experiment where a TV journalist who claimed to be a contractor who wanted to hire new employees called 24 job centers and asked for 'Danish nationals'. Although it is illegal, there was only one job center that refused to grant his wish" (p. 5). Wrench emphasizes that one of "the problems with raising awareness of discrimination in the labor market is that, in general, employers mistakenly believe that discrimination is always a form of specific and deliberate dislike directed at an individual and that they do not consider themselves racist" (2015, p .1-2).

Dahl and Jakobsen (2005) show, based on Scandinavian research, that men from non-Western backgrounds experience more discrimination in the labor market than their female counterparts. However, "this may also be because women are underrepresented in the labor market, and some industries and professions seem to be more marked of discrimination than others" (Dahl & Jakobsen, 2005). This affects opportunities for internships and completion of education as well as later employment. Furthermore, they point out that there are differences in the types of prejudices and stereotypes they are exposed to. "For men, the biggest themes are crime and oppressive attitudes towards women, while for women, the Muslim headscarf attracts a large part of the focus of prejudice" (Dahl & Jakobsen, 2005).

According to "the EU's Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II), based on data from 2016, there is a difference in experienced discrimination between the different groups of non-Western immigrants and descendants in Denmark" (Mealor, 2020, p.91). According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 42 percent of female immigrants and descendants from the countries south of the Sahara (the vast majority in this group come from Somalia) against 30 percent of men indicated that they had experienced discrimination during the last 5 years in connection with job hunting (2019, p. 33-34). The study by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights also shows that women are more likely to complain about discrimination than men: "among the people who had experienced discrimination in Denmark, there were more female immigrants and descendants (21 percent) than men (15 percent) who reported or complained about it" (2019, p. 34).

In the past few years, several correspondence studies in Denmark have focused on discrimination against immigrants and descendants in the labor market (Dahl & Krog, 2018). Dahl's (2019) study on discrimination against women in the Danish labor market showed, "based on a field experiment with 1,350 fictitious job applications, that women with Middle Eastern-sounding names had to send 18 percent more applications to be invited to the same number of interviews as Danish women, and that minority ethnic women with headscarves (a photo was attached to the CV) should send 60 percent more applications" (p. 139-140). To substantiate this, a Danish citizen by the name of Jorgensen in an interview stated, "I can see my co-workers with the same education [but names that aren't ethnic Danish] get a harder time," he says. "Incredibly, it's still happening in 2018, but it is." (Graham-Harrison & Rasmussen, 2018).

The exclusion took place "even if there was information in the CV that contradicted the usual stereotypes, and it took place across all industries and, surprisingly enough, in both the public and private sectors" (Mealor, 2020, p.93). In the public sector, "the differences for women without and with a headscarf were -9.2 and -11.2 percentage points compared to Danish women. In the private sector, the difference for women without a headscarf was smaller, at -1.4 percentage points, but for women with a headscarf, the difference was -11 percentage points" (Mealor, 2020, p.93). This is confirmed by Villadsen & Wulff (2018), who show in their study that the notion of the public sector as a more inclusive employer in Denmark is a myth.

ii.   *Danish Language Skills*

Dahl and Jakobsen (2005) emphasize, based on a Norwegian study, that a reference to a lack of language skills can in some cases be an excuse rather than the real reason for not employing people belonging to an ethnic minority (Mealor, 2020, p.82). KVINFOs Mentor Network approach could be constraining as it is one about holding Danish language conversations between the mentor and mentee and encouraging them to participate in language classes as a way of breaking the lack of language skills barrier. However, some barriers and obstacles prevent or discourage immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds from participating in Danish language classes in the first place. Dahl and Jakobsen (2005) refer to previous research in Denmark, which shows that non-Western women have poorer knowledge of Danish than non-Western men, and this applies especially to those who arrived in the country after the age of 13. They give three explanations for why women have poorer knowledge of Danish than men: pregnancy, maternity, and the caring role in the family cause participation in language courses to be paused (Mealor, 2020, p.81). In addition, compared to several other countries, Denmark has not been so good at employing women from non-Western countries especially not for refugee women (Mealor, 2020, p.96). "Men are more often employed which means they use the language more than women, and women have poorer social networks with Danish persons and fewer extroverted activities (including participation in associations) than men" (Dahl & Jakobsen, 2005; Bonke & Schultz-Nielsen, 2013).

The approach could also be constraining as it fails to recognize mental health as a determining factor. Migration stress and trauma-related disorders can have a great influence on immigrants' prerequisites for learning Danish. Research shows that refugees with trauma-related mental disorders have reduced learning ability and memory, and this makes it even more difficult for them to learn Danish (Danish Refugee Council, 2015). In addition, according to Mealor, non-Western immigrants – and especially women – have a higher incidence of disease compared to the majority population (Mealor, p.98). Furthermore, the effect of poor health on employment is greater for non-Western women than for Danish women, particularly refugees. "Women who have been exposed to traumatic experiences in their homeland and on escape routes have a greater risk of developing mental illnesses. In addition, long waiting times for asylum itself contribute to poor mental health" (Mealor, 2020, p.98). While this makes it more difficult to be in employment and/or education, research shows that precisely employment can positively affect mental health (Mealor, 2020, p.98).

iii.   *Industry distribution*

Industry matters – there's overrepresentation in some industries (Mealor, 2020, p.33). From a feminist perspective, gender plays a critical role in labor market integration. Traditional gender roles and stereotypes can marginalize women in the workforce, often relegating them to lower-paid and less secure jobs (Acker, 1990). The concentration of immigrants within the service sector also has other consequences. In his analysis of ethnic segregation in the Danish labor market, Ejrnæs (2007) points out that non-Western immigrants are concentrated in industries and professions that are characterized by open employment relationships and companies with a high staff turnover. This leads to even greater social inequality; professional organizations have less influence in terms of working conditions, wages, and further training, and companies are often characterized by being numerically flexible, which means that they use peripheral, relatively cheap, and unprotected labor – often part-time or temporary employees – who can be hired and fired as needed (Ejrnæs, 2007, p. 6). In other words, it is more likely that the employees will be affected by the last-in, first-out principle. (Mealor, 2020, p.33)

According to Mealor, "non-Western immigrants have an average lower position in the job hierarchy and are more likely to be locked into certain industries and job types than Danish people" (2020, p.35). This is connected to the fact that a large proportion of non-Western immigrants have a low level of education and that their education is often brought with them from abroad (Arendt, 2018, p. 12). It is especially the non-Western immigrants without education and with foreign education who have markedly lower opportunities for continued employment and upward mobility in the job hierarchy (Arendt, 2018, p. 12). Non-Western immigrants with an education from Denmark are more likely to be employed in positions higher up in the job hierarchy and at the same time have greater promotion opportunities (Gorinas & Jakobsen, 2015).

The gender division in the labor market is reproduced in the integration effort. Studies in Norway and Sweden show that men receive more employment-oriented offers (Stendal & Iversen, 2019, p. 56), "while women are more often referred to the traditional 'women's professions' such as cooking, and nursing and caring, even when they have qualifications in for technical and natural science subjects" (Dahl & Jakobsen, 2005, p. 69). Also, The Danish Refugee Council points to a gender difference in Danish integration efforts: "There are indications that professionals' preconceptions 'disrupt' when meeting individual citizens - and especially concerning women with a refugee background. A woman with a refugee background has not necessarily been a homemaker and does not necessarily dream of working in a canteen or a kindergarten" (Danish Refugee Council, 2020; Mealor, 2020, p.35)

As per the dual labor market concept, it is evident that refugee and immigrant women from non-Western backgrounds are concentrated in specific industries in Denmark, specifically in the service industry. An alternative approach to their integration would be recognizing this reality, as it is systemic. KVINFO Mentor Network, despite its efforts, also recognizes that "If one's social and professional network is limited, it is very difficult to get a job, and when it finally succeeds, it is often in jobs in the service sector with sparse contact with ethnic Danes" (2023).

Boswell (2003) identifies labor integration strategies of immigrants and women, concerning the economic dimension or how much access immigrants have to the labor market. The process is understood as an interrelation at three levels (individual, collective, and institutional), in this sense, Penninx and Martiniello (2006) argue that labor integration strategies are developed in socioeconomic, cultural, and political contexts. The host society plays a decisive role. Liversage (2009) suggests a different approach through which the integration of refugee and immigrant women from non-Western backgrounds could be approached. She suggests several labor market re-entry strategies: re-entry; promotion; and finally, going back to school, or re-education.

The first one involves entering the labor market in professional positions like those held in the country of origin. It occurs mainly among women with professions in the field of hard sciences like engineering, information technology, medicine−who have greater flexibility in the transfer of their qualifications. There can even be a job position change within the company; however, this seems more difficult for social science careers. The second option is promotion. According to Liversage, it involves modifying the professional path taken in their countries of origin by entering the labour market through jobs that are not in line with their education, since they usually require less skills (2009). Once they are working, they manage to get to even higher positions than they had reached in their countries of origin. The third option is going back to school. Liversage (2009) offers another option, "returning to the country of origin and recovering pre-migratory identity when these women do not find work opportunities in the new country, in this case, they do not achieve labor integration".

iv.   Education and employment

When it comes to employment, education is one of the most crucial things. The level of education has a significant impact on immigrants' career prospects, particularly if it offers vocational skills (Mealor, 2020, p. 41). In addition, it also matters if one brought the education with them or if it was completed in Denmark. Danish education offers, other things being equal, significantly greater opportunities for employment (Mealor, 2020, p.41). Depending on whether the education was completed in Denmark or brought with you, as well as how long you've been there, where you live, and what kind of schooling you received, there are several reasons why the employment rate varies so much (Arendt, 2018, p. 12). For instance, there could be several reasons why foreign education cannot be immediately applied to the Danish labor market, such as "the education being of lower quality, less useful, or outdated due to the time spent in the asylum system and on the run, the lack of additional professional, linguistic, or social skills, the lack of knowledge about the Danish labor market and the absence of a professional network, that the employer lacks knowledge of the foreign qualification, or that the employer discriminates" (Arendt, 2018, p. 12).

Mealor states that compared to recently arrived immigrants with education, immigrants with a Danish education have broader networks and a better understanding of the Danish labour market (2020, p. 48). Moreover, a Danish education suggests that immigrants are linguistically proficient. (Mealor, 2020, p.48). Arendt (2018, p. 7) claims that merely 2–8 years after beginning school, Danish

education increases employment rates by 11–39 percentage points. Those with a foreign vocational education here get the biggest benefit from taking an education in Denmark, while those with a long higher education get the lowest.

The employment rate for female immigrants with a Danish education is still significantly lower than for Danish women. Non-Western women with primary school as the highest completed education have an employment rate of 41 percent (10 percentage points lower than Danish women), and for women with upper secondary education, the difference is as much as 20 percentage points (Mealor, 2020, p.48). The same trend is seen in higher education: non-Western female immigrants with short, medium, or long higher education have employment rates of 74, 79, and 77 percent, while corresponding figures for Danish women are respectively 87, 87, and 90 percent (Mealor, 2020, p.48). The employment rate of non-Western immigrant and refugee women with vocational education is at a rate of 77 percent against 81 percent for Danish women (Mealor, 2020, p.48).

Although employment for both male and female non-Western immigrants is significantly higher with a Danish primary or secondary education, compared to foreign education at the same level, the gap between the sexes is still large. The employment rate for men with primary school and upper secondary education as their highest education is respectively 15 and 11 percentage points higher. However, the gap is reduced with the vocational training programs to between 3 and 5 percentage points (Danmarks Statistik, 2019, p. 64; Mealor, 2020, p.50). Nevertheless, there is a significant gender gap: men only benefit more from higher education in the vocational domain, but women benefit from employment at all educational levels (with vocational education providing the highest return, over 40 percentage points for female refugees). This may be explained by the fact that women who choose to learn in Denmark are especially interested in obtaining work and that men and women attend courses targeted at various industries (Arendt, p. 33-35).

In this sense, an alternative approach to the integration of immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds could be for example one that addresses the issue of foreign qualifications not being recognized in the Danish labor market by establishing a thorough credential evaluation system that will fairly assess and recognise foreign qualifications (Schuster et al., 2020).

v.   Healthcare

Singhammer's (2008) study of immigrants from 7 countries of origin shows that 22-48 percent rate their physical health as poor compared to 10 percent of the Danish group. The proportions among female immigrants were: "Iraq and Lebanon/Palestine (51 percent), the former Yugoslavia (44 percent), Pakistan (41 percent), Turkey (39 percent), Iran (31 percent), and Somalia (20 percent), compared to Danish women (11 percent). Female immigrants also have poorer mental health. On a scale of 0 to 100, the average score for Danish women is 72, while for non-Western female immigrants are significantly lower: Pakistan (41), Iraq (47), Lebanon/Palestine (49), the former Yugoslavia (55), Iran and Somalia (56) and Turkey (59). Frederiksen and Nørredam (2013, p. 41) point to a "mutual influence" between self-assessed health on the one hand and socio-economic factors such as employment and income on the other" (Mealor, 2020, p.75-76).

In addition, female refugees have a particularly high risk of developing mental illnesses due to traumatic experiences both in the home country and on flight routes, where more than four out of ten are exposed to assault, sexual exploitation, and trafficking (Mixed Migration Centre, 2018, p. 48; Mealor, 2020, p.76). These, among other health issues, put them in a place where they are unable to fully participate in integrating into the Danish labor market.

In this sense, to address the issue of integration of refugee and immigrant women into the Danish labor market differently, Norredam et al. suggest conducting comprehensive health assessments for refugee and immigrant women upon their arrival in Denmark to help identify any pre-existing health conditions and ensure timely intervention (2006). This includes addressing trauma, stress, and other mental health issues that are prevalent among refugee and immigrant populations. This could make integration efforts such as that by the KVINFO Mentor Network more effective.

vi.   *Social control*

Følner and Kristensen's (2020) study among job center employees in Copenhagen Municipality shows that social control can be a barrier to women's participation in the labor market. The extent of social control cannot be measured precisely, but the case handlers in job centers find that it poses a problem with women's employment. The study shows that it is mainly two groups of women who are exposed to social control about employment: newly arrived spouse-supported reunified women who live relatively isolated and have poor knowledge of Danish, and long-term unemployed over 30 years of age, typically reunified in arranged marriages, who have lived in Denmark for many years. Furthermore, it is said that for some women social control becomes a long-term "ingrained barrier", as they move over time from the first to the second grouping (Følner & Kristensen, 2020, p. 51). The women come from countries in the Middle East and North Africa, but examples of Chinese women and Roma women exposed to social control are also mentioned in the study. Typically, it is the spouse or other family members and acquaintances who pressure the woman not to be available for the labour market. The authors point out that the motive may be, for example, that the woman should not be in workplaces where there is close contact with colleagues of the opposite sex, or because of expectations that the woman should stay at home.

The study shows that approximately one-third of job center employees indicate that they have had contact with unemployed women from an ethnic minority background, "who have given expression that they experience pressure from their family or circle of friends concerning not being available for the labor market" (Mealor, 2020, p.71-72). However, it is stated that it is very difficult to obtain reliable information about how widespread social control is concerning the employment of female immigrants and how big a barrier it can be (Mealor, 2020, p.72).

KVINFO Mentor Network has a mentorship approach that one could argue addresses this issue of negative social control. By establishing supportive networks and mentorship programs, the network empowers immigrant and refugee women with practical advice and emotional support (Weiner, 2008). Additionally, the Network's empowerment programs focused on language training, vocational

education, and confidence-building further equip women to overcome barriers and pursue employment despite potential family opposition (Bevelander, 2011). As will be observed in the 'Appendix' chapter, several mentees state that thanks to the Network, they gained confidence in themselves and were motivated to seek jobs, which was not the situation before participating in the KVINFO Mentor Network program.

vii.   Overqualification in the Danish labor market

In terms of overqualification in the Danish labor market, in the EU member states, the proportion of employees who are overqualified for their jobs, very high among immigrants. People from countries outside the EU - and in particular those with education - have to accept jobs for which they are overqualified (Mealor, 2020, p.52). Schultz-Nielsen and Skaksen (2017) show in their analysis that "62 percent of non-Western women in the age group 25-64 years, with an education providing vocational skills, work in jobs that do not require vocational education at all (i.e. in unskilled jobs)". According to Mealor, "There is a big difference, depending on whether the education was brought from abroad or Danish, and it is greatest for women: for example, 26 percent of women with an education brought from abroad, and 5 percent with Danish higher education work in unskilled jobs" (2020, p.52). There is a big difference, depending on whether the education was brought from abroad or Danish, and it is greatest for women: for example, as earlier highlighted 26 percent of women with brought and 5 percent with Danish long higher education work in unskilled jobs (Mealor, 2020, p.55).

Kleif et al. (2012) observe several key trends in employment among immigrants in Denmark. They note that "while Danish work experience significantly enhances the likelihood of securing a well-matched job, work experience from an individual's home country tends to hold less value" (Mealor, 2020, p.57). Among those who are overqualified for their positions, "approximately one-third reported having inadequate proficiency in Danish. In contrast, those in well-matched jobs either have strong Danish language skills or utilize English at work" (Mealor, 2020, p.57). The highest rates of overqualification are found in industries such as "cleaning, restaurants, transportation, and daycare, whereas hospitals and primary schools exhibit better job-training matches" (Mealor, 2020, p.57).

Furthermore, "overqualified individuals are frequently employed by small companies with fewer than ten employees, whereas those in larger, international firms tend to have jobs that match their qualifications well" (Mealor, 2020, p.57). According to Mealor, a "significant proportion of those with foreign degrees in humanities, social sciences, or pedagogy (around three-quarters) are overqualified, and this issue also affects more than half of those with foreign technical or science degrees" (2020, p.57). Interestingly, "the incidence of overqualification among individuals with Danish education decreases the longer they stay in Denmark, while it increases for those with foreign education, likely due to insufficient local work experience" (Mealor, 2020, p.57).

According to Mealor, "gender disparities also emerge, with men more often overqualified than women, especially among those with Danish education, and this difference may be attributed to many women exiting the labor market for family reasons" (2020, p.57). When it comes to job searching,

overqualified individuals are more likely to apply for public sector positions and roles in companies owned by ethnic minorities. Additionally, "matched people had more often got their jobs through job postings (50 percent) compared to overeducated people (28 percent), and more than a third of overeducated people had gotten their jobs through personal networks" (Mealor, 2020, p.57). Matched people had got their jobs through job postings (50 percent) compared to overeducated people (28 percent), and more than a third of overeducated people had gotten their jobs through personal networks (Mealor, 2020, p.57).

As highlighted earlier, this issue is systemic and could be beyond the KVINFO Mentor Network mentorship approach. However, the issue of unemployment could be approached differently by having these women assisted in obtaining occupations that are appropriate for their degree and skill set via bridging programs that provide additional training or certification to align international qualifications with Danish requirements.

These, among other 'silences', could be considered as 'silences' or underlying issues that individual mentees face, and can constrain KVINFO's Mentor Network success rates.

Question 6: How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated, and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted, and replaced?

To analyze the representation of the problems that immigrant and refugee ethnic minority women face when integrating into the Danish labor market according to the KVINFO Mentor Network, we need to explore both how these representations are constructed and shared, and how they might be challenged or reimagined.

Production and Dissemination:

The representation of the problem of 'employment' has been produced in organizational documentation and reports such as KVINFOs 'Barriers for women with immigrant and refugee background in Danish labor market' paper, its annual reports, research papers, and briefs that articulate the challenges faced by immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds. These documents frame the issues within a context of cultural, social, and economic barriers. In addition, the structure and activities of the Mentor Network itself, including the selection of mentors and mentees, training programs, and success metrics, embody the problem representation (KVINFO, 2019). These are based on assumptions about what these women need to successfully integrate.

In addition, the representation of the problem regarding barriers to the integration of non-Western refugee and immigrant women into the Danish labor market has been produced and disseminated through various channels. Academic research, government reports, and policy documents are primary sources that highlight these barriers. For instance, studies by researchers like Madsen and Krog (2018) have extensively documented the structural and systemic challenges faced by these women, including language barriers, discrimination, and lack of recognition of foreign qualifications.

The problem has been disseminated through publications and media. Governmental bodies and NGOs, such as KVINFO, also play a significant role in disseminating this problem representation. KVINFOs reports and initiatives, such as the Mentor Network, articulate the specific obstacles non-Western women encounter, thereby raising awareness and providing a framework for addressing these issues (KVINFO, 2019). KVINFO disseminates its views through articles, press releases, and interviews in specialized media such as through its YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/@KVINFO). KVINFO also uses social media channels and its website to share success stories, program updates, and research findings, reaching a broad audience and reinforcing its problem representation. This helps shape public and political discourse around the integration of immigrant and refugee women. For example, the OSCE Secretariat, OSG/Gender Section published a report about the KVINFO Mentor Network. In the report, it was highlighted that "The Danish Centre for Information on Gender, Equality and Diversity (KVINFO) has directly harnessed the importance of networking for marginalized women by successfully developing a Mentor Network that has involved more than 7 000 women since 2002" (The Danish Centre for Information on Gender, Equality and Diversity, 2014, p.5).

In addition, by organizing and participating in conferences, workshops, and public discussions, KVINFO promotes its problem representation to a wider audience, including policymakers, other NGOs, and the public. For example, The KVINFO model was presented as a good practice example of how to empower women from all minority communities at the OSCE conference on "Women as Agents of Change in Migrant, Minority and Roma and Sinti Communities in the OSCE Area" in Vienna on 6-7 September 2012. (The Danish Centre for Information on Gender, Equality and Diversity, 2014, p.5).

Media outlets further disseminate this representation by reporting on the struggles of refugee and immigrant women in finding employment. Such media coverage often includes personal stories and expert opinions, which help to frame public discourse around the topic (Hansen, 2020).

Defense:

KVINFO defends its representation through the success stories and testimonials of mentees who have benefited from the program. These narratives are used to validate the approach and highlight its effectiveness. The testimonials can be found on its YouTube channel, on its official website, and on reports such as 'The Mentor Relationship: An Entrance to The Danish Labour Market' by the KVINFO Mentor Network. Through research and data, the organization supports its problem representation with data and research that illustrate the barriers immigrant and refugee women face and the positive impacts of mentorship (kvinfo.dk, 2023). This problem representation is also defended on the grounds of promoting social justice and equality. Advocacy groups argue that acknowledging and addressing these barriers is crucial for the socio-economic integration of immigrant and refugee women (Mealor, 2020, p.94). By defending this representation, stakeholders aim to highlight the necessity of targeted interventions that can mitigate these barriers and facilitate smoother integration into the labor market.

Questioning and disrupting:

Through critical research, researchers could question the assumptions underlying KVINFO's representation by conducting studies that explore other potential factors affecting integration, such as structural racism, labor market dynamics, or the impact of immigration policies (Mealor, 2020, p.95). Structural racism, and labor market dynamics, among other factors. In addition, including more direct input from the immigrant and refugee women themselves can provide alternative perspectives. Their experiences might highlight different priorities or challenges than those currently emphasized by KVINFO. This representation of the problem has been, and can further be, questioned and disrupted by alternative perspectives that either challenge the existing narratives or propose different solutions (Bacchi, 2009). For example, some critics argue that the focus on barriers might inadvertently reinforce a deficit view of immigrant and refugee women, portraying them primarily as victims of their circumstances rather than as agents of change (Bredgaard & Thomsen, 2018).

To disrupt this problem representation, one could adopt a strengths-based approach, emphasizing the skills, experiences, and resilience of non-Western immigrant women. This perspective could lead to approaching this issue by focusing more on leveraging these strengths rather than solely addressing barriers (Smith, 2017). In addition, promoting alternative narratives that focus on systemic change rather than individual adaptation could disrupt the current representation. For instance, emphasizing the need for anti-discrimination policies or systemic labor market reforms might shift the focus (Mealor, 2020, p.91). Also, implementing intersectional approaches that consider how overlapping identities (e.g., race, gender, socioeconomic status) impact these women's experiences could provide a more nuanced understanding of the issues (Samie, 2023).

Replacing:

Advocacy for broader solutions such as improved labor protections for immigrants or more comprehensive integration initiatives, could replace the focus on individual mentorship with systemic solutions. In addition, replacing this representation would involve shifting the narrative from one that centers on barriers to one that highlights opportunities for empowerment and inclusion. For instance, integration could be framed around the economic contributions of immigrant women, advocating for inclusive labor market practices that value diversity and multiculturalism. This could involve promoting entrepreneurship among immigrant women, enhancing support for skill recognition programs, and fostering inclusive workplace cultures (Cederberg, 2019). Finally, supporting community-led initiatives that empower immigrant and refugee women to lead their integration processes might offer an alternative representation (Sandhu, 2018). These initiatives could focus on collective action and community support rather than individual mentorship.

Step 7: Self-problematization:

To apply Step 7 to this analysis, I must consider if, as a critic, I might have overlooked something. The WPR approach emphasizes the need to challenge the power effects we inevitably create (as discussed earlier). Although the approach acknowledges the necessity of temporarily "fixing" meanings, it also provides an opportunity to question and "unfix" those meanings, a concept Lather refers to as a "doubled practice" (Bacchi & Eveline, 2019; Lather, 2001). Researchers are encouraged

to view themselves as culturally and politically invested individuals who critically evaluate the analytic categories they use (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010). Applying the seventh step of Carol Bacchi's WPR approach encourages a deep reflection on my role as a researcher and the potential biases I bring to the study (Bacchi, 2009). By being mindful of these factors, I can strive to produce a balanced and impactful analysis that positively contributes to understanding and improving integration efforts for non-Western immigrant women in Denmark.

As a non-Western immigrant woman living in Denmark, I bring a personal perspective to this research that could influence how I frame the problem and interpret the findings. My own experiences with integration and the labor market might shape my views, potentially highlighting issues such as language barriers, cultural differences, or discrimination based on my journey. This subjective lens could affect how I represent the barriers faced by others in similar situations (Bacchi, 2009). In addition, my background may lead me to emphasize certain barriers more than others, reflecting my challenges and successes. This focus could shape the representation of the problem, possibly stressing systemic issues like discrimination and lack of support over other factors. It's important to recognize how my experiences might color my analysis and ensure that I consider a variety of perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

The way I frame the problem in my research could impact policy discussions and public perceptions about integrating non-Western immigrant women into the Danish labor market. If I emphasize systemic barriers, my findings might advocate for broader policy interventions. On the other hand, focusing on individual-level solutions, such as mentoring programs, could shift the discourse toward personal empowerment and self-reliance (Lipsky, 2010). My research has implications for various stakeholders, including policymakers, NGOs, and the women supported by the KVINFO Mentor Network. By reflecting on my positionality, I can aim to present a balanced view that incorporates multiple perspectives, ensuring that my findings are inclusive and address the needs of all involved (Walby, 2011). This may include establishing that refugee and immigrant women from non-Western backgrounds also have a role to play in their integration into the labor market by being proactive in seeking jobs.

While my personal experience provides valuable context and empathy, I must balance this with objective analysis. Being transparent about my positionality in the thesis will help readers understand the lens through which I conduct my research, fostering a more nuanced and critical engagement with my work (Bacchi, 2009). Considering opinions from researchers who have different perspectives on this issue has enabled the analysis to be objective; while it is established that the KVINFO Mentor Network works, other researchers agree that there are deeper issues that these women go through that make it difficult for them to integrate as discussed in Question 6 above.

6. Conclusion

The primary research question explored in this thesis is how the KVINFO Mentor Network approach works in helping immigrant and refugee women from ethnic minority backgrounds overcome the barriers to their integration into the Danish labor market. In this chapter, I briefly recap my results and explain what my results mean and why they matter. I will also highlight avenues for further studies or analyses regarding my research.

In this research, I had set out to criticize KVINFOs Mentor Network to find out if their approach works. After considering what the Network believes are the barriers that prevent immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds from integrating into the labor market, it was established that these barriers are; insufficient Danish language skills, lack of education, lack of networks, and lack of knowledge about the Danish labor market (kvinfo.dk, 2023). As previously highlighted, the KVINFO Mentor Network approach works, as it achieves what it set out to.

The KVINFO Mentor Network assumes a multifaceted problem requiring a holistic approach, combining cultural adaptation, skill development, network building, and empowerment. There is an assumption that with the right support, these women have the agency and potential to overcome the barriers they face. The underlying belief is that mentorship is a highly effective tool in addressing these diverse and complex challenges, providing personalized and context-specific support. The network took stock of their 2022 efforts and had the following as their results: Most mentees got jobs or education. "In 2022, the KVINFO Mentor Network completed 63 courses, of which 45 were evaluated. It is important to mention that the mentees take various courses at the same time, meaning results are calculated as percentages of the total participants of specific courses. For instance, as evident from the statements from KVINFO Mentor Network mentees and mentors included in the 'Appendix' of this thesis, one specific mentee can be involved in various mentorship activities simultaneously such as; improving their Danish language skills, job seeking, involvement in education, among others, by the end of the mentorship program. Here are the key figures: 70% got a job or education during the mentoring process, 33% got a job, 36% got into education, 83% felt more motivated to get to work after the mentoring course 63% experienced that they had improved in Danish during the mentoring course" (KVINFO, 2022).

These numbers suggest that the initiative seems to work mostly in terms of motivating the mentees to look for work, and in helping them improve their language skills, as compared to their mentees getting jobs and education as participants also often report increased confidence and self-esteem. Participants of the Mentor Network showed notable improvements in their Danish language proficiency. The mentorship program boosted the confidence and self-efficacy of immigrant and refugee women. Many participants felt more empowered to seek employment and navigate the job application process independently. A significant number of mentees secured employment or internships during or after the mentorship program. The sustained employment outcomes indicate the program's success in facilitating long-term integration (KVINFO, 2022).

However, I aimed to explain how the framing of the problem of unemployment by the KVINFO Mentor Network helps its participants break the barriers that immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds face when participating in the Danish labor market, and how this problem of unemployment can be approached differently according to other researchers. I found that 'silences' around the topic include discrimination, health issues, negative social control, family responsibilities that prevent non-Western immigrant and refugee women from enrolling and completing Danish language classes, education and employment, and industrial distribution whereby these women are overrepresented in the secondary labor sector in Denmark, are the deeper issues that should also be addressed. Scholars such as Liversage (2009) suggest several labor market re-entry strategies: re-entry; promotion; and finally, going back to school, or re-education. This is because these women have shown interest in participating in integration initiatives as per KVINFOs Mentor Network which since its inception has had over 3300 participants (kvinfo.dk, 2023). I conclude that the issue of "unemployment" can be approached in different or less conventional ways, by addressing what is left 'unproblematic' in interpretations of the barriers to the integration of refugee and immigrant women from non-Western backgrounds into the Danish labor market. In addition, it is also important to mention that according to kvinfo.dk, "If one's social and professional network is limited, it is very difficult to get a job, and when it finally succeeds, it is often in jobs in the service sector with sparse contact with ethnic Danes" (2023).

These results matter as they answer one of the questions, I set out to answer in the beginning; 'How does the framing of the 'problem' of unemployment by KVINFOs Mentor Network from 2003 help its participants to break the barriers that immigrant and refugee women from non-Western backgrounds face when participating in the Danish labor market?', proving that their approach works. It achieves what it set out to. In addition, this research contributes to the academic discourse on immigrant integration by providing empirical evidence on the efficacy of mentorship programs. It adds a nuanced understanding of how targeted support can mitigate specific barriers faced by immigrant and refugee women. Finally, the success factors identified in the Mentor Network can be replicated in other similar integration programs to enhance their effectiveness. In terms of limitation of the study in general, the study primarily focused on short to medium-term outcomes as per the KVINFO Mentor Network approach. Therefore, longitudinal research is needed to assess the long-term impact of the Mentor Network on participants' career trajectories and overall integration.

Based on my findings and limitations, future perspectives and approaches to this study may include conducting longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of mentorship programs on labor market integration and career advancement of immigrant and refugee women, performing comparative studies between different mentorship programs and other types of integration initiatives to identify the most effective components and practices can be another area of research. For example, a comparison between IGU and the KVINFO Mentor Network. Expanding the research to include a broader demographic, including men and individuals from different ethnic backgrounds, to understand the varying impacts of mentorship across different groups could be another approach. Finally incorporating quantitative measures, such as employment rates, income levels, and job

retention rates, to provide more objective data on the effectiveness of mentorship programs is another approach that could be considered.

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Appendix

Appendix A: CODEBOOK

CODES	THEMES
Levels of education, vocational qualification, enrolment in Danish education, education "brought in" by non-Western refugee and immigrant women	Education and Employment
Responsibilities preventing them from completing Danish language school	Danish language skills
Overrepresentation in certain industries e.g service industry	Industry distribution
Discrimination by employers, stereotypical, preferential, societal discrimination	Discrimination
Negative social control of women from friends and family to not seek jobs,	Social control
Mental health due to trauma from areas of conflict	Healthcare

Appendix B: STATEMENTS FROM KVINFO MENTOR NETWORK'S MENTEES AND MENTORS

Experiences from Mentees:

When asked why they registered as mentees, three women had the following opinions:

"Through the mentornetværk I've finally met a Danish woman with the same professional background as myself. When I came to Denmark, I only knew my husband, his family, and their friends, and none of them works within my profession" Harpreet, 29, biotechnologist (p.3, n.d)

"I felt enormously relieved after the second meeting with my mentor. Now I was no longer alone with my problems in terms of applying for jobs and figuring out where I, with my qualifications, fit in jobwise. I've been successful in my home country, and I now believe that I will be successful here as well" Heidi, 43, a former florist (p.3, n.d)

"I recently received limited authorization to work as a nurse in Denmark. That's why I would like a mentor who can help me practice my Danish and fill me in on Danish hospital culture before I start working in a hospital" Mahsa, 28, nurse (p.3, n.d)

Experiences from Mentors:

When asked why they registered as mentors, three women had the following opinions:

"When I started my own company, I soon realized that networks are essential to making headway in Denmark. So far, all my jobs have come about due to my network and personal contacts" Grete, 44, engineer (p.2, n.d)

"I think it is a waste of human resources that so many people arriving in this country with good educations are simply marginalized. I can make a difference with my network and contacts, and my "list of friends" isn't closed either" Pernille, 30, project manager (p.2, n.d)

"I see it as my duty as a citizen to share valuable knowledge with immigrants and refugees. Amongst other things, I can offer knowledge about the Danish labor market and its many different codes" Laila, 50, trade union employee (p.2, n.d)

Other opinions from mentees and mentors:

Below are some opinions from participants of the KVINFO Mentor Network over the years. The information below has been collected from secondary data such as from KVINFO's YouTube channel, its website (https://kvinfo.dk/moed-fire-mentees/), and reports by KVINFO Mentor Network such as 'The Mentor Relationship: An Entrance to The Danish Labour Market'.

Disha Bhatt

She is a mentee from India who arrived in Denmark in 2018 and was a mentee between 2021-2022. She stated that through her conversations with her mentor Jeanette, she also got to practice speaking Danish. She said that "it is difficult to learn Danish, but she reads and understands it now, and that her goal is to become fluent in Danish". (kvinfo.dk, 2023). She aso states that before she came to Denmark, she worked as a sales employee in Dubai (kvinfo.dk, 2023). But, she soon found out that the labor market is completely different here, and it was difficult for her to find a job. Her mentor, Jeanette, has, among other things, helped her adapt her CV and expectations for the Danish labor market (kvinfo.dk, 2023). After an internship period of 14 days, she got a job as a cleaning assistant at Svendborg Hospital. She said that in the long term, she will probably try to find a job within her old industry, as a sales associate for example, but is also very happy with the job she was able to get (kvinfo.dk, 2023).

Yousra

She is an Algerian lady who has been residing in Denmark since 2017 and has been a mentee since 2021. She stated that since she came to Denmark, she has been looking for work (kvinfo.dk, 2023). From Algeria, she has a degree as an architectural engineer, but said that it is difficult to get a job here in Denmark because of the language. She now reads and understands Danish but does not speak Danish fluently yet. She said that she was losing hope of finding a job, but through her mentoring conversations, she regained faith that it can be done. She got an internship at the Culture Campus in Gjellerup and although the internship is unpaid, she feels like it is a step forward (kvinfo.dk, 2023).

Afsaneh

She is a mentee who had a university education behind her from Iran. She considers the language to be one of the most important things to be able to do in Denmark and at the same time one of the most important barriers in relation to finding a job (KVINFO, 2008, p.53). "When you can't express yourself properly, it's just hopeless," she said. She also said that one of the worst things she can face is when people can't understand what she's saying, so it's important for her to keep improving her language skills (KVINFO, 2008, p,53). Birthe, her mentor helps her with this, and for Afsaneh, the encouragement and support she has received from Birthe has been decisive for her continued desire to work with the Danish language (KVINFO, 2008, p,53).

In addition, she was a trained graphic artist from Iran and worked as such for two years before meeting and reuniting with her Iranian husband in 2000. After a few years of unemployment, she decided to attend business school (KVINFO, 2008, p,53). "Among other things, her mentor Birthe has helped her with writing job applications and CVs, and together they have achieved Afsaneh's goal of getting a job. She is now employed in a bookshop full-time, and continues to benefit greatly from Birthe, who helps her improve her Danish skills" (KVINFO, 2008, p,53). She still has the dream of one day working as a graphic artist, "but right now the most important thing for me is to be up and running", she said (KVINFO, 2008, p,53).

Sanaz

She was a 29-year-old at the time and was from Iran. Together with her mentor Charlotte, she had a lot of focus on the Danish language (KVINFO, 2008, p.50). She is a mentee who turned to KVINFOs mentoring network with the desire for a combination of a professional and social match. Sanaz's network in Denmark was limited, and before she met the mentor, the case workers at the municipality were the only Danes she had contact with (KVINFO, 2008, p.50). She had difficulty finding her way around Danish society and didn't know where to go to get a job or how. For Sanaz, it was therefore about several things. Charlotte could help her with the small and big things in everyday life such as letters that had to be written or explained or rules that had to be interpreted. (KVINFO, 2008, p.50). She also received assistance in tweaking their CVs and application letters to standards that are preferred by Danish employers, being assisted in interview processes, among others.

They did a lot of job applications, but she couldn't get a job because she wasn't good at Danish, and she did not have an education from Denmark. However, according to Sanaz, her mentor Charlotte

helped her in terms of bridging her with the company Sanaz worked for at the time. It was also through her contacts in the cleaning industry that Sanaz initially got a 3-month temporary job as a cleaning assistant and was later offered permanent employment (KVINFO, 2008, p.50).

Fardowsa Jamac Qalad

She is a lady who has been residing in Denmark since 1998 when she was 16 years old. She has been a KVINFO Mentor Network mentee since 2022 who expresses her difficulty finding work and difficulty looking for work (kvinfo.dk, 2023). But after 18 years on cash benefits, she really wanted to go out to work. She one day read a note in a hallway that one could get a mentor and she went ahead to get one in March 2022. Together, they talk about work and look at websites for jobs. She wrote an application for a nursing home and four days after her interview she got a temporary job at Blomstergården Nursing Home (kvinfo.dk, 2023). She now gets enough shifts that she no longer needs supplementary cash assistance. Through the mentoring program, she is now motivated to take a SOSU course and that is why she has started the 9th grade at VUC, because it is a requirement to enter the SOSU school (kvinfo.dk, 2023).

Fartun Abdullahi

She is a Somali immigrant woman who has been living in Denmark since 1993 when she was 2 years old. She was a KVINFO Mentor Network mentee between 2009 to 2010 who heard about the program when she was in high school, and although unsure what she wanted to do, she dreamed of going to university to better herself. She ended up applying to Aarhus University and studied at an international faculty in Herning. During her bachelor's degree, she applied for an exchange stay in South Korea and later got a scholarship in South Korea. She then graduated with a master's degree in *public relations and advertising* and now works for the Danish Business Authority (kvinfo.dk, 2023)

Fartun Aweys

She is a mentee from Somalia who said that the Mentoring Network program gave her the strength and will power to be able to know more and find out what she wanted, and that now she knows what she wants and has had several part-time student jobs in a year which she had never had before (KVINFO, 2013). She also said she now knows what she wants to do at the University, and she will now move away from home for the first time to take care of herself. She appreciates that the mentoring has impacted her life in a big way as she has gained so much confidence too.

Heidi

She was a 43-year-old florist at the time. She stated that: "After my second meeting with my mentor, I felt enormous relief. Now I was no longer alone with my problems in relation to job hunting and finding out where I fit in jobwise with my qualifications. I have been successful in my home country and now believe that I will probably get it here too" (KVINFO, 2008, p.4).

Kanako

She is a mentee who is married in Denmark, has an economics and office education from Japan, and worked for 7 years in a credit company before she came to Denmark. The first years in Denmark were hard, and the language was particularly a big challenge for Kanako (KVINFO, 2008, p.48). Her network was limited, and she felt very alone. After the language school, she began an education as a dental technician, but never quite settled into the education, and therefore stopped again after a few years. She contacted KVINFOs mentoring network because she wanted help finding a job and learning more about Danish workplace culture (KVINFO, 2008, p.48). The meeting with her mentor Karen was the turning point for Kanako. She received assistance in tweaking their CVs and application letters to standards that are preferred by Danish employers, being assisted in interview processes, among others. Together they drew up an application for an integration position within the financial sector, and when she was called for a job interview shortly afterwards, she received good advice and guidance along the way from Karen (KVINFO, 2008, p.48).

Faiza

She was a mentee under KVINFOs Mentor Network who said that when she was in tenth grade or when she was taking her preparatory course, the teachers did not believe that she could manage on her own, or get an education, even though they had never seen her fail a single exam (KVINFO, 2013). She then states that she met Tine who was her Mentor under KVINFOs Mentor Network and was fantastic to her. She even remembers the first time she met Tine because up until that point, there had been very few people who had faith in her abilities. In their first meeting, they discussed her only concern, which was if her accent was comprehensible whereby Tine replied, "Yes of course I can understand you, you speak Danish fluently!" (KVINFO, 2013). She felt relieved and for the first time, she believed she could learn things, and that she could manage on her own, even if others believed otherwise. This could be seen as a way of KVINFOs Mentor Network, but it was only possible because of the mentee expressing what she had gone through while young.

KVINFOs Mentor Network, through its thorough process in matching mentors and mentees in terms of common interests, has been been able to form matches that have led to formation of friendships between the participants. Apart from discussing matters to do with Danish language skills, Education and Networks, they also discuss personal challenges that mentees might be going through. This shows the initiatives' effort towards addressing what is at times left "unproblematic" by thinking about the "problems" differently. A mentor named Birgitte Baadegaard, for instance, approached her relationship with her mentee differently (KVINFO, 2013).

Birgitte Baadegaard

She is a mentor whose aim was to help her mentee break the barriers to the integration of her mentee as stated by KVINFOs Mentor Network: lack of Danish language skills, lack of a network, and lack of education. She later realized the constraints within her first approach and decided to instead be flexible, because what she thought were the 'problems' or barriers were not necessarily what her

mentee considered as her personal challenges, and that her solutions were not necessarily what the mentee needed. So, Brigitte had to be adaptable and address the points relevant to her mentee's wishes (KVINFO, 2013). Birgitte also said that the Network gives her pleasure and enthusiasm and has given her some stimulating alternative contacts through people she would have never met if she had not joined the Mentor Network (KVINFO, 2013).

Johanne Skov

She is a mentor who believes that allowing her mentee Fartun to be independent led to Fartun working harder in her activities and even overtaking Johanne in their small projects. This was because they were both nervous in the beginning that Johanne automatically took control of their relationship. She however said that her relationship with Fartun developed overtime and they became more 'equal' than they were at first, hence improving the outcome.