Race, Gender and Entrepreneurship
The Perception of Self within the Social Construct of the 21st Century Afropolitan Identity
Abstract

This study explores the role identity plays in entrepreneurial opportunity identification as well as entrepreneurial engagements. At the core of the research problematization stands the very definition of national, ethnic, personal and constructed identities as perceived by the actors themselves versus others. Using a phenomenological approach, the extent to which upbringing, personal experiences and social environments shaped Afropolitan actors’ perceptions of self and their attitudes were carefully analysed. The results showed that beyond cultural identity and group belonging, entrepreneurial engagements and decisions were first and foremost built upon self-identity born out of lived experiences (crucibles). The uncovering of layers of consciousness, as well as reflections by the writer, and intersections add important elements of uniqueness to this paper.

Keywords

Entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, embodiment, sense-making, leadership, culture, identity, Afropolitanism, multiculturalism, globalization, feminism, Black feminism, racism, employment, female leadership
Acknowledgements

My interest in culture, identity and entrepreneurship started in my early teenage years. Although I have always sought answers to many of the questions plaguing me – some of which I have addressed within this paper – I never truly had the opportunity or time to face these head on. I am therefore very humbled to have been given the opportunity to conduct research in a matter so close to my heart. In many ways, this paper was about being and becoming me. I therefore want to express my sincerest gratitude to Prof. Daudi who supported me in undertaking this research and encouraged me to become an active part and parcel of it, leaving my footprints and fingerprints on each and every page. I also want to say a very warm and heartfelt ‘Thank You’ to every single actor who influenced my research, who freely shared their experience, and opened up about their background, perception and identity. Although I could not include all participants of my research into this paper, I appreciate all of your important contributions to my research and writing process. In addition to my active actors and participants - who have all been named within my methodology - I received immeasurable support from my close friends and family. I therefore want to specially appreciate my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Makinwa, who lovingly and patiently cared for me during this research, supporting me emotional, mentally and financially, putting up with my short temper and often unpleasant attitude, as well as my dear friend and mentor Moses Ida-Michaels, and trusted friends Oluwatoyin Jawando, Adelagun Olusoga, and Peter ‘Papa Twins’ who believed in me, encouraged me and continuously supported me. Last but certainly not least, I want thank God, The Lover of my Soul, for ability, creativity, grace and strength. I am grateful. Thank You!

Olayinka Makinwa
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“In matters of style, swim with the current. In matters of principle, stand like a rock.”

~ Thomas Jefferson
1 ON AFROPOLITANISM: AN INTRODUCTION

This first chapter aims to lay the foundation upon which this study was founded, as well as offer an understanding to the most central theme and issue of the paper: the concept of Afropolitanism in light of identities, attitude formation and belonging. It furthermore lays the backdrop against which this paper is to be read and understood.

According to Roberts (1993) women experience gender in different ways. In regards to oppression, Black women are typically simultaneously faced with the issues of race, gender and class: the complex combination of these three becoming effectively more than the sum of their parts.

Although the glass-ceiling has come to represent the unique set of challenges women are faced with when seeking to attain leadership positions or climb the metaphorical corporate ladder (Eagly & Carli, 2007), it has long been argued that the glass-ceiling has failed to lend its voice to the unique challenges professional Black women in business and leadership face. Bell and Nkomo (2001) suggested the term concrete wall to describe this distinct struggle, specifically addressing gender and race issues in relation to their impact on leadership. Outside the African continent, debates about Black entrepreneurship, businesses and leadership have so far predominantly been analysed within the American context (Butler, 2005; Brown & Irby, 2010; Cook & Glass, 2013; Ogbolu & Singh 2013). The subject of the aforementioned group of individuals within a European setting – and with important and diverse local distinctions and considerations – is yet to garner any serious academic consideration. It has furthermore been argued (Rosser-Mims, 2010) that Black women in leadership – particularly those who have acquired leadership positions through non-conventional means – are predominantly concerned with lifting the Black community “out of racial, economic, and educational subjugation” (p.5) and that entrepreneurship for these Black women, consequently, exists as a tool for change and advancement, rather than actual profitable engagement. To what extent this holds true for my actors specifically will be discussed within this paper.

Whereas there are large numbers of Black (first, second, third generation) individuals and professionals in many European capitals, opportunities for these strangely differ. In order to gain a somewhat deeper insight into the matter of race, gender and entrepreneurship we will take a closer look at diversity, employment and entrepreneurship within a specific social context: London.

According to recent statistics (Office for National Statistics, 2012) England is becoming increasingly diverse. While the majority of the population still identifies as “White”,
results from the past 20 years show a steady decline: falling from 94.1% in 1991 to 86% in 2011. London was found to be the most ethnically diverse area, due to its global importance, rather open economic and financial borders and international attractiveness. It is unsurprisingly home to professionals from around the world, offering a plethora of business opportunities and encouraging entrepreneurial engagement on both a small and large scale.

However, there are manifold questions that need to be looked at here: How do black professionals really perceive this statistical openness? How do black professionals – women specifically – compete within this labour market, and to what extent are opportunities fair? Do perceived structural, institutional or cultural limitations drive people out of employment and into self-employment? In terms of fitting into this increasingly diverse arena: to what extent does their perception of identity influence them? What role does identity play in entrepreneurial engagements? There are copious gaps that need to be filled here.

Taking a closer look at the issue of identity, Taiye Selasi coined the word “Afropolitan” in 2005, giving the 21st century “Western African” a name. The Afropolitan, being an “originally African” person with a multicultural background and upbringing, feels a deep sense of belonging to more than just one ethnic or cultural group. S/he is a glocal, feeling at home in numerous places of the world – belonging to all and somewhat none. The Afropolitan person represents the Black individual whose response to the question of “Where are you from?” is usually followed by a pause and a follow-up question of, “But, where are you really from?” causing her to reflect and – more often than not – come up with an incomplete answer in order to forgo complexity. The Afropolitan person represents the Black individual who refuses to simply be called a “second or third generation Nigerian/ Ghanaian/ Cameroonian” etc., who – although proud of his African ancestry – is a product of many more cultural, ethnic and national influences. The Afropolitan individual represents a person who is just as much Ghanaian as they are British, as much Nigerian as they are Austrian, and as much African as they are European. The Afropolitan individual represents a person who is just as comfortable being both and being fluid; effectively privileging culture over country.

Within the context of the Afropolitan professional, I have noticed significant increases over the past decade: (1) there has been a steady rise of Afropolitans – in London predominantly – attaining enviable positions within the corporate world: be it banking and finance, business management or analysis, medicine or law; (2) there has been a parallel increase of Black professionals reacquainting themselves with their ethnic/national roots: their parents’ native language, foods, clothing, and general aspects of a cultural identity long ignored or buried; and (3) there has been a correlating surge in these individuals’ engagement in (social) entrepreneurship: more often than not with their identity at its quintessential core. I find that this holds true for female
entrepreneurs specifically: entrepreneurs who are appreciating the fact that the changing world of work now allows them to combine their diverse backgrounds, skills and experiences with their visionary passion and feminine traits.

The 21st Century Afropolitan European Woman in business, consequently, is more than just a Black woman in business; she represents a new and very different subgroup of Black women: a woman with a profound awareness of her multiple cultural identities; one who is both shaped by both her local as well as ethnic experiences and who is willing to embrace them all – to whatever degree or extent – forming her own new identity and carrying this forward into her world.

If culture is a socialization process marked by teaching and learning (Livesey & Lawson, 2008), how does that impact upon one’s ideas about entrepreneurship? Is an entrepreneur’s behaviour contingent on her social reality and culture? And if so; to what extent? Is identity – how I define myself, how I define others and how my beliefs of my identity impact upon my beliefs of yours – cultural, personal or both? To what extent does one’s personal identity specifically shape or restrict entrepreneurial engagements and behaviours? These are just a few questions that arose during the research. There are various gaps that need to be filled here.

With this thesis I accordingly aim to fill these by personally deepening my understanding of the concept of the Afropolitan identity in relation to entrepreneurial, professional and social engagement, as well as contributing to the new academic discourse on Afropolitanism in general. The main focus of the study, thus, lies in developing understanding and creating meaning around the topic of the “Afropolitan identity in view of entrepreneurial engagements” as well as possibly highlighting challenges that uniquely relate to contemporary Black female entrepreneurs and professionals.

This paper seeks to identify to what extent individuals’ social engagements and entrepreneurial activities are shaped and influenced – by their environment, their upbringing, their multiple and shifting identities, their attitudes and their sense of belonging – as well as in what manner individuals fit into this social construct of the Afropolitan identity. As a 21st century Afropolitan woman myself, I have chosen to carry myself through this research; quintessentially becoming a part of the study, an actor, myself (reflexivity). As a result of having included myself into this research, it is important to point out that subjectivity has become an integral part of this study too.

Taking the reader on a personal journey of reflections and growth, this research is marked with my footprint and fingerprints all-through.

1.1 The Research Question

Based on the aforementioned, research on “The Perception of Self within the Social Construct of the 21st Century (Afropolitan) Identity” emerged. The quintessential points being the interconnectedness of the environment with the perception of identity by
others versus self, as well as the influence these play individual’s professional, social and entrepreneurial engagements.

Research Question:
To what extent does one’s identity influence one’s entrepreneurial activities or professional engagements?

At the core of the research problematization stands the very definition of national, ethnic, personal and constructed identity as perceived by the actors themselves, and the role this plays in entrepreneurship and business. My primary target audience (or actors) being 21st Century Black female professionals of Nigerian origin, based in London.

1.2 Focus of the Study
As entrepreneurship – as an economic subject – has existed for roughly 300 years, many scholars from Richard Cantillon and Jean Baptiste Say, to Schumpeter and Kirzner have sought to share their ideas about what true entrepreneurship implies and entails (Bjerke, 2013). As a multidisciplinary approach, it is argued, the subject is now looked at and discussed from manifold viewpoints and within a wide range of arenas – political, social, and economical. In citing Bridge (2003), Bjerke (2013) describes the two main views of entrepreneurship (the narrow or American view versus the broad or Scandinavian view), making a clear distinction between entrepreneurship as a purely economic phenomenon aimed at satisfying demands, and entrepreneurship as belonging to the society aimed at meeting needs (pp. 4-7).

While it has been said that entrepreneurship implies discovering, assessing and exploiting opportunities in the form of new products, production processes or strategies (Cuervo, Riberio & Roig, 2007); and Mintrom and Vergari (1996) assert that all entrepreneurs perform three main functions, namely a) discovering unfulfilled needs and suggesting innovative means to meet them, b) bearing the reputational risks of new ventures, and c) serving to mobilize collective action problems” (p. 422); within this study, when talking about entrepreneurship, I am referring to the previously described “broad view of entrepreneurship”, the Scandinavian view. The entrepreneur, thus, does not act for personal glory but for the benefit of society at large and the positive outcome of the entrepreneurial process itself (Bjerke, 2013, p.5). The entrepreneur is more than simply a pace-setter, spotting opportunities by seeing more, faster, and farther than others do (Leroy Eims, n.d., cited in Maxwell 2007, p.38), he or she is an agent.

Taking a close look at the role of exclusion and social change, and laying environmental variables such as culture and societal values against psychological characteristics (the need for achievement, the capacity to control, tolerance for uncertainty, tendency to take risk) and non-psychological ones (education, experience, social network), we will
uncover to what extent socio-economic and institutional elements act as motivational factors for entrepreneurship (Cuervo et al., 2007).

### 1.3 Justification of Topic

As the Afropolitan identity specifically – and how this identity shapes or influences one’s professional engagement and entrepreneurial behaviour – has not been discussed in any way so far, this paper aims to lay a foundation upon which fellow researchers can build subsequent studies; thereby hopefully realizing a societal need to create understanding and foster insightful action.

Understanding how misguided it would be to conduct a study with a limited number of individuals within European cities and calling it a representation or sample, this study intentionally focuses on the experience of a limited number of female Afropolitan entrepreneurs within their social reality.

### 1.4 Limitations of Study

This research commenced with a clear understanding of the presence of an essential limitation: myself. Being an Afropolitan woman, there was no realistic probability of distancing myself – be it academically or emotionally – from the research at hand. Thus, I became an integral part of the research: consciously analysing my thought-patterns and perceptions, continuously questioning, challenging and analysing my own feelings and responses to the data collected.

Consequently, this paper presents – through the lens of a young female Afropolitan professional (myself) – motivational factors for becoming entrepreneurial (push and pull-factors), as well as influence(r)s and distinct challenges Black female professionals in the business world face. It then takes a somewhat broader approach: Looking at the journey of a dozen further second generation nationals, the research uncovers and discovers challenges in and of multicultural Europe.

The final part of this paper merely touches upon the most recent developments in migration and European migration policies. While there is a lot change and development in this sphere and consequently a lot to be discussed here, due to limitations in time and resources, this paper does not discuss them in detail, but connects the matter at hand – Afropolitans, Black female entrepreneurship, multi-culturalism and political leadership – to a wider European context.
1.5 The Structure of Content

This paper is divided into four parts and is to be understood in light of layers being removed; gradually digging deeper into the issue at hand and uncovering as well as discovering patterns and experiences.

The first part includes the first two chapters, the introduction and methodology, aimed at giving the reader an overview about the core issue as well as how the research was conducted. This part lays the backdrop against which this study is to be read and understood.

The second part of the paper presents three important elements (chapters 3-5): the first layer, the consciousness according to the actors, deciphers motivational factors for entrepreneurial engagements; while the second layers deals with the unconscious, looking at influences and influencers; and the third layer, the subconscious, looks at cultural and personal identities, finding links between them and my actors’ lived experiences.

While I zoom closely into the issue of Black female entrepreneurship in the first two parts of the paper, I am zooming out in the third – including a somewhat broader perspective – and even more so in the fourth part of this research paper – expanding my research issue, looking over the wider landscape and the implications of my findings on a European scale.

The third part of this paper (chapter 6), thus, throws light on the issue of identity and Blackness from a different stand-point: a complementary male perspective. It was intentionally formulated as a speech to add drama and emotion, thus capturing the reader's mind.

The fourth and final part of this paper (chapters 7-9) presents my final conclusion on identity and its place in multicultural Europe. Having widened my scope to include the unique experience of Afropolitan professionals, as well as professionals of diverse ethnic backgrounds, it became apparent that many of the issued Afropolitan individuals – both male and female – faced, were not necessarily uniquely exclusive to them; thus giving rise the question of how to forge ahead.

The structure of this paper – that is, the arrangement of its chapters – has been chosen deliberately. As well as taking the reader on my research journey, the reader is made part of my personal journey of growth and personal development through my reflections following each chapter.
Chapter 1
On Afropolitanism: An Introduction

Chapter 2
The Methodological Framework

Chapter 3
Motivational Factors

Chapter 4
Influence(r)s

Chapter 5
Identity Formation

Chapter 6
A Complementary Perspective

Chapter 7
The Fluidity of Identity

Chapter 8
Multiculturalism and Europe

Chapter 9
Conclusion

Figure 1.1: The Structure of Content
2 THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter offers an introduction to methodology in general, as well as the chosen methodological approach in specific. It briefly highlights the uniqueness of the Actors’ View in creating and analysing collected qualitative data, introduces the actors that contributed to this research paper, as well as summarizes the researcher’s journey role in the process, giving rise to the emerging structure of the paper. The chapter furthermore introduces and explains important sections of the paper – such as reflections and intersections – in order to facilitate the reader’s understanding.

One of the first challenges individuals face when conducting research is deciding on a specific topic. Having decided on a topic, individuals are then faced with defining the question and narrowing it down sufficiently to make it practicable, rather than being overwhelmed by superfluous data. And although an excessive amount of data makes it impossible to constrain oneself to a principal idea (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.36, 147), it is paramount to frame a research question broadly enough to allow for flexibility and the possibility to research a phenomenon thoroughly (p. 40). Strauss and Corbin (1990) assert that the way in which one asks a research question is important, as it offers a consideration on the researcher’s own perception and understanding of how the world functions, as well as sets the foundation for the methods and techniques used (p.39) in collecting and analysing data. The plethora of methodological approaches often makes it difficult to choose one specific method or research design for a particular study. Although many social scientists have come to see the benefits of combining qualitative a quantitative methodological approaches (Della Porta & Keating, 2008, p.7), I have chosen to focus exclusively on qualitative data collection and processing.

2.1 My Methodological Approach

2.1.1 The Actors’ View

Within the Actors’ View, reality is a social construct and the entrepreneur an active participant of the system, advocating knowledge and creating interactions (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009, p. 52). Based on this assertion, Aspers (2004) states that entrepreneurial leadership explanations, thus, may well vary from participant to participant, as her personal meaning-structure is being studied and the individual’s “subjective perspective is the starting-point of the analysis” (p.1-2). The actor thus approaches reality on its own terms, takes responsibility and desires more than to merely come up with descriptions: he desires to drive change (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009, p. 52, 54).

As a phenomenological approach, the foundation of my research was based on the lived experiences and narrations of my actors. Investigating the effects and the perceptions
these experiences have had on my actors, phenomenology distinguishes the phenomenon (through the lens of the one whose experience it is) from the noumena (what truly is). Differentiating the experienced from the fact, emphasis is drawn on the subjectivity of reality (Bound & Campbell, 2011). It is an approach uniquely based on personal experiences, knowledge and subjectivity and laying emphasis on personal perceptions and interpretation; and is thus free from preconceptions (Hussler, 1970). As Lester (1999) describes it, the purpose of phenomenology is to describe rather than explain; starting from true experiences and observations, rather than hypotheses and theories.

In emphasising my actors’ “constructed and experienced reality” (Bjerke, 2013, p. 119), specially attention is given to the individual and social world surrounding my actors, as well as the sense and meaning ascribed to this.

With a variety of methods used in phenomenologically-based research, within this study dialogues, interviews, conversations, and focus group discussions were predominantly held for qualitative data collection. Seeking to find the unique within the measurable, I – as the researcher – sought out parallels, using the grounded theory approach.

2.1.2 Grounded Theory

At the centre of grounded theory is the powerful interplay between the observed and the experienced (Daly, 2007, p.227), as well as the process of “coding”: the route through which data are broken, hypothesised, and combined to form theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Daly (2007, p. 231 ff.) explains the Stages of Coding as follows:

- **Stage 1 : Open Coding and The Creation of Concepts**
  Once verbal data has been collected, it must immediately be transcribed and analysed. Open-coding infers dissecting (“opening”) the data and naming it.

- **Stage 2: Creating Category Concepts**
  Emerging concepts are put together to form higher levels of notion (categories). This can only happen once enough data has been collected to form themes in data.

- **Stage 3: Making Linkages**
  Having collected and analysed the data, it is necessary to explain how the different parts work together and influence each other.

- **Stage 4: Creating a Theoretical Storyline**
  Finally, the fragments must be put together in a “sense-making” way, telling a story based on main categories chosen, specific elements picked, and relationships and processes explained).

Grounded theory, thus, merges both the collection of data and the analysis of data; where I, as the researcher, discover rather than construct (Willig, 2013, p.72, 77).
Within grounded theory, objectivity is just as important as sensitivity. While objectivity implies maintaining a somewhat sceptic disposition and regarding all collected data as provisional, possessing sensitivity means looking beyond that which is obvious, having insight and giving meaning (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.46). Comparisons are important, as they allow individuals to understand the world around them, as well as quickly move the researcher away from focusing on very specific cases to drawing more abstract but general pictures (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, pp.80-83). The Flip-Flop Technique, which turns issues inside-out or upside-down, as well as Waving the Red Flag, which includes biases, prejudices, beliefs and assumptions into the investigation, are suggestions for comparative techniques (pp.94-97). Having recognized basic underlying assumptions and given them a voice, the importance now lies in stepping back and critically analysing them (p.7).

2.2 My Role as Researcher

Authenticity has become an integral part of the academic discourse of leadership (George, 2015; Ibarra, 2015; George, Sims, McLean & Mayer, 2007). Accordingly, I sought to uncover just how important authenticity in light of self-identity was for Black female entrepreneurs and to what extent this was consciously or subconsciously carried into their entrepreneurial engagements (embodiment). This phenomenological approach perfectly placed the actor at the very centre of the research; making allowances for - and indeed embracing - subjectivity and the significance of lived experiences; thereby to making the actors’ realities (their socially constructed world) most meaningful.

My intention – as an aspiring entrepreneur who has gone through an identity crisis herself – was to discover and uncover the relationships between culture, personal identity and embodied entrepreneurship. Having been tagged different in an environment that officially promotes but actually fears diversity, my role was to offer individuals a platform upon which to share their own experience in a productive and constructive manner; offering insights and stimulating communication. My intention was to paint a vivid picture of the unique challenges and opportunities that existed for Black female entrepreneurs within the diverse and changing world or work, business and entrepreneurship.

My goal was to gain a deeper understanding of people I had defined as being “Afropolitans”, people who – or so I thought initially – were just like myself. As a conscious researcher, however, the creator of knowledge within the actor’s view (Arnbor & Bjerke, 2009, p.20), I understood reality to be relative – rather than absolute – and thus consciously applied myself to careful listening, questioning, and analysing; looking for cues and interpreting them cautiously; taking note of both verbal and non-verbal communication, meaning, and deeper intentions. It was paramount to build rapport
and empathy with my actors, as I understood the value and depth of information shared to be dependent upon our personal relationship and a certain level of trust. As a person who typically takes things at face-value, neither probing nor reading between the lines, the development of my own consciousness and social awareness, perhaps, stood at the centre of my knowledge creation and formation.

2.3 On The Study

2.3.1 Applied Research Methods

Conducting interviews, forming dialogues and holding conversations – based on the below key elements – formed the most central part and main source of my qualitative data collection.

![Applied Research Methods Diagram]

**Figure 2.1: Applied Research Methods** | Dialogue Structure

2.3.1.1 Dialogues

Dialogues imply a contribution on both parts: learning from each other, gaining deeper insights, contribute in equal measures and thereby jointly creating the discourse. In dialogues stories, experiences and emotions are freely shared and participants regarded as equal contributors to the discourse.

Drawing upon my personal network and connections, I could identify a large number of dialogue partners. In addition to those I knew personally, a large number of entrepreneurs were suggested to me at the end of sessions, as well as on social media. Announcements and tags on social media sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook added to my pool of potential entrepreneurs. Being faced with a large sample of potentials, I took a conscious decision to cover diverse fields of entrepreneurial engagements in order
to gain as varied a pool of information and experiences as possible. My dialogue partners were:

- **Sola Abiola-James**: a Lead Business Analyst with broad knowledge of and experience within the public sector – specifically business and policy analysis. She was born and raised in Vienna, Austria to Nigerian parents and educated in London, U.K., holding a BA in International Relations & Law and a MSc in Public Policy and Management. She is the founder of His Bride, a Christian lifestyle-consultancy firm.

- **Abiola Egbeyemi**: a Business Manager, holding a BSC in Law and Economics, as well as a Master's in International Business Management. Her career spans an impressive resume of working for international investment and telecommunication, and finance corporations. She was born and educated in London and is founder of Jezreel Designs, a fashion-line specialized on the production of exclusively hand-crafted high-quality African accessories.

- **Detola Amure**: a Senior Business Analyst. She was born in the United Kingdom, educated in Nigeria and South Africa and holds a BSc in Computer Science and MSc in Operational Research. Her professional “business analysis” career spans numerous countries and industries. She is founder of Super Working Mum, a consultancy firm or working mothers, and quit her professional job just weeks prior to our dialogue session, now exclusively focusing on and running her business.

- **Frances Ore**: a marketing officer at the Austrian Chamber of Commerce in Lagos, Nigeria. She holds a BA in Community Sector Management and takes pride in her professional background as a Sexual Health Specialist for the NHS Newham and Tower Hamlets in London. She supports Jezreel Designs and is founder of the Pleasure Box Concept, a company focusing on restoring filial and conjugal intimacy through education, exploration and communication.

- **Mariam Ify Lawal**: an employee at Amy and co-founder of Crown Rose, an African-print swimwear line founded in London. She was born and educated in London – to Nigerian parents – and holds both a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree in Marketing.

During this process special attention was given to the use of language (metaphors, cultural expressions, and symbols), as well as non-verbal communication to construe meaning. As the first dialogue sessions took place via Skype, there was a need to follow-up on my findings in person, allowing each actor reflect upon my analyses and share additional reflections.
2.3.1.2 A Complementary perspective

Having conducted my aforementioned dialogues, I sought to gain additional insights from a different perspective - a male perspective - and decided to hold a conversation with my friend and mentor Moses Ida-Michaels: an IT consultant, public speaker, author, husband and father to four daughters. With a professional experience that spans across three continents, 22 African nations and a myriad of success stories, I understood that his deep insights to Black entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurship both in Africa and the diaspora would be a great addition to my personal development, as well as the content and development of this paper.

I was not mistaken. A conscious as well as emotional shift happened during our conversation; causing me to expand my research beyond the borders of London and the spheres of entrepreneurial engagement. Was there a comparison that could be made beyond my initial assumptions? Could my reality have been just that – mine? Would an extended research into the matter of “self-identity” within more or less diverse societies alter my existing frames of references or enforce them? What further insights could be gained? I decided to include further conversations and interviews into this study, creating and embracing intersections.

2.3.1.3 Conversations and interviews

Having expanded my base of participants, I included Afropolitan professionals into my data collection in order to ascertain and analyse to what extent identity and group belonging influenced professional engagements; highlighting intersections and drawing similarities or dissimilarities wherever possible. The purpose of these conversations and interviews was to ascertain to what extent the central themes within this paper – being identities, attitude formation and belonging – would be reflected outside the concept of Afropolitanism.

I thus included the following participants into my study:

- Demola Soremekun is an Oxford University graduate and Organizational Change and Development expert, currently working within Organizational Change and Service Transition at the National Counter-Terrorism Policing Headquarters in London. He was born in England, spent 7 years schooling in Kaduna, Nigeria, and currently lives and works in London. He furthermore holds an extensive academic and professional background in “behavioural, cultural, business and organizational change”.

- Martina Kehinde is a professional accountant. She was born in Vienna (to Nigerian parents), moved to Maryland, USA, age 14, went to university in Northampton, England, and currently works as a contracted accountant in London.
Henrietta O. was born and raised in Vienna (to Nigerian parents) and currently works as a human resources manager within the social sector.

Doreen O. was born and raised in Vienna (to Nigerian parents) and has been working for Austrian Federal Ministries for eight years (Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Interior).

Yejide Faniyi was born and raised in Vienna (to Nigerian parents), studied in London and currently works at Vienna’s Wilhelminenspital as a bio-scientist.

Anais Hattmannsdorfer is of Malagasy and Austrian origin and was raised in France. Her family and her moved to Austria when she was aged 14. She currently lives in Purkersdorf, studies in Krems, and works at the international jewellery store ANNA in Vienna.

Mide Jones was born and raised in Austria, spent a few years living and schooling in Nigeria, studied Business Management in the United Kingdom and currently works for Porsche Austria in Vienna.

2.3.1.4 Focus group discussion

Having concluded my formal education at the VBS (Vienna Bilingual School), I decided to invite a group of friends to share their experiences in relation to “identity at work” too. I found this group of individuals unique as it was made up of individuals of manifold cultures and unique backgrounds, thus capable of adding an interesting and invaluable culturally qualitative perspective to this study:

Nira Dejust is of Austrian and French origin, spent her formative years schooling in India, grew up in Austria, and currently lives and works as a social media marketing manager in the United Kingdom.

Jeny Puthusseril is of Indian origin, was born and raised in Austria, studied at Cambridge University and Imperial College in the United Kingdom, and has worked for one of the world’s largest pharmaceutical companies in Austria.

Camilla Snow is of Korean/Austrian origin, has lived and was educated in a four Asian cities. She currently lives, studies and works in Austria.

Jeffrey Sniper is of Italian/Austrian origin, spent his formative years studying in India, and currently lives and works in Vienna, Austria.

Anton Volt Jr. is of Indian origin and was born, raised, educated in and currently works in Vienna, Austria.

Sui Qi is of Chinese origin, was born, raised, educated in and currently works in Vienna, Austria. He has very strong ties to France and Asia, as both leisure and work regularly take him there.
2.3.2 Data Analysis

Having computed and analysed my data (transcripts), roughly a dozen issues crystallized on various levels. These issues were subsequently grouped into themes. Following my initial analysis, I sought out commonalities between the experienced (personal perceptions and experiences) and secondary data (literature, journals, statistics, reports, the news/media report etc.). My findings were eventually presented again to my key actors, as well as finally analysed and discussed with Fay Scott, a management consultant at Mosaic Advocacy Centre C.I.C in London, with over 15 years of experience working in public sector organizations. Her most recent specialisations include equalities, governance and people management, introducing strategy development and policies, introducing governance and performance management frameworks, developing leadership development programmes and undertaking equality audits.

2.3.2.1 Engagement and Continuation

All actors involved in this study demonstrated extremely high levels of engagement and portrayed signs of true interest. While Abiola Egbeyemi, Sola Abiola-James and Frances Ore were particularly interested in continuing the dialogue beyond the recording and follow-up sessions, Frances Ore felt particularly inspired to take the MBTI personality test in order to gain deeper insights into her personality: how much or well did I fit into certain “categorizations” after-all? Sending me her results, she was keen to continue our conversation of personality, culture and identity even weeks into my research. Sola Abiola-James additionally introduced me to Fay Scott, a specialist in integration and equality issues, creating the basis of my final analysis. While Anais Hattmansdorfer felt particularly thankful and emotional about having been given the opportunity to share her story and talk about personal issues with an individual who could relate, Henrietta O. insisted I speak to someone who could offer an added and important perspective to my paper, Doreen O., going forward to create the link.

The participants of my focus group discussion, whom I have met with a second time, carried the conversation of “culture, identity and multiculturalism” into another meeting, buttressing the importance of the issue in light of recent elections and rising nationalistic sentiments in Austria and Europe at large.
2.4 The Structure that Emerged

2.4.1 Themes

The themes that emerged through the course of my analysis were: factors for motivation, influences, identity, perception by and reception of others, attitude formation, adaptation, and group belonging. The chapters that follow will address these in a detailed manner; linking the uniquely personal to existing discussions, theories and concepts.

2.4.2 Reflections

Each chapter is followed by a personal reflection, connecting the previously discussed to my personal experience as an acting and active researcher. These reflections are literally a reflection of myself in view of my findings, taking the reader on my personal growth journey, allowing him or her to watch me as I evolve in my thinking, reflecting and understanding of the issue at hand.

2.4.3 Intersectionality

Issues of oppression rarely happen in isolation but typically in combinations. In her 1989 essay, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex”, Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the word “intersectionality” in an attempt to explain how layers of oppression are usually interlinked. During the course of my research and writing, a number of intersections emerged in addition to the already established one; the first leading me to add a complementary perspective (gender), another causing me to consider the experiences of other multi-cultural professionals (race).

2.5 The Outline

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the concept of Afropolitanism and the main research question at hand, while chapter 2 sought to explain the methodological approach upon which the research was based, explaining methods, introducing actors, and highlighting my role as researcher. Chapters 3 to 5 zoom into the Afropolitan female entrepreneur, focusing on uncovering conscious, unconscious and subconscious layers of entrepreneurial engagements, while chapter 6 zooms out again, offering – against the backdrop of my findings and analyses – a complementary perspective. Chapter 7 and 8 take an even broader view, addressing the issues of multiculturalism and acculturation, integration and sub-culture creation, while chapter 9, the final chapter, briefly presents my final reflections, further limitations, as well as hopes going forward. Let’s zoom in!
3 MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS

This chapter looks at factors of motivation for female entrepreneurs: the known according to the actors involved. What lies behind their entrepreneurial engagement and journey? What was it that drove them to start their own enterprise? This chapter uncovers the first layer: the conscious. Looking at entrepreneurs by happenstance, entrepreneurs as visionaries, and entrepreneurs as change agents, this chapter discusses motivational factors for Black female entrepreneurial engagements.

Although supremely important for every nation’s economy, not much is known of the true motivational factors driving (social) entrepreneurship today (Hachavarria & Reynolds, 2009). While Rostow (1960) suggested countries went through five stages of growth in their economic journey (traditional society, preconditions for take-off, take-off, drive to maturity, and age of high mass consumption); Porter (2002) proposes three phases of development, rather than growth: i) the factor-driven stage, which is marked by high rates of agricultural self-employment, low-cost efficiencies and low value-added products; ii) the efficiency-driven stage, marked by reduced rates of self-employment and the opportunity for companies to take advantage of economies of scale; and iii) the innovation-driven stage, with its increased knowledge-driven activities and high value added industries. Whether entrepreneurial engagements are factor-driven, efficiency-driven or innovation-driven, the results unanimously contribute to the development and well-being of societies and their economies (Porter, 2002).

Pines, Lerner and Schwartz (2012) specifically challenged the limited study into female entrepreneurship despite the obvious and rapid rise of the very same. Women’s contributions, which range from investing in communities, educating children, and paying back benefits received by helping others (GEM Women’s Report, 2014) have largely been underemphasised. Cohoon, Wadhwa and Mitchell (2010) as well as Lewis (2015) correspondingly confirm women to be a particularly understudied group of economic contributors. It is believed that this demographic blind-spot stifles any serious attempt to increase the total numbers of female participants. With a wide, although decreasing, gender gap, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Reports on Women in Entrepreneurship examines the rates of female entrepreneurship in over 60 countries. It has been repeatedly found that the rates of women in factor-driven and efficiency-driven regions of the world were generally higher than those in innovation-driven regions of the world (GEM Women’s Report, 2014).
In the 2008-2009 study conducted by Cohoon et al. (2010) in which data from 549 male and female entrepreneurs was collected, the following motivations for starting businesses could be identified:

![Figure 3.1: Motivation for Creating a Start-Up Company](source: Cohoon et al. (2010) “The Anatomy of an Entrepreneur”)

The study found that female entrepreneurs’ motivation for starting up their own businesses were largely identical to their male counterparts’, emphasising pull-factors such as the desire or willingness to become entrepreneurial as a prime motivator, followed by the desire to create wealth, the desire to capitalize of innovative ideas, as well as push-factors such as no longer wishing to work under someone else. The lack of employment opportunities (“Couldn’t find traditional employment”) was a uniquely unimportant motivational factors for both male and female respondents, scoring a mere 5% in both cases.

In trying to understand entrepreneurship, Bjerke (2013, pp. 6-7) points to attempts to look at:

- Entrepreneurs as sense-makers
- Entrepreneurs as language-makers
- Entrepreneurs as culture-makers, and
- Entrepreneurs as history-makers

They are “makers” rather than “creators” as they use given and existing elements and combine these, rather than create all over (Bjerke, 2013, p.119). Bjerke (2013, citing
Baker & Nelson, 2005) furthermore explains this as “entrepreneurship through *bricolage*” (p.119), by which entrepreneurs make use of what they believe *makes sense* in their operations in relation to language (words and expressions), culture (existing values) and history (existing lifestyles).

While the desire, readiness, necessity and willingness to become entrepreneurial might well be at the heart of aspiring entrepreneurs in general, motivational factors for starting a social enterprise were less clear-cut.

Burger-Helmchen (2012) postulated that “entrepreneurial individuals [do] not only seek to combine resources, but also combine various social relationships in order to create and generate value in the community” (p.26). Within social entrepreneurship, it follows, actors around the world differ depending on their social culture, business environment and democratic culture within which they operate (Bjerke, 2013, p.122). It is posited that the values, basic assumptions and belief form integral parts of our understanding of culture, as well as unique combinations of sub-cultures we all belong to.

Abu-Saifan (2012) asserts that social entrepreneurship is that field of entrepreneurship in which individuals tailor their activities in such as way as to create ultimate social value. And although the discussion around social entrepreneurship has become increasingly popular over the years, a certain level of confusion and uncertainty still surrounds this concept. While there is no clear and commonly agreed upon definition for social entrepreneurship (Martin and Osberg, 2007), what the different concepts and definitions of social entrepreneurship have in common, is the actors’ willingness and inner drive to address and correct social or environmental issues – whether there be a monetary reward or not.

Within Black female leadership, it has been argued that women have been forced to obtain leadership positions in somewhat untraditional ways and for somewhat different reasons (Rosser-Mims, 2010, p. 5). Black women’s entrepreneurial engagements, it appears, are chiefly about community development and changing structures typically related to class, race and gender oppression.

“We must strive to ‘lift as we climb’...We climb in such a way as to guarantee that all of our sisters and brothers, regardless of social class, and indeed all of our brothers climb with us. This must be the essential dynamic of our quest for power.”
*(Angela Davis in “Women, Culture, Politics”, 1989)*

My study too found that this was fundamentally the case for my actors: they chose to climb not merely in an attempt to reach the top themselves, but rather pave the way for others: leading followers to “get there too”.
In the following sub-chapters we will take a closer look at motivational factors for entrepreneurial engagements; considering entrepreneurs by happenstance, entrepreneurs as visionaries, and entrepreneurs as change agents.

### 3.1 Afropolitan Entrepreneurs by Happenstance

A number of scholars have identified *opportunity identification* as the most distinctive entrepreneurial behaviour, examining to what extent entrepreneurial opportunities occur as a result of serendipity or intentional search (Gaglio & Katz, 2001, p. 95). Gaglio and Katz (2001) furthermore refer to studies that have been conducted to decipher how individuals go about searching for an idea, how much time and effort is invested into developing an idea, the influence of individuals’ social network on growing an idea, and the various stages and phases that are part and parcel of this idea process.

Within the entrepreneurial discourse, *entrepreneurial alertness* has been described and defined in abundant ways; from definitions of it as “the ability to notice without search” to highlighting the difference between how alert and non-alert individuals act within the marketplace and how their abilities and behaviours lead to an intelligent assessment of realities (Gaglio & Katz, 2001, p. 97). Thus, it is believed that entrepreneurs have a more accurate view and interpretation of the market and the opportunities that exist within it; thus a different reality.

![Alertness and the Opportunity Identification Process](image)

**Figure 2.1: Alertness and the Opportunity Identification Process**


The above figure depicts the entrepreneurial process as driven by entrepreneurial alertness; with alertness driving attention towards a cause and guiding the information process. Here, alert individuals are both aware of the reality of things, as well as
propelled to find contrary means or creating change; they are aware and ready to act, should they deem action useful and/or necessary. It is argued that alert individuals are particularly attentive and sensitive to a market disequilibrium brought about through technological changes, structural changes, changes in technology, and changes in social values. The question of “What if...?” often asked in response to sudden or unusual events does not automatically lead to the identification or creation of opportunities, however (Gaglio & Katz, 2001, pp.103).

“What I really wanted to do and what I was really passionate about was doing a lot of work around job creation. I wanted to start an agency and even got a name for it. I put together ideas, planned projects etc. and actually went as far as registering the business in Nigeria. I had a season where I was really passionate and excited about it and shared my plans with a handful of people. They all thought it was a great idea. But as life would have it, it never went anywhere.” (Ore, personal communication, February 2016)

It was somewhat surprising to see this not being unusual, for approximately half my actors had shared stories of failed entrepreneurial attempts, business restructuring due to oversights, gaps in information and changes within their environment, as well as becoming entrepreneurial “by accident”.

“Before then, another thing – I think, in all fairness – was that I had tried my hands on a few things but they never lasted; so he [my husband] probably thought, ‘Uh, here we go again. I’m sure this one too will end very soon.’ But then, this was different for me. It clicked. This was my baby and this was really happening.” (Amure, personal communication, February 2016)

And thus, it became clear, the path to entrepreneurship was not always straightforward. Entrepreneurs, like leaders, were not born. For many of my actors their entrepreneurial activity was born out of their crucibles, their lived experiences (Eilam & Shamir, 2005; Thomas, 2008), their need to make sense of certain events, their desire to make a difference, and their personal beliefs. And yet, not all entrepreneurial attempts were or will be successful; not all of them will last; and not all of them were followed through. To what extent their perception of self influenced their entrepreneurial engagements and vice versa, will be looked at in later chapters.

What can be buttressed, however, is that for some individuals, entrepreneurship was not necessarily born out of an identity or the desire or willingness to act, but rather as a response to a deeper sense of responsibility;
“I don’t think it’s a cultural thing in my case because I didn’t grow up in that culture. I also don’t think that it is so much my parents. My dad worked in his job for over 35 years and he’s not particularly business-minded. Although my mom was a trader for a little while – she was selling fabric – she’s not necessarily a very business-minded person either and she has little business acumen. I would say of myself as well that I don’t know much about business and I’m not necessarily business-oriented or passionate about business. I have little knowledge of how to run a business or an organization or anything like that. In my particular case it’s simply inherent; a deep sense for what I’m doing. It’s a passion from deep within, if you can say that. It’s just something that is part of me. It’s not necessarily something that I want to do or that I’m excited about doing. It’s a feeling of ‘You have to do this!” (Ore, personal communication, February 2016)

Along similar lines, my actors kept sharing – most passionately – how certain events and experiences propelled them into entrepreneurship. While painful personal experiences and encounters caused some to re-examine their lives and focus their attention on fighting certain social and economic shortfalls – abuse, misuse, poverty, unemployment – for others it was the hope of creating something new, being innovative and offering something that hadn’t been offered on that scale before, or doing something similar somewhat better and for a different cause. While all appeared very passionate about and committed to their businesses, none of them felt they were true entrepreneurs or born entrepreneurs; but rather: they were visionaries.

3.2 Afropolitan Entrepreneurs as Visionaries

Vision and purpose really stood at the very centre of my actors’ engagements. Their visions were unsurprisingly and unanimously tied to a strong passion – whether enduring, fading, increasing or constantly changing – eventually bringing with it a sense of responsibility. They measured their lives in terms of what would be left of them once they were no more. Whether that was creating social change through poverty alleviation, emotional change through mentoring, counselling and personal development schemes, or political and national change by improving the perception of a nation, her people and its products, my actors were strongly driven by a vision set to outlive them.

“There are days when nothing motivates me. There is no drive whatsoever. I wake up and there is nothing that motivates me. I don’t think I need to do this or I need to achieve that. Sometimes it’s a young man pushing a wheelbarrow by the side of the road filled with junk. What he does is challenge me to think how grateful I really should be for the things that I have. But beyond that, it is a sense of
accountability and responsibility. I guess, for me, it’s the fact that I want to leave my mark in this world.” (Ore, personal communication, February 2016)

“You know that you’re not put on earth just to live for yourself. You have to make an impact. You have to let God be seen, and you need to touch lives and make a difference. When I went back to Nigeria, I went with Pounds Sterling and that can take you a long way there. What I saw really affected me. I was staying at my aunt’s house she had a steward – which they would call a “houseboy” – and I gave him his first piece of ice cream which I felt was ridiculous. I never experienced such a thing before because in England, kids have ice cream all the time. He was so excited. I started realizing just how many things I had taken for granted. Things that weren’t readily available to others. This really touched me. And also, to know that we had a group of people in this country, who – I’m talking about Nigeria – who would never have access to certain things; like basic education, simply because there was no provision for that.” (Egbeyemi, personal communication, January 2016)

Noble (2015) posits that leadership – when truly altruistic and focused on promulgating good – is closely linked to social justice; and describes just societies as communities in which common rights, freedoms, and rights of individuals and groups are safeguarded and people are treated with dignity and respect. The basic requirements furthermore include fair systems of law and due process, equal access to opportunities, the unbiased distribution of resources, goods, and services, as well as the care and concern for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of people (pp. 107-108).

Thus, whether entrepreneurial activities were emergent or fixed, there was a clear – even in unformulated – picture: a desired change.

3.3 Afropolitan Entrepreneurs as Change Agents

“Great ideas, it is said, come into the world as gently as doves. Perhaps, then, if we listen attentively, we shall hear, amid the uproar of empires and nations, a faint flutter of wings, the gentle stirring of life and hope.” Albert Camus (n.d., cited in Greanleaf & Spears, 2002)

For my actors vision was neither private, nor could it ever stand alone. Although real, their visions only became true possibilities when shared with and accepted by others. Sharing the vision and having it accepted by others was important for every single actor whose entrepreneurial engagements went beyond offering products and services and
involved people. Vision, thus, acted both as a tool for empowerment as well as was the (in)direct result of empowerment.

While the discourse around entrepreneurship and leadership has been focusing on the importance of the leader and her vision, the role of followers has widely been ignored or underemphasized.

[An obvious and supremely important limitation here, one must note, is the fact that recent academic discourses around entrepreneurship have widely been conducted and written in light of the “narrow (American) view” of entrepreneurship, emphasizing the economics of entrepreneurship, rather than its larger phenomenon within a social context.]

Smircich and Morgan (1982) describe the four pivotal features of leadership as interactions, defined realities, a dependency relationship, and institutionalizations in the form of formalized rights and obligations.

“I was really just passionate about people. It didn’t matter what industry it was. It’s always just been about service and helping people; improving their lives. I’ve always been very emotional about this. We were so passionate about Nigeria and the potential we felt it had. We just wanted to give back. We wanted to do something to change the situation over there. What I really wanted to do was work around job-creation.” (Ore, personal communication, February 2016)

And while she went on to describe her vision and business model passionately, it soon became clear that the divergence between envisioned possibilities and actual realities was vast: there had been little buy-in on the followers’ side.

Kellerman (as cited in Lundgren, 2015) offers a one-dimensional categorization to measure follower engagement; making a clear differentiation between detached isolates, lacklustre bystanders, active participants, and risk-willing die-hards (pp. 7-8). The degree to which followers are involved is typically a trustworthy account for determining whether or not followers trust a leader’s vision and are devoted to it. From obvious detachment to passionate and active engagement, the realization of any leader’s vision was closely linked to how deeply and strongly leaders could motivate followers to buy into their vision, take on their reality and selflessly work towards fulfilling it. Entrepreneurs, like leaders, needed to possess the ability to change followers’ frames of references, create a sense of urgency, and make followers see their vision as sensible.

For my actors Ore and Egbeyemi who were working on one of their business projects together, that was unfortunately not the case.
“For us it was important to go back to the source. So we wanted to create locally and sell globally. When we started, anything ‘made in Nigeria’ was seen as inferior and I reckoned the difference between Italian and Nigerian products was literally just investment. Individuals, companies and the government had invested in training and machinery, this was unfortunately not the case in Nigeria. Because of the quality I wanted, a lot of investment was needed. And so we invested in people, training them and offering them tools. But there was no loyalty. People would receive the training and then leave. They would take your designs and just produce them for someone else. You know, there was no real structure in place. For us this was a challenge. Our legacy was not just about the product, you see, it was about the people we wanted to develop.” (Egbeyemi, personal communication, January 2016)

In these words it became clear to what extent leaders depend upon the engagement and commitment of the people they seek to lead. Follower’s disengagement, thus, was a powerful demotivating factor; both frustrating leadership efforts, as well as slaying the entrepreneurial spirit. Smircich and Morgan (1982) who explain the aspects of leadership as involving interactions, defined realities, dependency relationships, and institutionalizations (in terms of defined and formalized rights and obligations) might offer an explanation here (p.259). Smircich and Morgan also assert that successful organizations and systems depend on “the synchrony between the initiation of action and the appeal for direction; between the actions of leaders and the receptivity of followers (p.257). Leadership, thus, has to do with certain individuals’ perceived rights or obligations to define the reality of and for others (p.258) and the followers’ willingness to give up those rights to define their own realities, at least in part. Often a disconnect happens just there: a struggle to both define new realities and find a satisfactory way to achieve it. And so, while followers often look for leadership, they fight against the very same. Be it due to wrongful expectations or the inability of leaders to control all aspects of leadership, the leadership-followership relationship is dialectic and mutually dependent (p.259).

In the case of one of my actors, Sola Abiola-James, the relationship between leadership and followership – made visible in clear patterns of desires interactions, sense making and dependency – was somewhat more successful. Drawing upon her followers’ innate desire for physical attractiveness, emotional stability and personal development, her business model proved highly effective: selling a vision, while allowing individuals to formulate and develop patterns on their own. Smircich and Morgan define this as the “mediating form of leadership” creating a close link between institutional structures and human agents (Smircich & Morgan, 1982, p.260).
“The way His Bride works is that, there are two arms: there is the outward arm and then there is the inward arm. The outward arm is the arm that focuses on fashion and beauty. We work with experts in the fashion and beauty industry – like make-up artists, hairstylists, personal shoppers, personal stylists, and image consultants – that work with our members to look their best. And then, the other arm is the personal development arm; that arm is about helping people become who they want to become; helping people over 9-12 months set goals but also identify who they are: their strengths, their weaknesses, their opportunities, their threats; and equipping them with the right tools to actually have them achieve whatever it is they want to achieve that particular year.” (Abiola-James, personal communication, February 2016)

Continuing along the lines of her business model and growth so far, it became evident that her followers/clients were as committed to their personal development as they were to her vision. Having gained the buy-in of followers and their support, it was easy to continuously grow and expand: in numbers, services offered, and frequency of seminars and workshops.

“He who thinks he leads but has no followers, is merely taking a walk”
- John C. Maxwell

3.4 Reflections on Motivation

Akerlof and Kranton (2000, as cited in Falck, Heblich & Luedemann, 2009) introduced a model including identity as a motivation for entrepreneurial engagements, as oftentimes decisions to act entrepreneurially are directly related to social considerations as well as assignments to specific categories, highlighting the social consequences of entrepreneurial activities (pp. 3-5). In looking at my actors’ different business concepts and visions, the question of whether or not and to what extent their entrepreneurial engagements were driven by their Afropolitan identity and a sense of group belonging, could not be answered.

Butler (2005) postulates that national, ethnic, or religious minorities are often forcefully driven into entrepreneurial as well as economic activity due to their intended or unintended exclusion from positions of influence within their host community (p.7). My question thus was to what extent their lived experience – race in the face of a multi-ethnic society – had indirectly forced my actors into entrepreneurship.

In analysing the increased emigration of the Japanese to the Western world in the early 1900s, Butler highlights how sentiments towards this new migrant group changed over time. While they had initially been accepted into the society and embraced by the community, their concentration in the California region soon made them “the California
problem”. Although initially welcome, having gained stability and economic standing, it soon became clear that they would now compete within the white labour market. Essentially, they had become a threat. The Japanese soon found themselves in the place of “systematic discrimination and constant struggle” and in dire need of creating their own support system (Butler, 2005, pp.11).

Consequently, it was found that race relations were predominantly a matter of racial distribution. As the number of minorities within a certain population amplified, discrimination against this minority amplified too. Along with discrimination, dormant stereotypes and ideologies long absent resurfaced. In the case of the Jews, Butler argues, the negative image of “conniving or grasping or attempting to rule the world” sprung up as their numbers increased, causing this group of migrants to once again pull together even more closely in order to make living in a hostile environment less painful (Butler, 2005, pp. 20-22). Segregation, thus, strengthened group identity.

Based on this, I could form three basic assumptions:

- Societies were generally willing to accept the presence of a small number of culturally and religiously different individuals permanently, as long as their numbers were limited, they posed no threat to existing norms and cultures, and they lived separately, outside of mainstream society.
- Societies were also open to receiving immigrants (sojourners) for a limited period of time, as long as they understood their place. This meant that these groups of people could be present but not visible, could not take up needed jobs, would not take advantage of the system or society’s generosity towards them, should be willing to lay down cultural norms or traditions that stood in contrast (or were strange to) their host nation’s, and were ready to embrace the status of “second class citizens”. Society would accept them too, but only in limited numbers and only for a limited period.
- Alternatively, societies were willing to permanently accept immigrants who posed no threat to the existing order or culture and were both willing and able to totally assimilate; taking on the host country’s cultural norms and behaviours and becoming one of them, giving up all rights, links and connections to their former culture and existence.
- Societies were generally unwilling and incapable of doing more.

But how true and factual was this assertion today? Are people of migrant backgrounds truly pushed into entrepreneurship due to perceived difficulties or hostilities? If so, how true was this for my Afropolitan actors?

Today we see a plethora of individuals motivated to act, to make a change, to make a difference. We see entrepreneurship springing up all around the globe. I deem it fair to say that most individuals today would have or know of at least one entrepreneur within their closer social circle. Entrepreneurship is thriving and growing. But what was it that
specifically pushed my actors into entrepreneurial engagements? To be motivated implies *being moved to act*. Ryan and Deci (2010) expound upon this by elucidating that motivation is not a unitary phenomenon but that people possess different levels of motivation, as well as orientations of that motivation. Within the Self-Determination Theory distinctions are made between various types of motivation based on the underlying reasons for action; with the most basic distinction being *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*. While intrinsic motivation refers to actions based on a positive inner drive and desire, doing an activity for its own sake and derived pleasure, extrinsic motivation refers to actions based on wanting to produce a specific and separable outcome (pp. 54-55).

Following my third dialogue, I realized that my main research question – which was initially titled “How entrepreneurial leadership is influenced by the Afropolitan identity” needed to be rephrased. Having been exposed to young Black entrepreneurs and the concept of Afropolitanism at roughly the same time, I made an unconscious link between these two; moving forward with the belief – even if unbeknown to myself – that one’s cultural identity should play a predominant role in how one chooses to (or was forced to) live their life, as well as develop one’s entrepreneurial journey.

However, it soon became evident that there were forces much stronger driving individuals’ entrepreneurial engagements: forces such as vision, passion and a sense of responsibility. Although these visions and passions *may* well be related to issues of identity and ethnicity, they *always* were – that is, without an exception – birthed out of crucibles (Thomas, 2008). While some were motivated by the hardships and pain they had witnessed in their communities, others were driven by a desire to ensure the pain, moments of depression and frustrations they had personally lived through would not be as difficult for others to bear. And so, I found, that whether the pain was witnessed or experienced, it served as a motivating factor – even if to varying degrees. There was a strong desire to create, drive and enforce change in these areas: a passion for change that was driven not out of self or identity, but out of a strong compelling passion for others.

The power of crucibles – significant and indeed almost life-altering turning-points, one may call them – lay in the effect these had and the role these played in transforming the lives of others. What I realized was that it was never really about the self; even with the self at the centre of it all, and as the foundation upon which everything else was created and built.

Luckman (1981, as cited in Bjerke 2007) refers to the collective everyday reality as social phenomenology: a reality that is not objective but objectified, “seen and treated as objective although it is not” (p.53). Bjerke (2007) continues by buttressing that realities are constructed and sustained by multiple interconnected processes (subjectification), leading to the idea that “humans are a subjective reality” (p.53). In sharing my experiences with others through communication (externalization), it is argued that my
acts eventually gain an objective character (objectification). Thus, Bjerke (2007) explains: societies are human products. In connecting ourselves to the already existing world, we are members of this society through internalization (Bjerke, 2007, p.54). In discussing issues of identity and lived experiences with my actors, attempting to make sense of certain occurrences and tracing important decision-paths, this research marked by a retrospective journey (Weick, 1995), I realized, was as subjective for my actors as it was for me. Although I had – at the beginning of my research – believed my research question to be based on objectivity, I soon realized that it had been my objectification.

While factors for motivation provided an initial glance at what stood at the heart of entrepreneurial engagements for my actors, driving them, they offered little answer to the question of how my actors got to the point of entrepreneurial opportunity identification. While driven by a vision and a desire to create change, what ultimately motivated them to take this bold? Did it have anything to do with their culture, their ethnic identity? What role did Afropolitanism play in it; and why had no one thus far referred to it? Were my actors somewhat predisposed to acting entrepreneurially? Could a deeper look into their past, personal experiences, educational and professional background, social circle and community engagements or expectations hold the key?

In the following chapter we will therefore take a closer look at what might truly have influenced my actors to engage entrepreneurially.
4 INFLUENCE(R)S

Being is usually unconscious: a fish in its natural habitat, water, completely oblivious to the fact that he exists only within a certain environment in this way and that its make-up has been purposefully designed for specifically that. Often we do not realize just how much we are impacted and influenced by our environments, our social circle our upbringing and underlying expectations, our community, families and other relations. Thus, this chapter uncovers the second layer: the subconscious. Building upon motivation, I sought to look somewhat deeper, discovering unconscious drivers: influences and influencers, examining entrepreneurial engagements within the context of the actors’ life-stories.

Deciphering to what degree (extended) family, friends, mentors, partners, expectations, upbringing, education, and one’s faith played a role in my actors’ perception of self as well as entrepreneurial journey was not as clear-cut as initially thought. While it has been argued that the desire and willingness to become entrepreneurial stands at the heart of true entrepreneurs, I found that there were factors perhaps much more compelling and pivotal.

The GEDI (Global Entrepreneurship and Development Index) is comprised of three sub-indexes aimed at capturing features of entrepreneurship: entrepreneurial attitudes, activities and aspirations. Entrepreneurial attitudes deal with a populace’s general attitude towards entrepreneurial engagements and business start-ups, their perceived opportunities for self-employment. Measuring these includes a population’s willingness to take risks, fear of failure, cultural attitudes towards entrepreneurs and networking possibilities. The second sub-index of entrepreneurial activities deals with business creation in medium- or high-tech industries as initiated by educated entrepreneurs. It is believed that these individuals are better educated, more knowledgeable and possess better skills; thus laying the foundation for higher potential growth. The final sub-index of entrepreneurial aspirations looks at efforts to introduce new products and services, improve processes and penetrate foreign markets. Schumpeter (1934) describes this as “new combinations”.

It is important to highlight the sequence of these sub-indexes, as attitudes as pivotal pre-requisites for both entrepreneurial activities and aspirations. According to Acs and Autio (2010) this is an overlapping and cumulative process. While a population’s attitude towards entrepreneurship is to be the prime focus in factor-driven economies, entrepreneurial activities need to be encouraged in efficiency-driven economies, and aspirations stirred in innovation-driven economies.
Looking at Afropolitan female entrepreneurs of Nigerian origin (factor-driven economy) within London (innovation-driven economy) specifically, I thought it important to take a closer look at attitudes and beliefs that shaped and influenced my actors’ entrepreneurial activities and aspirations beyond themselves.

**4.1 Economic and Political Climate**

It is believed that the economic and political climate of a nation plays a pivotal role in both the decision to become entrepreneurial, as well as the way in which entrepreneurs choose to act within a given system (Baumol, 2009; Ghavidel, Farjadi & Mohammadpour, 2011; Naude, 2011). Here competitiveness plays a major role. Competitiveness has been defined as “the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine a country’s level of productivity. The level of productivity, in turn, sets the level of prosperity that can be reached by an economy.” (Global Competitiveness Report, 2014-2015). The most problematic factors for doing business within the EU, based on the results of the World Economic Forum’s Executive Opinion Survey 2014, have been identified as being red tape, access to finance, tax rates, labour regulations and tax regulations.

As the dynamics of the entrepreneurial process can be vastly diverse depending on context and level of development within an economy, a number of factors have been identified that play a major influence on entrepreneurial activities:

![Figure 4.1: The 12 Pillars of Competitiveness](image)

*Source: The GCI Framework*
Many times the individual choice to become entrepreneurial is furthermore influenced by a wide range of characteristics, such as risk-aversion, personality attributes, education, and unemployment rates. It has been assumed that the choice to become entrepreneurial is made easier when it is believed that the benefits – financial and otherwise – generated from self-employment to be greater than that of employment (Andretsch, Boente & Tamvada, 2007, p.5).

Baumol (1990) in his article titled “Entrepreneurship: Productive, Unproductive and Destructive” argues that although entrepreneurial engagement is typically considered in terms of increased income, productivity and innovation, entrepreneurs usually engage in entrepreneurship for wealth, prestige and glory. As such not necessarily economically healthy, hypothesizing that the inherent economical structure of rewards determines entrepreneurial activity rather than the actual objectivity of the entrepreneur.

Lawal, who is employed full-time while running her business part-time, shared her hopes of abandoning her day-job in order to focus on her business, as follows;

“I will definitely quit my day-job at some point. I’m just waiting for it to get to that point. I think that’s when the real sacrifice will come in I won’t have a regular income then. However, at some point you do recognize that your business needs a bit more attention. Honestly, the point of starting your own business is so that you don’t have to work for anyone else.” (Lawal, personal communication, February 2016)

And although she acknowledged the fact that there was a lot of governmental support and many initiatives supporting self-employment and entrepreneurship in the U.K., she found the socio-economic environment somewhat restricting still;

“Being in the U.K., yes, I do think there is a glass ceiling. It’s not as bad as it was before but it does still exist. So, I think that’s just because of where I am. I think if I was in Nigeria, I wouldn’t struggle at all. Or if I was in an African country, I wouldn’t struggle at all. I think it’s to do with where I am; being in the U.K.” (Lawal, personal communication, February 2016)

For most of my actors, however, unemployment played a major role in their decisions to become entrepreneurial (necessity-bases entrepreneurship, Hechavarria & Reynolds, 2009, p.418). Having been out of work for some time, Detola Amure, Sola Abiola-James, and Mariam Lawal all shared how these moments of aloneness and reflection influenced and propelled them to act;
“I would definitely not have started my business if I hadn't been out of work for such a long time. I think the huge drive came from the fact that I had a Bachelor’s and a Master’s degree and was still struggling to find work. I had applied to a few companies but had still not found anything. So, simply decided I was going to do something for myself.” (Lawal, personal communication, February 2016)

“I've always been good at doing make-up and I've always been very interested in fashion and image consulting. I also thought that I had a natural flare to talk to women, understand women, or even use my experience to help people. I just felt that all of these three things would fit together. I was passionate about all these three elements and wanted to bring them together. I thought that just because this didn’t exist yet, that was no excuse for not doing it. Then, when I was out of work, I heard someone say ‘If the job you’re looking for doesn’t exist, create it for yourself” and I think that’s how it started.” (Abiola-James, personal communication, February 2016)

“I was three months pregnant when my contract got terminated. I had told my boss that I was pregnant – when I was three months pregnant – and two weeks later I received the notice that my services were no longer required. Part of it felt like discrimination but I just left because I couldn’t fight it. I went home and immediately decided to focus on SuperWorkingMum as a business.” (Amure, personal communication, February 2016)

Ghavidel, Farjadi, and Mohammadpour (2011) in their paper titled “The Relationship between Entrepreneurship and Unemployment in Developed and Developing Countries” examine to what extent an increase in unemployment leads to an increase in entrepreneurial engagements; as well as how developed and developing countries differ in this respect. In quoting Parker (2004) they believe entrepreneurial opportunities to not merely be a consequence of push factors of (the threat of) unemployment but also of the pull factors produced by a flourishing economy full of prospects. Thus it is little surprise the European Commission (2003) suggested entrepreneurship as a remedy to Europe’s high rates of unemployment. However, while some studied found a positive relationship between unemployment and entrepreneurship, others found that heightened levels of unemployment decreased start-up activities (pp. 187-188). It was asserted that while unemployment increased entrepreneurial engagements (enhanced productivity), it decreased the propensity of individuals to start new businesses (introducing new services or businesses in the market). Although Ghavidel et al. (2011) conclude that there is a negative correlation between unemployment and entrepreneurship (Schumpeter effect), my research showed that unemployment was indeed a determining factor for entrepreneurial engagement; propelling my actors to
follow their passions, be bold, and act – most especially within the given environment, its culture, and norms.

4.2 Environment, Culture and Norms

My research found that beyond socio-economic and political influences, individual’s entrepreneurial engagements were heavily influenced by their social realities, environments and interactions. Just as one’s professional background, educational levels, personality and social environment impact start-up decisions, so do cultural norms, taboos, expectations of what is acceptable (to do/discuss) and not play a crucial role in both enabling and restricting actors’ specific economic activities.

For one of my actors introducing her concept outside of the United Kingdom was shared as a primary concern and indeed challenge:

“I was passionate about acquiring more knowledge about sex and intimacy within relationships. I wanted to be a pro and expert on this topic, but one of the things I really noticed was that with Africans or with Nigerians or people in my particular social network, I felt that there was a huge difference between how the average white person would express themselves – in terms of intimacy and sexuality – and how black people would. I really wanted to bridge the gap and get people a lot more comfortable to talk about sex and anything to do with sex; especially within the context of a marriage, the context of a healthy relationship.” (Ore, personal communication, February 2016)

With a professional background in sexual health and education, as well as many years of experience within sexual health and HIV/AIDS prevention, the new cultural environment proved a potential stumbling block. Although widely understood and accepted in London, she found that her business concept would have to prove and indeed defend itself for a while to come. While conversations about sexual intimacy and health were both encouraged and supported in Frances Ore’s home country, they were somewhat frowned upon and indeed discouraged in her new host country.

The Pleasure Box concept – a business model aimed at creating and fuelling sexual dialogue in order to foster intimacy and openness – was first introduced in the United Kingdom, before being taken to Nigeria. The Pleasure Box itself is made up of sex toys, card games, feathers, honey jars, cubes etc. intended to be used by couples to strengthen the marital bond, explore likes and dislikes within the bedroom, and encourage open and honest conversations. This, however, was not easily understood within Lagos, the new environment. As a result thereof, she often found herself having to defend her business-idea and concept, repeatedly emphasising that it wasn’t so much
about sexual intercourse as it was about intimacy, getting the conversations started, building trust, re-establishing healthy faithful marriages, and improving parenting by opening lines of communication between parents and children. Her idea was primarily founded open the notion that once individuals felt comfortable and secure enough to discuss intimacy and sexuality, they could embrace a healthier sense of self, personal identity, and thus have healthier and more satisfactory relationships.

In a culture and an environment that frowns upon the open discussion of sexual topics and prefers to – even with its worrisome STD rates and important public health awareness schemes – sweep related issues under the carpet, being a Black woman of Nigerian origin didn’t seem to help either;

“One of the things I strongly considered was not being the face of the business; having a business that has no face. Also because Nigerians tend to judge you – we are very superficial, very elitist – which means that if you don’t have a specific background, if you don’t have a specific acumen, you already risk losing your target audience by a large percentage. Also, if people knew who was behind the brand, they might consider you too young, too inexperienced.” (Ore, personal communication, 2016)

Hechavarria and Reynolds (2009) explain this as individuals operating within context-bound rationalities which are shaped by “customs, networks, norms, cultural beliefs and institutional arrangements” (p.418).

“We need such entrepreneurial leadership at least as much in education and human rights as we do in communications and hotels. This is the work of social entrepreneurs.” - Bill Drayton (n.d., cited in Abu-Saifan 2012)

4.3 Social Circle

One of the most obvious influencing factors shared by my actors were family and expectations. While my actors shared overwhelmingly strong positive sentiments about their Nigerian upbringing and aspects of the culture they had grown up with – such as respect for elders, community involvement, submission to their husbands, discipline and home training – they lamented its double-edged nature;
“Growing up, I never really considered not going to university. It was a very normal thing in our society, being Black African, being Nigerian. In those days it was simply assumed that as soon as you finished your secondary education, you would continue on to university. I knew I had to further my education, I just needed to find a subject that I wanted to study. But not studying was never really an option. I was going to give in to going to university but I wasn’t going to give in to having someone else choose the subject for me.” (Ore, personal communication, 2016)

“I grew up in a family where career was given the utmost importance: my father was a doctor, my mother a principal before she retired. I was always told I needed to get a good job, rise in the ranks, get money, and settle.” (Amure, personal communication, February 2016)

“As parents they always want what’s best for you. Parents are always cautious. My mom was always like ‘Ah, you can’t start this late! Why now? You have a good job! Why do you have to do this now?’ You see, my mom has always wanted me to go back and do a PhD and so it was like, that’s not going to happen anymore now, is it?” (Egbeyemi, personal communication, January 2016)

With all of my actors holding at least one Bachelor’s, one Master’s degree and professional certificates - apart from one - their academic accolades and ambitions were more common than they were surprising. And thus, it was clear that although parental expectations and drive had somewhat propelled my actors to succeed academically, it had somewhat proven a challenge – to whatever extent – in their entrepreneurial aspirations, often holding them back, causing them to forfeit unrealistic dreams, or delaying in their decisions to commit themselves to their passions. The importance of receiving external support, consequently, was widely shared and confirmed too: support in the form of mentors, counsellors and entrepreneurial friends.

Continuing along the lines of expectations, it was furthermore repeatedly stated that roles, responsibilities and duties within the home had changed too; thus impacting upon the entrepreneurial engagements of working wives and mothers;

“Many of us women have a deep desire to do so much more but because we don’t want to rock the boat at home, we don’t. We can’t. Many husbands also say, "No, you have to bring in money too". This is the 21st century and we are all contributing, unlike before when it was daddy mainly contributing financially. Now you have to bring in your share. And so, women are struggling between doing a day-job they don’t really like, being submissive wives, and being good mothers;
often also care-takers beyond the home.” (Amure, personal communication, February 2016)

With a culture that traditionally placed women within the home: at the centre of family life and support, my actors shared the added challenges and pressures these came with in today’s world. For married actors, thus, entrepreneurship proved to be more of a juggling act: continuing the day-job while running their enterprise part-time until it proved profitable enough for their partner’s to support them doing it fulltime;

“I had given myself six more months at my current job; without having that discussion with my husband. As I said, I didn’t want to rock the boat. I wasn’t ready to have any discussions about money. He could see what I was doing on a daily basis. I was up at 5 a.m. to work on my business before going off to work. He could see both my consistency and passion. Then my boss offered me a permanent role but I knew the answer for me would be ‘No’. I spoke to other colleagues, men, and they said ‘He [my husband] needs to see that this thing is bringing in money’ and so I did a cash-flow analysis. I showed it to him, everything, also my projections. I did a presentation, and then I told him that I did not want to take the new job. All he said was, ‘I can see this is important to you, so it’s fine’.” (Amure, personal communication, February 2016)

Hertneky (2010) argues that family demands primarily depend on the age at which women assume leadership positions – or in our case – initial entrepreneurial engagements; with my study confirming that parents and partners were mostly supportive of my actors’ entrepreneurial engagements between having graduated from university and getting married: effectively offering a window of approximately two to three years to see whether one’s passions were actually able to financially support one or not. Beyond that – most specifically in marriage and with children involved – expectations of what it meant to be a good wife and mother, financially stable and secure often frustrated entrepreneurial aspirations and stifled entrepreneurial activities. When they did not, they propelled them, as shared by one actor;

“I think that’s the most important thing, being married to someone who understands your vision and supports it. I think that’s priceless. It’s also very important to know that as a partners your timing might not necessarily work well together but eventually, everything works out. My husband is basically my biggest champion at the moment.” (Egbeyemi, personal communication, January 2016)
4.4 Faith and Group Expectations

According to Andretsch et al. (2007), Adam Smith and Max Weber believed that religion played an important role in shaping national economics. To what extent that was the case, however, had only been given scant attention. Their paper on “religion and entrepreneurship” therefore looks at 1) the channels by which religion influences economic activity, and 2) whether the impact of religion on economic activity is homogenous across religions. Within Christian entrepreneurship, Johnson (2006) explains that the entrepreneur understands that there is a higher calling; bringing a unique perspective to entrepreneurship. Although it remain supremely important to be profitable and remain alive, entrepreneurs are additionally motivated to act ethically, selflessly and responsibly.

Amongst my actors, this sense of responsibility tied to their Christian belief was made vivid too;

“Faith played the most important part in my decision to give back to society, definitely. Just knowing that one-day God will require of me an account of what I did with the time I was given.” (Egbeyemi, personal communication, January 2016)

“Everyone can benefit from my business concept, in the sense that what I share, the strategies and tips, are very practical. That was something I struggled with in the early days of my business. I target Christian moms but I have worked with non-Christians as well. My message would be to Christian moms. Anyone could use it but because I am focusing on women who want to impact their world and ultimately save souls – that’s the angle I’m coming from – they are my target group. But these women and their businesses could be to a much wider audience; I feel like I’m a catalyst to them, if that makes sense.” (Amure, personal communication, February 2016)

“Because I am Christian and my business is set up on Christian principles, I knew that if I was to work for somebody, they might not share the exact same values and morals as me. I really did not want to compromise on that though because that is the foundation of the work that I do.” (Abiola-James, personal communication, February 2016)

“It’s a sense of accountability and responsibility. It’s the fact that you can do so much more than you have done so far. It is also the reality of the fact that any day could be my last day and I want to be able to have done something that will leave a legacy behind.” (Ore, personal communication, February 2016)
Thus, entrepreneurial engagement by my actors is perceived and treated as a duty, a calling, a responsibility, a mandate; not separate from but intrinsically woven into them (Falck, Heblich & Luedemann, 2009). This translates into how these Christian entrepreneurs engage in their work: persistently and committedly, always remembering that what truly matters are relationships: people. The business, thus, stands as the means to an end, rather than the end in and of itself.

This was loudly echoed by Greenleaf (2002). By stating that the servant-Leader was a servant first, he admonished leaders to scrutinize themselves and whether their conscious decision to lead was truly complemented by the natural feeling to serve. In questioning whether those led/served became better human beings and the least privileged somewhat better, leaders were forced to re-examine their leadership styled and economic activities in view of human beings and the impact their leadership styles and engagements had on them. While the terms leader and servant might be seen as opposing, Spears (2010) notes that many businesses and non-profit-organizations are adapting a flatter leadership approach (servant-leadership) focused on interactions and relationships, moving away from traditional autocratic and hierarchical leadership styles and instead emphasising listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, growth, building community, calling/purpose and nurturing the spirit (Spears, 2005).

In addition to faith expectations, my Afropolitan actors intensely felt this inner drive to lead was very strongly linked to and strengthened by community expectations. According to Franklin (2000) two studies conducted in the United Stated in the 1960s found that there was a great disparity between the expectations about employment after marriage for Black women and those for white women. The numbers showed that the proportion of Black women expected to remain in full-time employment after marriage was three times higher than they were for white women. In addition to this, Franklin (2000) explained the challenges of combining the roles of wife and mother with occupational roles. Continued research in the 1970s asserted that whereas white college students showed great levels of professional aspiration and mobility, for black women aspirations were a reflection of group expectations: born not out of a true personal desire but out of economic necessity and a sense of obligation (p. 167).

4.5 Reflections on Influence(r)s

In the study of the sociology of entrepreneurship, Butler (2005) analyses the relationship between group characteristics and the emergence of entrepreneurial engagements in both a historical, as well as an evolving manner: connecting the shift of Europe’s economic centre from Southern to Norther Europe with the wanderings of the Jews, experienced hostility and eventual settlement (pp. 15-23), it is argued that there is
substantial evidence to support the notion of a positive correlation between the assimilation of a group into a society and the probability of economic stability for that group (p.25).

In looking at my Afropolitan actors and analysing their backgrounds in order to decipher whether perceived or experienced hostilities fostered group-belonging and gave rise to a spread of ethnic enterprises (Butler, 2005, p. 22) – just as it had for many Jews, Japanese and the Amish – I had hit a brick wall. For in uncovering the second layer of influence, I found the answer to my question of how these shaped, empowered or restricted entrepreneurial engagements inconclusive. While some deemed their environment empowering, others found the very same restricting – believing their challenges to perhaps be due to their socio-economic positioning. And so, I saw that while A looked at B and believed to be at a disadvantage, B looked at A, thinking the very same.

Thus, I recognized the environment to be as much a matter of fact, as it was of perception. While looking at the same thing, people were looking from different angles (position) as well as through different lenses (lived experiences and frames of references). In looking at attitude and attitude formation, I found that considering questions pertaining to the glass ceiling or concrete wall, those actors who either denied or strongly questioned their existence were those who had worked their way up in male dominated worlds, were business analysts, strategic thinkers. They were highly rational, organized, structured and clear-cut in their dialogues, straight forward and matter-of-factish; exhibiting what Paustian-Underdahl and Woehl termed masculine traits rather than typically female ones (2014). They believed that their ability to work hard, fight their way to the top, come out strong and work as equals amongst their male colleagues should and indeed could hold true for everyone – if only one was good and skilled enough. In their eyes, there was no empirical evidence to support discrimination.

“I had this conversation with a colleague of mine earlier today; about facts and perceptions. I am aware that in certain countries there is this thing about racial discrimination but I mean, I’m still struggling with the concept of this ceiling. Is it actually a matter of fact or perception? The only reason I say that is because I think words play such an important role here. If I am constantly told to look at that person who has been struggling to get a certain job, it is very possible that – as a Black woman – I’ll be discouraged from applying for that particular role. Not because I have tried it and failed but because everything I hear is just so negative.”

(Abiola-James, personal communication, February 2016)

Padilla and Perez (2003) explained that stigmatized groups generally differed in their willingness to attribute negative outcomes to factors of discrimination by and large (p.47). There are believed to be numerous reasons for this: 1) they perceive to have the
negative stigma itself under their control, 2) they prefer self-determination and personal responsibility over blaming others, essentially “my life is in my hands” and 3) the more actors believed systems were fair and determination payed off, the less likely they were to think of themselves and others as victims of discrimination due to their cultural background (p.47).

Following my actors’ factors for motivation and having identified important influencers, I sought to establish to what extent shared experiences fostered group belonging and effectively supported the notion of “united we stand, divided we fall”. To what extent did my actors’ lived experiences – their background, education, upbringing and professional career – shape their attitudes and perceptions about community, life and entrepreneurship? To what extent did these attitudes and perception influence them in their engagements? And beyond that, to what extent did/do they influence their perception and understanding of self versus/and others?

To a large extent, I reconciled, perceptions created biases and gave room to a certain level of pragmatic denial. Denying the experience of others, denying statistics, denying actual facts.

Having worked for an Austrian employer in Lagos, Nigeria, I was never made more aware of my skin-colour than I was there: amongst Austrians and Germans in an African nation. Although more educated and higher skilled than my Caucasian peers, I was continuously discriminated against, sneered at, laughed at, and belittled from my boss’ assistant. In an exclusively female office, however, I was unable to pin-point the precise reasons for this. Roughly a year and a half into my employ, one of my colleague’s earliest warnings: that I would not find it easy living in Nigeria began to make sense;

“You know, you’re really White, just that no one will accept it. And you will find it difficult because they won’t understand you. It’s your skin colour; it won’t work in your favour. Things are different here. Plus your name, Yinka. They’ll look at you and expect you to act a certain way, to understand certain things, but how can you? You’re Austrian.”

I laughed at this, believing myself capable of fitting in easily. But I was wrong and she had been right. It took my new friends a while to understand me: they found me exotic; while others simply thought I was too different, ill-mannered, outspoken and disrespectful. My questioning nature – which was instilled in my formative years and praised within the Austrian educational system – was seen as brash, rude and immature within my new society, while my beliefs of honesty, simplicity and transparency were viewed as outright foolish and naïve.

Moving back to Austria, however, I was faced with a continuous reluctance by employers to employ an assertive and confident, educated and qualified Black female – or so I thought. It appeared to not merely be my appearance that unnerved them, but my
difference – so I believed. Why should I be considered inferior due to a perceived difference? Was my difference not rather an asset? I told myself.

And while there were those actors who thought to argue it away, there was no denying that discrimination was real and persistent, as are wage-disparities and employment or corporate leadership opportunities for women (glass ceiling) and women of colour (concrete wall) still today. Price (2016) published an article in The Guardian (April 6, 2016) about the recent “Gender Pay-Gap Bake Sale” held at the University of Queensland campus in Australia, aimed at raising awareness about wage disparities by charging students the proportion of $1 for each baked good they would earn comparative to men. Essentially, this meant that white males were charged $1 for each baked good, while white women were charged less, and black women the least – for a women of colour in the legal profession the costs stood at a mere 55 cents per baked good. Although usually successful, the campaign faced fierce backlashs from male students who felt particularly discriminated against and resorted to violent behaviour.

However, while it is important to keep the discourse along gender and ethnic inequalities within systems going, being a young Black female within certain sectors has often-times proven advantageous too, as shared by another participant;

“No, actually, being and looking different has been a big advantage. At the beginning of my life, of course I would dislike the fact that people would point at me and be like, ‘Oh, she is not from here’ and look at me in a weird way, but now people are really interested about my background because nobody can pinpoint where I come from. They have no clue. They usually think I am American or Brazilian or from the Dominican Republic or even Indian. They guess and the conversation starts. Sometimes, especially in job interviews, I think my story compensates for my skills. I would have this whole package, this story that I can tell, that I know by heart, that I have told so many times; and people would still get so excited and show so much interest. Being in international business, especially, has helped me a lot. People embrace me. For me, being and looking different has actually been a huge advantage.” (Anais Hattmansdorfer, personal communication, March 2016)

The media has only marginally been reporting on young Black individuals doing exceptionally well; such as Sorto’s (2016) report on Augusta Uwamanzu-Nna who was accepted into all eight IVY league colleges in the United States, Ufot Ekong who broke a 50-year old record by “solving a mathematical equation which was unsolvable 30 years ago, in his first semester” (Sherrif, 2015), and Prof. Abiodun Alao who broke a 187-year old record at the University of London, being the forst black African scholar to deliver an inaugural lecture at King’s College (Olowoopeji, 2016). And thus, I was left to wonder why – in light of a plethora of negativity surrounding Blackness globally and the silence
over what it meant to live, act and work with it within a European context – not much more discussions had been created around Blacks, especially Afropolitans, doing well. Within Austria and beyond there has been praise for David (Olatokunbo) Alaba, an Austrian footballer of Nigerian and Philippine origin, who made history as the youngest player for Austria’s national team at age 19 and winning the title of “Austrian footballer of the Year” in 2011, currently playing for Bayern Munich and repeatedly being commended for his skills, versatility and ability to play virtually any role on the pitch (Honigstein, 2016). Listening to interviews, Alaba carries his cultural (Austrian, Nigerian, Philippine) as well as religious (Christian) heritage with pride. And yet, David Alaba too has had to face racial slurs and comments; the most notable one being the racial comedy sketch by Austria’s national broadcaster ORF in 2012 when a white host was painted black, pretending to be Alaba, and was being mocked with statements such as “You probably live in a refugee camp (and being shown a banana, asked) What is this? You probably know this, you’ve always seen them, It’s a banana” as reported by Kent (2012). Understanding what position and responsibility demanded of him, he has spoken out against racism, choosing to represent himself as well as important elements that have shaped and influenced him (group-belonging) with pride. Quite clearly, although focused on his professional career, his cultural identity strongly influenced his engagements and activities. Perhaps neither intentionally nor consciously, he had become a spokesperson for many multi-ethnic identities (Afropolitans).

Considering the insights gained, it became clear that there was a need to look even deeper into the issue of entrepreneur’s self: While evidently influenced by numerous factors, none of these factors held a distinct answer to the question of to what degree entrepreneurial activities could be linked to the concept and social construct of the Afropolitan identity.

Hence, I realized the need to take off yet another layer of self: moving beyond motivation and influences, I decided to go straight to the core: perhaps a look at what individuals believed they truly were, held the key to what they decided to devote themselves, their resources and time to and eventually do. As perceptions are directly related to our experiences and our interpretation of their meaning, we will now take a closer look at individual’s perception in terms of self-identity and the effect this very identity has had on their entrepreneurial engagements.
5 IDENTITIES FORMATION

This chapter looks at cultural versus personal identity. It seeks to answer the question of “Who am I?” beyond national, ethnic and cultural borders. Moving beyond theoretical concepts of culture, ethnicity, and identity I decided to unearth personal identities, giving my actors the curtesy to define, redefine and undefined themselves. Understanding their identifying of self, I subsequently sought out the link between this self-identity and their entrepreneurial engagements and activities.

5.1 Identity

From gender identity, socio-economic class identity and familial identity, to racial identity, ethnic identity and cultural identity, numerous distinctions have been created to frame the multiple aspects of identity that exist (Weinreich, 2003).

Throughout the 19th, 20th and 21st century scholars have sought to conceptualize and define “identity”. Many definitions have focused on the social and cognitive self, and as behaviour as an individual’s reactions to a set of group expectations. Both James (1890 & 1910) and Mead (1934) ascertain that identity exists only in relation to others. James specifically states that “a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him” and “we come to know ourselves through our interactions with others”, while Mead describes the multiple stages of self through the “generalized other”: analysing the stages of play (perceiving and taking on someone else’s distinct behaviour) and game (developing a full sense of self), to explain how children are taught to both take their place as well as act within different social settings. Among Mead’s most important discussions in relation to this is reflexivity: “I, the active source, acts in response to “my” situation and can thus be experienced.” Reflexivity allows for me to not merely experience myself but also anticipate how my actions and gestures might be experienced by others – whether they be physically present or not. As responses of others have been experienced over time and thus internalized, they have become part and parcel of my consciousness and accessible mental catalogue (Stanford, 2008).

In the 1960s, discussions around identity started moving further beyond the individual in relation to his immediate surroundings, proving highly resonant within journalism and academia, permeating social and political discussions. With the rise of the mass society, globalisation and the individualist ethos, identity concerns began to rise, shifting the focus more towards group identities, class structures and weaknesses in class and migration politics. This discussion was furthermore fuelled in the 1980s, with its heated dialogues around race, class and gender. Within social sciences today, the
discourse around identity predominantly centres on *unity within visible diversity* (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000).

Many terms – such as race, nation, ethnicity, citizenship, democracy, class, community and tradition – can be labelled categories of practice, as well as categories of analysis. Identity, as a category of practice, mainly concerns itself with the *making sense of oneself and one’s activities and how these differ from others* (sense-making) *in order to justify joint-action*; while identity, as a category of analysis, concerns itself with *how particular terms are used and understood* in order to achieve this (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, pp. 4). Identity, thus, has multiple uses: in addition to being the basis for social or political action, it is frequently found in combination with the collective phenomenon, an elementary and uniquely important condition of social being, a form of solidarity and group-belonging, or the fractured whole of the contemporary self.

Thus, what identity truly is remains somewhat unclear. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) suggest that identity’s ambiguity ascribes to it either too much or too little true *meaning*. It is argued that the assumption that identities are constructed, fluid and multiple leaves us without the foundation upon which meaningful discussion about identities and identity formation can take place.

While the issue of sense-making will be analysed in more detail later in the paper, it is important to point out that identification and classification are both central to understanding cultural identities, the concept of group-belonging and the influence these have on social entrepreneurial engagements, particularly for individuals with migration backgrounds.

Within this study of the social construct of the Afropolitan identity, we will look at identity as defined as follows;

“We know who we are by knowing where we stand. One’s identity is defined by moral commitments.” –Taylor (1992)

“We make sense of our identity by the stories we tell of our lives. We are the subjects in other’s stories and others are the subjects in our stories.” –Ricoeur (1991)

“The self is viewed as emergent, as a ‘selfing’ process, whereby an individual both shapes and is shaped by the situational and cultural contexts within which social interaction takes place.” –Weigert, Teitge & Teitge (2006)
With the social construct of the Afropolitan identity as our central theme, we will look at how Black female professionals of Nigerian origin living and working in London in particular perceive themselves in terms of group belonging (ethnicity) and self-identity (self-perception vs. the Afropolitan construct), creating a link between identity and entrepreneurial engagement.

Culture, in this sense, is considered at both the group level and the individual level; integrating the micro- and macro- perspectives into one.

5.2 Cultural and ethnic identity

Within social theory, the question of cultural identity deals with the aspect of self that arises out of belonging to an idiosyncratic ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, and national, culture (Hall, Held, Hubert & Thompson, 1995). According to Kasperova and Kitching (2013) researchers often describe two interdependent and opposing aspects of personhood; namely the standing of self and uniqueness, and the sense of sameness and group belonging (p.440). Hall (1995) describes modern identities as shifting and persons now being fragmented, no longer consisting of a single but multiple identities. He ascribes this to human’s subjective nature and our need to adjust to structural and institutional changes (p.598).

The Office for National Statistics (2012) also confirmed that the question of “ethnic group belonging” has become more complex and intricate since the office commenced with the ethnic group question. This question provides information on residents’ ethnic characteristics which can then be used by both private and public organizations “to monitor equal opportunities and anti-discrimination policies, and to plan for the future through resource allocation and informing provision of services”. It is stated that the number of tick boxes has increased from merely nine in 1991 to 18 in 2011. People are, thus, choosing to define and describe themselves in more complex and shifting
manners, giving rise to the question of what cultural identities really are and what role the media—specifically “new media” such as the internet and social media—plays in this (Bolton, 2013).

With an increase in cultural debates, the spread of globalisation and the rise of multiculturalism (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007), the concept of cultures and cross-cultural identities has been closely followed by the mainstream media too. CNN as well as BBCAfrica have as recently as April 2016 been discussing “identity” and its complexities by encouraging individuals to both tweet and share their personal identities and multicultural backgrounds on social media outlets such as twitter and Instagram.

Human beings possess the unique ability to experience and analyse themselves as the object of their own thoughts. Identity, hence, cannot be separated from consciousness and self-knowledge. Consequently, it is important to note that the Afropolitan identity is being studied as constructed in discourse: how it is done and made, as “negotiated among speaking subjects in social contexts, and as emerging in the form of subjectivity and a sense of self” (Bamberg, De Fina & Schiffrin, 2010).

With a focus on Afropolitan identities, I primarily sought to decipher to what extent being Afropolitan—essentially being a member of a distinct group of people who belonged to multiple cultural or ethnic groups and thus to none exclusively—fulfilled the need of “group belonging” and drove entrepreneurial engagements. How important was group belonging really, how conscious was it?

5.3 Personal Identities

My research and analysis found that while some actors found it easy to identify with cultural categories put forward—such as “Nigerian” or “Afropolitan”—others resisted the
notion of being put into any particular category or generalization, opting rather to define themselves based on concepts and ideologies they believed truly reflected both them and what they stood for. By choosing to identify themselves as individuals rather than members of a specific group of people or culture, my actors took on the right to undefined and redefine themselves.

In doing so, a very strong link between personal identity and entrepreneurial engagements could be established. Watson (2008) describes this as “a coming together of inward/internal self-reflection and outward/external engagement”.

All actors’ entrepreneurial activities were direct extensions of their self-perception – even if unconscious. From the Christian, to the Sojourner, the Nigerian, the Black British African, and the Working Mother, each actor’s business stood as a representation and extension of themselves. Thus, they embodied their businesses in the truest possible form. They were driven by their personal identities – rather than the Afropolitan, as initially presumed by me. As a matter of fact, none but one embraced the concept of Afropolitanism itself.

5.3.1 The Christian

In introducing herself, Abiola-James emphasised her “devoted Christian” background. Far beyond education, familial identity or ethnic group-belonging, she passionately drew attention to her Christian values, upbringing, beliefs and engagements. Her sense of self, belonging and security were undoubtedly founded upon the importance of her Christian self;

“I would say I am first and foremost a woman who loves God. My identity is neither Austrian, Nigerian, nor British; I am simply me. I wouldn’t generally say I am conscious of my cultural identity when walking down the street. I would say, however, that in certain situations - especially in London - it is more prevalent because there are so many cultures and so many different ethnic groups that – it’s almost ironic – you’re made more aware of who you are and where you belong.”

(Abiola-James, personal communication, February 2016)

Although often made aware of aspects of her professional, cultural and ethnic identity (other perception), her passion, drive and focus were directly related to her conscious perception of self. His Bride – her entrepreneurial engagement which is made up of two arms: the inner arm focusing on emotional and mental health, as well as personal growth and development, and the outer arm devotes to personal styling, beauty and fashion – seeks to transform individuals, using Christian principles and values. At the forefront of her engagements stands her desire to create “transformation within, reflection without”. The motto being, “getting women to look into the mirror and not just
liking the reflection they see but the person they see.” She emotionally relates this to difficult past experiences;

“I've been in a place where you look beautiful; your hair is all set, your make-up is all quaint and your dressing fantastic; you’re walking down the street and everybody is looking at you and complimenting you but then, you know, inwardly you’re really unhappy, you are really depressed, even suicidal. You’ve gone through a horrible ordeal and you just don’t know what to do. People see you and think that everything is okay. They don’t know that you’re probably just on your way to the next bridge to jump off. I knew that there were so many people around me – family and friends – that have been through something similar, similar experiences or even worse, and just didn’t know how to come out of them.” (Abiola-James, personal communication, February 2016)

Her social enterprise, thus, has been purpose-driven from the start and that purpose directly stems from her personal identity as a “Christian first and foremost”. Her past encounters with pain and depression laid the foundation – having overcome and come out strong – for her entrepreneurial engagements.

Maclean, Harvey, Gordon and Shawn (2015) explain that storytelling and identity are closely related: the way individuals chose to depict themselves is closely tied to their making sense of certain experiences, attaching themselves to certain issues and using these to give meaning to decisive actions (p.1626). It is furthermore two-fold, as there is a part of identity directed inwardly, making sense of experiences and controlling the personal sphere, while there is another aspect of identity directed outwardly, projecting values, concepts and ideas on others.

This pattern of entrepreneurial activities as extensions of personal identities continued throughout the course of my research.

5.3.2 The SuperWorkingMum

Detola Amure was first faced with the question of identity in light of having seemingly lost it: her job. From her early childhood all through her primary, secondary and tertiary education, she had always seen herself as doing rather than being, and thus, the loss of her job stripped her of what she had always held dear;

“I was working as a business analyst and my contract, which had just recently been renewed for a year, got terminated after the first month. This really shook me. It really affected me. I didn’t see that coming. I didn’t see it coming at all. And I think that was the first time that I experienced what depression was. It shook
my world; it shook my identity because I didn’t realize – until then – that my identity was in my job and I started questioning who I was; ‘Who am I?’” (Amure, personal communication, February 2016)

Eriksson and Linde (2014) explain that occupations are very closely related to social identities; and while some scholars claim that people identify less with their professions than they previously did due to the changing world of work, increased mobility and flexibility, others continue to assert that occupations are major influencing factors on individual’s social identities (p.33). In quoting Hughes (1971/2008) Eriksson and Linde explain that people – when introducing themselves – choose the best possible title, knowing that the mere mentioning of the same creates and affects image and perception (p.34). Socialization is seen as another factor strongly influencing occupational identity adoption. Due to the fact that individuals often take on the working attitudes and occupations of their parents, occupational identities – especially such as farmers, bakers, fishers – the means of production are often inherited too, thus creating family heritage and a sense of identity (p.35).

Detola Amure, as previously elucidated and like most of my actors, grew up in a family that supremely valued education and professional standing. This shaped and cemented her belief in the importance of doing: be it doing a profession, building her home, or raising her children;

“When I started SuperWorkingMum initially, it was from the angle of “How do I juggle everything?” and especially as a Christian mom: how do I juggle my faith, going to work, being a wife, being a mother? What I found was that a lot of moms – or women when they became mothers – totally abandoned their dreams. They were more interested in being moms – which is also fantastic – but then they would leave everything else behind. They were no longer thinking about themselves; they were no longer driven. They were just running around in circles, taking care of everyone else but forgetting about themselves. Motherhood takes a lot from women. So it’s about being able to find that balance. The vision is helping mothers maximise their time because, once you can maximize your time and you’re focused, you’ll still have time to do all these other amazing things you want to do.” (Amure, personal communication, February 2016)

In choosing to turn a part-time hobby into a full-time job, she managed to extend her personal and occupational identity into her entrepreneurial engagements; quintessentially remaining true to her intrinsic motivation, doing, while at the same time being. Being, being something that came naturally to the Nigerian.
5.3.3 The Nigerian

Abiola Egbeyemi who was born, bred and educated in the United Kingdom, never saw herself as English. Growing up with a single mother and in a household of only male siblings, she grew up with a clear perception and profound understanding of who she was;

“I am a Nigerian that just happens to live in the U.K. I've never been confused about that. I've never seen myself as being British or anything else. I am 100% Nigerian.” (Egbeyemi, personal communication, January 2016)

Having grown up within a mono-ethnic (white) community and environment in London, Abiola Egbeyemi was always (made) conscious of her ethnicity. While never explicitly made aware of the fact that she was different, her mother made sure to instil in her typical Nigerian values as well as a strong cultural heritage. Although she emphasised that she never felt her Blackness to have been an obvious issue at work, she did share times she simply had to work much harder than her peers – due to her Blackness. This, however, was never a real problem for her as she knew who she was and where she was going. Conscious about the presence of the glass ceiling or concrete wall, she believed the air got thinner the higher you climbed, and was relieved she had no such ambitions; she had other plans;

“For me, it was important to go back to the source. Ankara is a West-African print. It is what we wear in Nigeria. So, I wanted to go back to Nigeria and produce this. I started off producing just bags using ankara and then I went on to using it with leather which was produced in Nigeria. It was very important for me to have it made in Nigeria with Nigerian craftsmanship and sourced locally as well. The vision of the business was to create locally, sell globally. I wanted to change people’s perception about Nigeria. So, I decided to invest.” (Egbeyemi, personal communication, January 2016)

In speaking about her business, Egbeyemi emphasized the Nigerian image: empowering people, improving Nigerians as a people and Nigeria as a nation, supporting Nigerian workmanship, the Nigerian industry, and the currently overwhelmingly negative Nigerian image across the globe. Stressing that both Nigeria and her people have largely been associated with corruption, fraud, drugs and prostitution, she has committed herself to carrying a better and improved image of Nigeria(ns) anywhere she goes; thus seeing herself as an ambassador. Her personal identity, consequently, lay in her cultural identity and formed the basis of her entrepreneurial activity.
5.3.4 The African South Londoner

While identity was fundamental to some, it was less clear-cut and functional to others. Mariam Lawal, who grew up in a predominantly Black community in South London, mainly took pride in her British Africanness;

“Black British African. I definitely identify with that because I think it’s a mixture of both. I wouldn’t say like I’m just British and not African or just African and not British. I’m a mixture of both.” (Lawal, personal communication, February 2016)

She went on to describe her background and upbringing, making multiple references to “privileged whites”, “popular Jamaicans” and “primal Africans” and how group formations – as early as in primary school – shaped her perception of self and fostered a sense of group-belonging, especially amongst West-Africans. In linking her identity to her cultural Nigerian heritage, however, there is a disconnect;

“Yea, I’ve been back [to Nigeria]. I’ve been back twice and the last time was six years ago or so. My mom lives there but I haven’t gone back in a while. You know, going back is not as important to me as it is to many others.” (Lawal, personal communication, February 2016)

In narrating her upbringing (elementary school to university) she takes pain to emphasise the regions within South London she grew up in. She takes both pride and glory in them; in her South London-ness and Africanness, rather than Nigerianness.

While the issue and formation of sub-cultures will be discussed later in this paper, it is important to point out here that this apparent disconnect can be seen amongst millennials (Generation Y) across most cultures today. This new identity made up of numerous cultures and ethnic backgrounds is in many ways – although appearing to be connected to its source – standing alone. Globalization, multiculturalism and virtual connectedness – in addition to lived experiences – are increasingly beginning to shape identities and perceptions of self and others today.

Sharing her frustrations over being an educated, determined Black women and yet unemployed, she went on to share how her perception of being a Black British African inspired her to start her Afropolitan swimwear line;

“It’s basically what you’re speaking about, the Afropolitan person: it’s merging the two cultures – where I grew up and where I come from – into one brand. So, we have contemporary pieces made of African fabric. This represents my culture. This represents where I’m from.” (Lawal, personal communication, February 2016)
As can clearly be seen her too, her entrepreneurial opportunity identification – born out of her season of unemployment – too was an extension of her personal identity.

5.3.5 The Sojourner

Maclean et al. (2015) describe the narrative identity as a constant work-in-progress: never completely stable and definite but constantly evolving and changing, seeking to improvise and revise itself (p.1626). This aspect of identity, this constant desire to remain relevant, be flexible and adaptable, and remain true to one’s changing and growing self, was most clearly seen in Frances Ore’s narrated story and perceived self;

“I don’t really know what I identify as. I wouldn’t say this; I wouldn’t say that. I have never called myself Afropolitan. I wouldn’t call myself Nigerian. I don’t think - or I wouldn’t say - that I have typical Nigerian traits. If I had to explain who I was, I would say I’m Austrian Nigerian. An Austrian would never identify me as being Austrian, neither would a Nigerian identify me as Nigerian. It’s interesting because you’re a little bit of both worlds for different reasons.” (Ore, personal communication, February 2016)

This is reflected in her lived experience: from having attended numerous primary and secondary schools, to starting and changing her undergraduate higher institutions as well as degree programmes a couple of times, her journey has indeed been an interesting one marked with a handful of ups and downs, as well as U-turns. In her entrepreneurial engagements she furthermore shares a handful of businesses she officially registered but never started, as well as dreams and business concepts she had developed but never seriously pursued. With her, there have been many ideas but a missing see-through; life as an evolving journey.

In her current entrepreneurial engagements this pattern seemed to be repeating itself, as she shared the following;

“I am going through a process of restructuring. For me it is all about the journey. The destination is not really clear. A vision is great and beautiful, but I don’t necessarily need to see everything. For me, it is just about the journey itself and the people.” (Ore, personal communication, February 2016)

Frances Ore too, as has been made evident, carries her personal identity, life as a journey and herself as a sojourner, into her entrepreneurial engagements: never limiting herself but constantly evolving and changing, and allowing herself do this in her work too.
Notably, while all openly shared their journey of the discovery of self and the identity crisis that inevitably formed part of this process, none but one of my actors embraced the concept of Afropolitanism. None saw themselves in it, completely identified with it, or was particularly influenced by the *multiplicity of identity*. While identity has to do with personal experiences forming part and parcel of *becoming and being* – this will be looked at in more detail in the succeeding chapters – the embodiment of this identity has to do with consciously making sense of these lived experiences.

In concluding this part on personal identities, it becomes clear that a closer look at embodied entrepreneurship as well as making sense of lived experiences needs to be taken. The next sub-chapter will therefore concern itself with this particularly.

### 5.4 Sense-Making and Embodiment

Entrepreneurship concerns itself with storytelling and a narrative identity: assuming a morality and adapting an identity within a particular context which is narrated as a story in order to create a specific outcome (Maclean et al., 2015). This quest for meaning is born out of one’s experience and desire to make sense of one’s life-journey, one’s crucibles.

Weick (1995) explains that *sense-making* is a retrospective process, whereby meaning is ascribed to a certain reoccurrence one is struggling to fit into a mental process of predictions or expectations. The three elements of sense-making can be explained as cues – simple structures or stimuli that need to be identified and extracted, frames of references – the backdrop within which these stimuli are then placed, and finally a plausible relationship between them – in order to construct meaning and make sense.

While sense-making focuses on understanding and interpreting experiences accurately, embodiment assumes that who we are and who we embody cannot be separated (Kasperova & Kitching, 2014).

It follows that once a vision has been formulated (out of one’s lived experiences) and communicated to others, entrepreneurs almost naturally take on the very embodiment of the communicated vision. No longer are visionaries considered separate of their vision but their words, actions and lifestyle are all equally taken under the radar, thoroughly examined. Followers now no longer view leaders as mere sharers of visions or distinct from them, but the very embodiments of the same. Should there be any discrepancies in what is said and what is exemplified, leaders quickly lose credibility, being tagged hypocrites. Their lifestyles, thus, must be a reflection of the visions and stories shared; they must both enact and embody them. There must be an evident relationship between the two (Gardener, 2011, p.35); and for my actors there clearly was.
Rosser-Mims (2010) points out the nature of Black female leadership in relation to “climbing to the top not for self but others”, while Fey Scott (2016) points out the added pleasure or pressure (depending on experience and perception) of belonging to a community that both encouraged and emphasised support. It is believed and understood that our collectivist culture places great importance on the responsibilities of leadership and the expectations that come with a platform through which one makes sense of experiences – both that of self and others.

It is believed that the ply of Black women in leadership positions or positions of authority has long been ignored: the pleasure of being a working woman, wife, mother, and spokesperson while simultaneously remaining humble, submissive, charitable and selfless have added an unnatural level of pressure and displeasure, constantly increasing levels dissatisfaction and stress for many. Roberts (1993, p.4) put it as follows;

“There are joys and sorrows that most mothers share: the pleasure of nursing her baby; the exhaustion from chasing after her toddler; the gratification of watching her child achieve whatever goal; the terror of unwanted pregnancy; and the despair of surrendering yet another dream in order to care for her child.”

In many ways being a Black female entrepreneur does indeed come with added cultural challenges.

### 5.5 Reflections on Identity

While I grew up with a stern pride in my Viennese upbringing, culture, mannerisms and identity, I have seen my perception of self altering over the years: having finally chosen to embrace my Yoruba name (Olayinka) rather than introducing myself by my English name (Victoria), I now carried my Nigerianness with pride. Having often been mistaken for being Jamaican, there was no mistaking me now. For many of my actors the story was similar – although choosing to identify themselves through means other than culture and group belonging – many of these too have chosen to – albeit subconsciously – embrace important parts of their cultural identity likewise, relinquishing their English or Christian names, and embracing their cultural ones. For some it was an official step: changing their names in their passports and ID-cards, while for others it happened informally, in correcting people when addressing them by their former names, or simply be introducing themselves through their native names going forward. While only two of my actors identified as “fully Nigerian”, all actors’ entrepreneurial engagements were very heavily culturally influenced – whether or not consciously, intentionally and emotionally so. For although their cultural (African or Nigerian) identity might not have played an obvious role in their decisions as to what kind of enterprise to start, their
experiences, parental upbringing and community relations certainly shaped and heavily influenced them in their decisions to become entrepreneurial.
Sharing their experiences growing up, my actors confirmed that their parents too had emigrated to Europe and other Western countries in the late 1960s in the search for *greener pastures*. Their decisions to leave their home-country was one in quest for a brighter future; both for themselves and the generation to come. As confirmed by many researchers, the search for a better way of life has always been the ultimate motivating factor for a group to leave their country (Butler, 2005, p.7). Their aspirations were strongly tied to academic accolade, professional success and social standing. What they wanted was security, respect and acknowledgements. With education proving the doorway to all of this for them – opening doors and launching them into a privileged society – what they were keen on was making sure their children too would follow in their footsteps, either as employees of international organizations as many of them or as professors, lawyers, doctors and engineers. For parents who grew up within a system that ranked students – often in a class of 70 or 90 pupils – coming out in second or third position was never praised. The successful ones were those who came out top of the class, as first. And so, there was constant pressure. In a society where about 8 million people of a labour force population of about 76.95 million is unemployed (ca. 10.4%) one could simply not afford to not be the best. Especially amongst the Yoruba people of Nigeria, education was – and still is today – regarded as the most important element of life and basic foundation for human success. As such, it is no surprise that a Bachelor’s degree is usually followed by a Master’s or two, and those individuals brave enough to continue on in search of a PhD or similar, considered prime examples of what it means to be a child of Yoruba parents and a proud descendant of the people. In his study on race and entrepreneurship, Butler (2005) correspondingly emphasises migrant parents’ desire to launch their children into professional occupations within larger economic sectors due to the importance placed on education (p.2).

These expectations – all tied to academic and professional successes – have indeed laid the backdrop for my actors’ entrepreneurial engagements: both empowering and restricting them. With failure not being an option growing up, it still wasn’t for them today. And so, for those who managed to distinguish themselves as firsts, there was an unconscious and subconscious need to separate themselves from those who had not quite managed to excel and surpass their peers; people who were simply not *like them*. For these individuals, very often, I found there was an added challenge of dealing with the negative image or perception towards Nigerians abroad: having been branded a nation of corrupt individuals, opportunists – and especially in European countries such as Italy, Austria and Germany – drug-dealers and prostitutes – you either belonged to the *good* ones or the *bad* ones; there really was no in-between; there was only the need to distance yourself.
Negative imaging and stereotyping had caused a more or less conscious level of embarrassment and resulting desire to distance oneself in order to avoid being identified or classified as a member of a certain group of people. This negative group identity had as much to do with ethnicism, as it had to do with classism.

Naturally, I could very much relate, for I too had been a victim to believing the single story told about Nigeria and her people. A story highlighting poverty, corruption and fraud, failed governments, lacking infrastructure, missing public services, high levels of unemployment and crime, and a dysfunctional medical and educational systems. A story that was not untrue but rather incomplete. A story that failed to talk about the resilience, joy and laborious nature of the average Nigerian. A story that draw no attention to Nigerians’ creativity, artistic abilities and continuous positivity in face of adversity. This story did not include any triumphs, any victories. It was a story of darkness, sadness and gloom. Adichie in her TED Talk (2009) talked about the dangers of a single story, and the fact that they were not untrue but incomplete.

When my professor shared that “I simply think you’re a global African”, I felt somewhat offended. I decided to face – rather than ignore – the offence, seeking to understand just why I felt so deeply of his identification of me. My initial point of self-defence was that the global African did not describe me in any way: it told nothing about me, nothing of my cultural (Nigerian Yoruba) background and international experiences. Thus, I found identity to be as closely linked to purpose as anything else: to the Pan-African, his identity stems from being African and his purpose from his desire to unifying broken and torn-apart nations and peoples, his slogan, “We are one. Let’s unite!” To the African, his world is his continent; and I felt that the global African was merely one who carried this mentality into the world.

My world, however, was not Africa; it was my Nigeria, it was my Vienna. I consequently felt somewhat taken aback by someone else’s identification of me as an African – or a global African. I wanted to be perceived and identified as an Austrian Nigerian or Nigerian Austrian: influenced by these and many other cultures, wanting to make a change within this sphere, my world: my Vienna, my Nigeria. I felt that tagging me “global African” stripped me of too many things I held dear; it stripped me of me.

That, naturally, was not the case. In reality, the global African – as perceived by the professor – was the Afropolitan – as perceived by me. What I had opposed, in reality, was not his definition but his right to define. What I had opposed, I realized, was the mere fact someone had thought it appropriate to define, box, categorize me.

Upon sharing my reflections with a close friend and confident, she laughed at my identification of being Nigerian. Questioning and challenging the concept of “the Nigerian person”, she wondered, “How can you come from a concept? There is no such thing as a Nigerian; at least not to me. I simply identify as being Yoruba. That’s who I am, that is where I belong. How can you possibly come from something that was made up? The
people and culture and language have always existed; but Nigeria as a nation has not. How can you call yourself Nigerian? Well, I am simply Yoruba."

And therein, I recognised, lay the danger of identifying others: of creating sections, divisions and groupings; of assuming that my Afropolitan sentiments would and should be shared by people I felt had similar backgrounds as me and should consequently embrace my concept of identity too. Our lived experiences, localities, memories and frames of references shape us in our creation of personal identities more than anything else, I realized.

Having discussed the issue of motivational factors for entrepreneurial engagements, influence(r)s and cultural, ethnic and personal identities, a number of parallels could be drawn and assumptions made about the lived experiences of Black female entrepreneurs and their unique challenges. But were their challenges truly unique? And if so, to what extent and why? In order to get a somewhat more complete picture, I decided to discuss this issue outside my initially laid borders.

Having zoomed into the issue of identity and entrepreneurship, I wondered to what extent many of the describes challenges were truly unique and exclusive for my Black entrepreneurs (actors). Zooming out, I thus decided to speak to Black male professionals too; including them into my research: to what extent was Blackness an issue to Black professionals within their careers? Was identity an issue to them at all? Was the glass-wall or concrete-ceiling something Black men were perhaps subject to as well? Desiring to gain a somewhat more balances view on the issue at hand, I decided to expand my frame of reference, my dialogue partners, and step out of my research box.
A COMPLEMENTARY PERSPECTIVE

This chapter has been written as a monologue – a fictional speech, one may say – highlighting the main points and issues that arose from my conversations with Moses Ida-Michaels and Demola Soremekun. The monologue challenges the concept of diversity and multiculturalism at the workplace, the concrete-wall many professional Black women in business are supposedly exclusively subjected to, continues with a discussion of the issues and challenges of European integration today, and concludes with a call for action in order to break through existing and remerging barriers.

Fifteen years ago exactly, I sat – rather than stood – here; just like you: in the audience. I was looking forward to this intercultural dialogue aimed at tackling the growing challenges of European migration, cultural assimilation and human integration. I looked forward to hearing innovative solutions and creative suggestions about how to forge forward, how to combine our efforts, and how to actually create a system that would benefit all persons involved. I looked forward to heated discussions, interesting dialogues and insightful actions. I looked forward to so much, but received so little; and so I was determined to stand up and step out: out of my comfort zone, out of the listening seat, and right into the debate, becoming part of the ongoing conversation. So determined was I that my passions and efforts paved a way far beyond what you can see today.

Ten years ago exactly, I was promoted to senior management within my company. I was one of about half a dozen senior managers of multi-cultural backgrounds, I was to find out. Then, the multicultural debate was heated and lively: the company needed and wanted more diversity at top management levels and so I was one of their obvious candidates: hard-working, committed, loyal, ambitious and black. My reality was, however, that I had put in twice as much work and extra hours as my colleagues, had brought in the most high-profile and high-paying clients, had resolved issues way beyond my pay-grade, and had shown a willingness to sacrifice beyond the norm. As such, this alone qualified me.

Roughly five years ago I was made the first Black male to join my company’s board of directors. A company with hundreds of offices around the globe: over a dozen in the United States, a few in the U.K., offices in Berlin and Munich, Vienna and Graz, Lagos and Johannesburg, Dubai and Mumbai; and yet, I was the first Black male to make it to the board of directors. I had made history – apparently. I should be proud of myself – apparently. This might have been a small step for me, but it was a mighty one of the history of my company – apparently. My family rejoiced and my friends celebrated, for no one in our vast circle of acquaintances, professionals and experts in over a dozen fields had managed to make it to the top of a Fortune500 global conglomerate yet. And
yet, all that stood apparent to me was that we had a long way to go: as a company, and as a country, as a people.

I have never sought to define myself by my ethnic background or somewhat multicultural upbringing. As far as culture goes, to be fair and square, I am English. I was born in England, primarily educated in England, and have always been exposed to a thriving English culture. As far as parental upbringing goes, I was brought up the English way, I still speak English with my parents to this day. And so, in my early years I identified as being English. When I first interviewed at my current company – I was applying for a junior assistant position then – we spoke as much about golf and jazz, as we did about politics and wines. In hiring me, the company did not hire diversity, they hired likeness. Although employing someone of supposed African origin, they had – in truth – just hired another Englishman. My political ideologies, educational background and personal preferences stood in no contrast whatsoever to my company’s bosses’ or employees’; I just naturally fit in.

Looking at our hiring practices and strategies over the years, it was little surprise why: our complex hiring procedures, our affiliations with sports clubs, private clubs and elite universities, and our long-standing culture of supporting our own almost certainly attracted a minute group of individuals while excluding the majority. The truth was, although English, I was actually rather fortunate to have been interviewed by someone who truly wanted to get to know me that day. The truth was, although English, I had been fortunate, blessed to have been given an opportunity. For the truth was, I too have often known the challenges and indignities of being perceived as different by virtue of my skin colour; of having to work twice as hard to prove myself, my skills, my worth. And so with consciousness and awareness, my identity shifted. However, I have also known the challenges of not being different enough; for while hiring a Black man looked good, hiring a Black women looked even better, allowed hiring professionals tick off two boxes.

Following the fourth Women’s Conference in Beijing in 1995, there was a drastic change of mind-sets across many African states. Due to the fact that African women were very well represented in that conference, the first roots of feminism began to spring up across Africa. It spread like a wave. Following this conference, people started to look for women to rise up. Moving beyond the notion of a woman’s place being in the kitchen and not rising above her estate, a new set of Africans started emerging, encouraging their daughter to become great and their wives to aspire to reach their goals. Most of these African girls that were 10 or 15 years old then, are the adults popularly referred to as Afropolitans today. Individuals – mainly woman – who have been empowered to go forth, embrace themselves, reach for their dreams, conquer the world.

And today we see but some of these results. We witness the fruits of the watered seeds in the form of women being empowered all around the globe: to further their education, to climb the corporate ladder, to become entrepreneurial, to take on leadership
positions, to build a life outside their four walls called home. We see women prospering and flourishing in all spheres of their private, academic, professional and entrepreneurial lives. We see women being encouraged and supported in entering into STEM, where they have been a missing voice for long. Today, we often preferred them to their male – both black and white – counterparts in order to create a balance and reflect change. We see women being empowered all over.

Of recent we have also been speaking more about the nine protected characteristics; about the fact that people should be protected according to certain criteria: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and finally sexual orientation. The Equality Act 2010 postulates that we are to treat others equally in spite of their differences. I, however, want to put it to you that the creation of differentiation categories is precisely the problem. I want to put it to you that in creating categories and highlighting differences, by pointing out ways in which we are different from others and others different from us, we create divisions. We create precisely the problem we seek to solve: separation.

Now, of course there are those who will say that the categorization of certain groups and peoples is very much necessary to ensure their protection and survival; that both the Native Americans in the United States, the Maya in Guatemala, the First Nations in Canada, the Aborigines in Australia, the Roma in Europe, and the Yazidis in Mesopotamia only exist to this day by virtue of certain laws put in place to protect them and their rights. There are others who will add that certain laws and practices are important in order to prevent marginalization, exploitation or forced assimilation of certain underprivileged groups; and that is right. However, in talking about classifications here, we are talking about the prevention of genocide and stoppage of group extinctions.

To those who will argue that labels are important for discussing certain issue within a given context, highlighting societal, political or economic shortcomings and calling for industrial action, I will say that right should be right within whatever context, as wrong should be wrong. Must I be a refugee to fear for my survival? A parent to grieve at the loss of a child? Must I be female to defend women’s rights? A human resources manager to care for the wellbeing of my employees?

No.

You see, by creating categories, we are creating classes and thus give room to labelling and grading. We are creating an othering, a distinction, a gap. Apartheid. There is no need for any of that. Not anymore, not today, not here. What I have experienced and seen – not what I have been merely told – is what is causing me to stand here today, to propose a better way.

International migration has become a key feature of our modern societies. It is estimated that about 2-3% of the world’s current population are migrants – both voluntary and
forced. In 2013, Europe was host to approximately 4.1 million asylum seekers and – as we all know – these numbers are growing. In 2015 alone over one million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe and according to the UNHCR the numbers for 2016 presently stand at 135,711 people.

Let me point out that according to recent statistics, migrants coming into the UK since 2000 have been by far less likely to claim and receive benefits or use social housing than people already resident in the UK. These migrants have furthermore made a net contribution of £25bn to public finances.

Let me also point out that we need these migrants, both socially and economically! We need these GPs and doctors and IT professionals and bankers, just as much as we need these construction workers and nannies and cleaners and manual workers. We need these men and women and students and children.

However, tensions and uncertainty in many European cities are increasing, nationalist tendencies are rising and racism is once again spreading. In many ways we are taking steps back as *a people*; we are stepping back on an emotional, empathetic and human level. I say *a people* because – in my eyes – we are really all one.

I am in no way negating the facts. The facts are obvious. The facts speak for themselves: there is change coming, there are challenges, there are wants, there are needs. But you see, there are certain challenges minority groups struggle to overcome on a daily basis that members of the majority group will never come know. However, let us not look at the symptoms. Let us fight the problem at its root, at its core: our minds. I propose a change of discussion, a shifting of attitudes and mind-sets, a revival of the human spirit. What if we simply learnt to look passed ethnic group belonging, gender, abilities or disabilities and right at the heart of the matter? What if we, as professionals, simply looked at skills and offered opportunities fairly? Not based on similarities or differences, but simply on basic characteristics: ability? What if we all individually went back to looking at what truly mattered: people?

I am of African heritage, yes, but beyond that I am a man who has certain dreams; just as many of these migrants have. Just as you have!

Let us stop seeking opportunities for Whites or Blacks or Asians or male or females; let us start creating opportunities for all.

Let us commit to appreciating and celebrating differences: true diversity.

Let us commit to being part of the generation that stopped the discussion about whether or not all humans were truly equal and deserving of the same rights and opportunities.

And finally, let us commit to leaving this world a better place than we inherited it.

Let us all commit to change!
6.1 Reflections on the Complementary Perspective

In speaking to two Black male professionals, Moses Ida-Michaels and Demola Soremekun, with a combined professional and international experience spanning over 38 years and covering well over 27 nations, I sought to gain insights into how identity and culture had shaped their lives, careers and entrepreneurial engagements. Were the challenges Black women – Afropolitan or not – faced uniquely different from theirs? Was identity an issue for men at all; the concrete wall a myth or truth too? To what extent had their perceptions of self and their surroundings shaped them professionally, personally and entrepreneurially?

Demola Soremekun found that his identity had shifted through the years, as his consciousness and awareness heightened:

“In terms of identity, I attach identity and consciousness. In my early years, I identified myself as English, born and raised in England. I had an English name – as one would have – and so the identity one would have at that point in time was one of being English, even though you know, based on the attitudes and perceptions and reactions, that you were different. Your solidarity wasn’t on the basis of race either, your solidarity was functional. Through my teenage years, my experiential consciousness somewhat shifted and my search for an African identity then started. There was a dissonance between my perceived identity and how society treated me.” (Soremekun, personal communication, May 2016)

And so the search for identity began: an identity that carried with it the narrative of the African experience, rather than a national one. Reading about and studying on people such as Franklin Douglas, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X, a Pan-African identity was created; one that carried itself through his twenties and thirties. As an individual who went through an early identity crisis too, I could very much relate to that. With history classes only slightly touching upon the Transatlantic Slave-trade as well as South Africa’s apartheid, and a father very enthused with all matters relating to the African continent, I soon started reading African books, studying African biographies and watching documentaries about Africa too. With a natural passion for social justice and equality, South Africa became my natural choice: I studied its history, learnt Zulu, went online in search of (South) African friends, and eventually started dating a South African. Long before I started identifying as Nigerian, I saw myself as African; carrying the Pan-African ideology into my European world. That was, until my environment, surroundings and social circles changed. For having moved to London and becoming part of a Nigerian community, I experienced yet another shift in identity: group belonging.
Soremekun as well as Ida-Michaels (2016) describe this search of identity as a desire to finally fit in somewhere, no longer being perceived as the odd one out. Moses Ida-Michaels described it as follows;

“Following the Beijing Women’s Conference, we were suddenly looking for strong black women. Everybody was looking for strong black women and whenever they emerged in the workplace, they became very powerful because they filled a gap, a representative gap. They became a voice that was missing and they found their places in enterprise, in banking, in business. They found their space. But then, they don’t look Western. They were the children of African parentage; they sound Western but their colour is different. They are people of colour; their texture is different, their paradigm is different because part of their parental upbringing shaped their world-view and their beliefs were very different. What you found was that in some ways, they were clashing with Western cultures. Many Africans believe Western societies are racist against Black people. Now, it is not actually about being racist, it is just the fact that these people grew up together for 500 years, you come 480 years later, are different and look different. They don’t understand you or your world-views, so they are more inclined to gather around what they understand and are somewhat inclined to create resistance against everything unfamiliar. Afropolitans are actually not familiar. They are a new concept. They are just emerging. They are fighting established systems that have been around for 500 years. They are black and so many other things that the societies which receive them don’t understand. So, in many ways, Africa has given them up as “the lost children“ and the countries in which they live have not received them either. You see, the truth is that they want to be African so badly and they want to be European so badly. And they are fighting in both places.” (Moses Ida-Michaels, personal communication, February 2016)

It was at precisely this point that I understood my true motivation for undertaking this research in the first place: it was a continuation of my own search, a longing for understanding, clarity, acceptance. In many ways, it was a search for individuals who were just as searching and needing as me, another step within the life-long journey of the discovery of self.

The desire to simply blend, as just described by Ida-Michaels, is furthermore often met with more obvious and conscious choices. Just as previous actors had, Soremekun had his names officially changed: now choosing to embrace his cultural identity openly and proudly; with consciousness giving way to forcing the narrative;
“So, I would introduce myself for instance as “Demola Soremekun but if you have problems pronouncing that, you may just call me ‘Sir’” and people would go, “How do you spell it?” So, yes, forcing the narrative. When I speak of functional solidarity: I have a number of people within my professional environment that I call ‘brother’ or ‘comrade’. They are not black, they are not African, but our worldviews align and so the issue of race and colour is something one would only discuss in passing.” (Soremekun, personal communication, May 2016)

And yet, he shared, he felt a strong sense of duty towards fellow Black professionals. By virtue of having witnessed discrimination and limitations imposed upon capable individuals of African background, he oftentimes found himself in the place of going the extra mile, breaking down walls, and speaking out for those whose voice was not as loud or influential as his. Very much confirming Rosser-Mims’s (2010) discussion on Black women climbing in such a way as to prepare the way for others, Soremekun too had actively sought and employed Black professionals, simply because he acknowledged the limitations of the systems, as well as the importance of paving a way and offering opportunities;

“It’s responsibility. We are like ambassadors, spokespersons for the next generation: to not hold them down, to pave a way, you see. If I am up here in this place, I want some brothers with me. Possibly there is something true about the fact that every time we have gotten to the top, we have taken the ladder off. This notion of ‘I am the only Black person at the top’, this poverty and slavery mentality, that needs to be broken. I’ve hired white people; so why shouldn’t I also be able to hire a black person?” (Soremekun, personal communication, May 2016)

He felt very passionate about the responsibility he believed he held as a Black professional in positions of authority and influence: a call he did not take lightly at all. Often, he explained, he too had to prove himself in the workplace, challenging prevailing mind-set and underhand racism;

“It’s underhand. When people ask “What school did you go to?” I would always start with my first degree, Middlesex. ‘Oh, Middlesex, okay.’ But when I mention that I also did a Master’s elsewhere, at Oxford Business School, they would go, “Oh, really. Did you go on a scholarship?” Again, the mind-set of it, you see? I remember being in a debate with a very senior police officer, and he went something like “You know, for you working class people who actually made it to Oxford..” and I went “Whatever made you think I ever was working class? Because I’m Black and was born in London, I must be working class?” Intellectually and economically my parents would have been middle-class in any
part of the world, so, we can get over that.” (Soremekun, personal communication, May 2016)

During the course of this conversation, thus, it soon became evident that many of the challenges previously discussed in relation to Black females and the concrete ceiling applied just as much to male professionals – if not more.

“There is a disproportionate amount of black women to men. There is also the element – not in a cynical sense – that hiring a black woman would help if I was working in HR. I could tick two boxes off: she’s black and she’s female; that’s two! In a country that is so heavily governed by statistics – equality – that does quite a lot. Most of organizations that I’ve worked with have been exclusive: the pharmaceutics of this world, the top legal firms, etc. and I would see more black women than I would see black men, especially in senior positions. Every black person that has hired me, that has had the power to sign a cheque, has been a black woman. No black man has actually ever been in a position of hiring me, and I have done well over 20-23 contracts in my life-time.” (Soremekun, personal communication, May 2016)

This was very much in line with Moses Ida-Michael’s statements relating to the contemporary female advantage within STEM specifically and many other sectors in which women have generally been underrepresented thus far;

“Many young women who went to study aeronautical engineering or marine engineering currently actually find themselves very advantageous in a man’s world. When they go for a job interview and are the only two ladies amongst twenty odd men, many times they have an advantages simply because they are female. A representative advantage. So, the first advantage of the young ladies who are emerging from Africa, or Afropolitan women, is the fact that they are underrepresented within certain fields. They are Black and they are female but that is not necessarily only a challenge. It is a real opportunity as well.” (Moses Ida-Michaels, personal communication, February 2016)

Both Sola Abiola-James as well as Detola Amure found that their Blackness had at times worked in their favour. While they challenged the existence of the concrete wall, and questioned the notion of discrimination at the workplace, they did confirm that certain roles and jobs were predominantly handled by them, due to their perceived toughness. And so it came that certain clients, for instance, would be handled by Detola Amure only, as she was perceived strong, capable and effective. The perception of “the
angry Black women” which many have sought to shy away from, was seemingly working in her favour here.

Realizing just how deeply my own lived experience and discrimination due to my identification of self (identity) was subjective rather than objective and this research driven based on my own perception of how things were, I decided to take a step back: looking beyond the self and personal experiences, I wanted to uncover just how real my experiences were for others and relatable outside myself: Afropolitans and beyond.

Following the previous conversations, I thought it wise to zoom out further: beyond my Afropolitan entrepreneurs and Black male professionals, did the average Afropolitan or Black professional feel at any (dis)advantage due to his or her cultural or ethnic background too? Did the challenges previously discussed strictly apply to Blacks or could they perhaps be somewhat more general? Having found one intersection (gender), I concluded there might be just a few more (race and ethnicity). Zooming out even further, now much further than Blackness and gender – the next chapter addresses the issue of being different – specifically in terms of race, colour, ethnicity, culture and national identity and language – within London and Vienna. Moving beyond my initial focus of Afropolitans in London, the complementary perspective raised concerns about multiculturalism within Austria specifically and Europe generally.

Drawing upon my network of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural professionals within London and Vienna, I presented the issue of race and identity, group belonging and acceptance, integration and assimilation to them, seeking to understand how their experiences fit into my wider research area: to what extent was identity an issue for them? How – if at all – had their identity influenced their perception of self, professional endeavour and social interactions? Did discussions about identity, culture, diversity and multiculturalism shape them as much as they had shaped me? And if so, what could possible solutions be?
7 THE FLUIDITY OF IDENTITY

This chapter looks at social identities and their fluidity, acculturation, integration and subculture creation by looking at the different ways in which migrants become integral parts of their new host countries and communities. Beyond this, the chapter discusses uncovers integration through the lived experiences of second generation migrants of numerous backgrounds. To what extent could parallels be found and drawn here? To what extent was identity fluid, changeable, adaptable?

There have been numerous studies looking at what precisely takes place when individuals from diverse cultures and languages come into contact with one another (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 35). In their study of European immigration across different spheres of life, Aleksynska and Algan (2010) explain the complex levels and dimensions of integration and assimilation of immigrants into receiving societies. Beyond the classical questions of immigrants’ economic adaptation, such as language, wages, occupation, socialization, participation in welfare programmes or citizenship acquisition, different immigration waves, generations and policies across European countries for heterogeneous migrants are compared and contrasted. It was found that while integration happens two-way, involving both the migrants and the host society, assimilation – typically expected of migrants – was a one-way process: “a process of convergence of immigrant behavioural and preferential outcomes to the outcomes of the native-born” (p.5).

7.1 Contact, Accommodation and Assimilation

Padilla and Perez (2003) describe acculturation as “the cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture; also: a merging of cultures as a result of prolonged contact.”

Amongst black women around the globe, acculturation has been evident for a number of generations: from pressing or chemically straightening their hair, to bleaching or lightening their skin and changing their names, there has been both the desire and often need to assimilate, appear integrated, separating oneself as far as possible from the “second-class citizen status” and become one with a different kind of people. From being told about kinky African hair being “bad hair” and straight European or Asian hair being “good hair”, Black women around the globe have largely grown up with the notion that “in order to be respected and accepted, look and act as white as possible.”

“There was a day my manager asked me why I hadn’t yet gotten my hair done. It was a Monday. The funny thing is, I had actually planned on having my hair done
over the weekend but so many things came up and I didn’t have the time. I decided to wear my natural hair to work. I packed it up really nicely; I thought I looked rather professional. But she didn’t think so. She thought it looked too “street” and “urban” and told me I could leave the office early to get my hair done. It’s funny, you know, coming from a fellow Black woman. None of my white colleagues have ever thought me unprofessional because of my natural hair. On the contrary, they quite like it and always complement me when I wear my hair out; saying I should do it more often. But amongst black women, I don’t know, it’s still an issue. I think it still goes back to the slave-mentality.” (Kehinde, personal communication, March 2016)

Although surprising and perhaps even shocking to some, this is an all-too-known reality for many black women around the world even today. As recently as May 2016, BBC’s Sini reported on “Wear a weave at work – Your afro hair is unprofessional”, sharing the “hair experiences” of multiple Black women at work in London’s offices, while NBC News reported the experience of an elementary girl being told to change hair (natural afro) hair as it did not comply with school regulations.

Many researchers have traced this notion of “good hair, bad hair” back to the early-1600s and the first arrival of African slaves in Jamestown, USA. As traditional African hairstyles reflected a person’s family background, her tribe and her social status, the removal of the aforementioned brought with it a removal of identity and an adjustment to new standards of beauty: light skin, straight hair, lean features. As recently as April 2016, Tinsley, an associate professor of African and African Diaspora Studies, reported on the dangers and consequences of aggressively prying on Black women’s culture of self-care, emphasising how Black women spent approximately “four times as much as white women on hair, and twice as many black women douche and deodorize compared with our white counterparts”.

Jahangir (2015) in his BBC article on “How does black hair reflect black history?” analyses the link between the transatlantic slave-trade, emancipation and the change of self-perception and beauty passed the abolition of slavery; raising the question of why black people felt the pressure to fit into the mainstream white-society and adjust accordingly.

Padilla and Perez (2003) – moving beyond the three-stage model of acculturation being contact, accommodation and assimilation – present a new model of acculturation resting upon the pillars: social cognition, cultural competence, social identity, and social stigma.

While social cognition is described as the mental process guiding interaction, which is itself derived from multiple sources (i.e. personality, situational constraints, or social structures, cultural competence posits that people think for the purpose of satisfying
their rational motives. This is believed to also hold true for migrants trying to be successful in a new country. Cultural competence thus refers to the acquired ability to function in a new environment in a manner that is consistent with the norms, customs, manners and beliefs of the host nations (p.42). The third pillar, social identity explains people’s behaviour as a reflection of their larger social unit, often determining individuals’ thoughts and behaviours (p.43), while the final pillar deals with social stigma. As it is believed that hierarchies to some extent form part and parcel of all social institutions, acculturation is more challenging for individuals with more distinct features (i.e. skin colour or religious group belonging) from the dominant in-group (p.44), as “it is a function of having an attribute that conveys a devalued social identity in a particular context” (p.45).

Consequently, it is believed that if other people’s reactions influence our behaviour and identity, then reasonable individuals would try their utmost to control others’ reactions by manipulating what they expose about themselves. (p.44). As the lived experience of stigmatized individuals is visibility, things and characteristics that can be concealed (i.e. certain ethnicities, religious group belonging etc.) will be concealed in order to interact with others in a non-limiting and non-judgemental manner (p.45). And thus, while Blacks could not hide their Africanness, they could adjust certain uniquely African characteristics, such as their skin-colour (through the use of whitening creams) and their kinky, curly, Afro hair (with chemical straighteners).

The Clarke Doll Test (1939) conducted by the African-American psychologists Dr Kenneth Clarke and his wife Mamie, illustrated how deeply ingrained stereotypes, racism and self-perceptions (“good” versus “bad”, “desirable” versus “undesirable”, “alike” versus “different”) were in dark-skinned children as young as six years old. Asked to choose between a white and Negro doll, the supermajority of children were more favourably inclined towards picking the white doll. Having conducted this experiment in numerous cities, a pattern could be identified. Their findings eventually contributed to the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling determining racial segregation in public education to be unconstitutional. The doll test has since been repeated numerous times – including children of numerous ethnicities – and is only finally beginning to show more balanced results.

With lightened skin and straightened hair perceived by many as visible signs of and expressions of forced assimilation now, the Black Power Movement of the 1960s brought with it an abandonment of the practice and a recapturing of roots (Luter, 2014), causing many to change the narrative and embrace their authentic and natural selves. Within the black community around the globe today – and amongst young female Afropolitans specifically – this movement is rapidly spreading. From social media sites and blogs, to ‘natural Afro hair care communities’, independent ‘all natural Black skin care’
producers and the rise and spread of workshops and seminars centred around taking appropriate care of Afro-hair in order to grow it long, strong and healthy, the narrative is being changed. Additionally, there is evidence to suggest that African governments’ initiative to fight corruption, improve the country’s image globally, encourage local produce and production, their increased support for local farmers, readily available grant schemes, increasing investments into the economy and infrastructure, as well as the rise and popularity of ‘locally made’ products amongst others has supported the rise of the proud African. Whether locally or globally, Africans, Nigerians and Afropolitans specifically, are much prouder;

“I don’t know about now - but the difference back between the Nigerian community in America and the Nigerian community in the U.K. was that in America, Nigerians aren’t really proud to be Nigerians. I had a lot of Nigerian friends who pretended to be Jamaican because - for some reason - Jamaican was the lesser evil. It was an exotic place, a place people would go to on vacation; whereas Nigeria had this bad reputation. So people claimed being Jamaican. They would “westernize” their Nigerian names: Wunmi became Mimi, Seun became Shawn. But then I came to the U.K. and I saw Nigerians being proud: speaking their languages, speaking pidgin [English], speaking Yoruba - even those who were born and raised in the U.K! So it was a very different experience for me and that was when my interest in the Nigerian culture was finally birthed.” (Kehinde, personal communication, March 2016)

Many Africans, and Nigerian specifically, are no longer desperate to separate themselves from Nigeria and everything Nigerian. While negative remarks – such as David Cameron’s to the Queen on May 10th regarding Nigeria’s “fantastically corrupt” politicians – would have garnered no outcry or sneers a few years ago, it is a point of discussion today. Beyond Africa’s borders, the spread of Afrobeats (music), Nollywood (movie industry) and ankara (fashion) has furthermore heightened the perception of “made in Africa” goods and products, as well as what it means to be Nigerian or African around the globe. Nigerians have generally become more defensive of their nation, as negative images are gradually being dismantled and impressions changed. And yet, we see little discourse around this. While race, ethnicity and social engagements are prevalent topics within America and America’s black communities, they are almost non-existing within the European context. We see little and hear even less about Black students, professionals and individuals in sports or the sciences, arts or technology doing well. Within Europe we hear of and spread little praise, and thus go unnoticed – on all levels of society besides issues of migration. There is something potent about controlling the narrative: about writing your own story. And so, I came to question
why there were so few spokespersons; so few Afropolitans who thought it important to raise a flag, to change the discussion. Akinyosoye and Inou, both Viennese journalists of Nigerian and Cameroonian origin, rose to the challenge, establishing Austria’s first “Fresh: Black Austrian Lifestyle” magazine, aimed at presenting Africa and Africans through the eyes of Africans, promoting African culture, lifestyle, foods and history. In many ways, it is taking hold and controlling narratives. However, while many individuals’ search for personal identity and group-belonging moved them towards their cultural identity, it drew others further away from it.

7.2 Integration and Adaptation

Algan et al. (2010) postulate that while most European countries have accumulated large populations of immigrants, the absence of long-term strategies and policies to integrate these into the society and national labour markets have often been the underlying reason for social and economic exclusion (p.4). Although the economic outcomes of immigration have largely been recorded for Germany and the UK, it is argued that they have largely focused on first-generation migrants (p.5); leaving out how second-generation’s education, earnings and employment affect their social and economic integration.

In discussing whether Black/Afropolitan male professional’s underrepresentation in positions of leadership within London is due to discrimination or a lack of skilled and qualified individuals, Soremekun argues as follows;

“On the literacy question, no, that’s no point; but there’s other education though, isn’t there? The things that we’re involved in: our engagement in community work, extracurricular activities, the things that broaden our worldview and expand our consciousness. We (Africans) are possibly very limited in that level of exposure. I’ve had interviews were all we spoke about was jazz and golf.” (Soremekun, personal communication, May 2016)

Making reference to culture and cultural group belonging, he highlights to just what extent matters of integration go beyond language, education and qualification, and truly impact upon personality and lived experience;

“That is where I feel the Americans got it so right. You know, the term African-Brit or Asian-Brit doesn’t actually exist. An African-American makes sense, an Asian-American makes sense, because Americans actually expect you to come and be American; bring an element of yourself into society but be American. We have not
actually allowed people to come and become part of us, you are always just a visitor. And if that has backfired, there is something more to think about.” (Soremekun, personal communication, May 2016)

Many times the pressure to fit in and appear as belonging to a group of people has driven others to extreme measures: sometimes less harmful than at other times, one actor shared her frustrations over forcefully adapting for the sake of gaining employment;

“I was asked where my friends were from, where my boyfriend was from. They wanted to make sure I was truly fully integrated into the Austrian society. Naturally, I told them what they wanted to here. Austrians, Austrian. What else could I have said? Of course I did not mention his Serbian-roots. I later found out I didn’t get the job because they thought I wasn’t Austrian enough. I was advised to spend two years at a traditional Austrian company, perhaps in Tirol. You know, to some extent it’s a language thing. We speak Hochdeutsch; that’s not considered Austrian. They prefer accents. So, on that front, it’s a huge disadvantage.” (Camilla Snow, personal communication, March 2016)

While she felt she needed to adapt to certain expectations in order to score higher during the application process and job interview, adaptation can take different forms.

Doreen O. who has been working for the Austrian federal government for approximately 8 years – first at the ministry of foreign affairs, currently at the interior ministry – was used to adapting her persona and identity depending on her given situation. Sharing her concerns about disclosing her place of work within Vienna’s African community, she often found herself torn between her professional Austrian persona and her Nigerian cultural group-belonging;

“As soon as I started with the Ministry of Interior, I had a lot of situations where I didn’t feel reduced to my Nigerian heritage but where I was really confronted with it because, as you might know, the Ministry of Interior works very, very closely and tightly with the police. Meaning, all police reports land at the Ministry. Every day I would get a report or there would be an internal newsletter circulating: talking about crimes, about police related issues, about ministry related issues, about meetings with other police forces, other international police forces etc. and whenever the topic of Africans or Nigerians would come up, my antennas would go up too. I’d be more sensitive. It was something that actually bothered me and to some extent shaped me too. Here I was, an Austrian representing Austria. But really, I was Nigerian too at the same time.” (Doreen O., personal communication, March 2016)
What I found supremely interesting and surprising were the numerous different experiences shared. While some of my actors felt extremely alienated from society, others felt integral parts of it: and this was not an issue of colour.

For Mide Jones, who was born and bred in Vienna – to Nigerian parents – had studied in London and currently lived in Vienna, being as well as identity weren’t much of an issue at all;

“Just the other day we had a client come in and while we were talking, he asked me where I was from. My answer, naturally, was that I was originally Nigerian. Immediately, my boss stormed out of his office, very irritated and upset, saying ‘What do you mean by you’re Nigerian? You’re Austrian! You’re Viennese to be precise, you’re from the 22nd district! You’re not Nigerian.’” (Mide Jones, personal communication, March 2016)

Continuing with his lived experience, he shared that he had always felt part of the Austrian community. As a professional black man who had always lived, worked and hung out with locals, the issue of race or ethnicity had only ever been an issue one would joke about; just as they would about Italians or Americans or the Chinese. This pattern repeated itself through my research, allowing me to conclude that group belonging was often simply that: belonging to a group by attaching yourself to it and its values. For those individuals who had difficulties doing just that, their experience and identity, almost naturally – one may add here – was much more complex;

“Although I am half-Austrian, I really don’t feel Austrian at all. I mean, I don’t have a lot of Austrian friends. A lot of my Austrian friends are actually mixed too or they simply hang out with a lot of international people. It’s a real issue, you know. I don’t feel comfortable here at all.” (Camilla Snow, personal communication, March 2016)

For Jeny Puthusseril who was born and bred in Vienna and educated in the UK, identity was somewhat more complex too. With Indian parents, her self-identification largely depended on her locality: She was Indian in Austria, Austrian in India and depending on whom she spoke to, something in between in other places of the world. Having come to term with identity herself, she took comfort in the fact that her sense of belonging came from her multi-cultural friends-circle. Her younger brother, on the other hand, still seemed to be struggling;

“My brother is always like ‘I’m Austrian, I’m not Indian.’ He says that, you know, he’s got Indian parents but he is Austrian. And he is so persistent. We tell him
‘You’re not being accepted by this community that way.’ but he insists ‘Well, it should be and I am Austrian and I have every right an Austrian has.’ He’s very outspoken and particular about this. The issue that I have is that when I ask for something and someone would say ‘No’, I would just accept it. I accept it because I don’t feel that I have the right to receive what an Austrian would receive.” (Jeny Puthusseril, personal communication, March 2016)

Especially, in light of having one’s own rights neglected or unacknowledged by a host community, it is easy to solidify group identity with individuals facing similar struggles – be it through the formation of multi-ethnic groups and communities or the creation of new sub-cultures.

7.3 New Sub-Culture Creation

Culture can be understood as the beliefs or views people form about the purpose and importance of life shape collective and individual practices. Parekh (2006) asserts that culture exists on numerous levels; language being its most basic, with societies sharing language typically sharing some basic cultural features too. Looking at societies, cultures furthermore embody proverbs, memories, jokes, body language, customs, traditions and manners. On a somewhat different level culture is reflected in the arts, in literature, moral life and ideals and expectations too (p.144); and shapes moral life and concerns too, thus creating a very strong link between religions and cultures. No religion, can of itself be culture-free (p.147). As cultures are created against the background of common topographies of human existence, there are naturally shared features in beliefs and practices amongst cultures too (p.149).

According to Mercer (1990) identity only becomes critical in the face of experiencing something previously thought fixed and stable now being displaced and replaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty.

Hall et al. (1995) analysed the claim by theorists that old identities were under threat and gradually being replaced by new and evolving identities. This described “crisis of identities” postulates that modern identities are being broken up and modern societies transformed, “fragmenting the cultural landscapes of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and nationality which gave us firm location as social individuals” (p.596).

My conducted research with Afropolitan millennials strongly supported the rise and creations of a new types of identities, more specifically “African sub-cultures” of sorts, rooted in the local experiences of young Afropolitans. These millennials – whether male or female – identified with the Afropolitan concept much more strongly than the interviewed professionals or entrepreneurs. Growing up both in Vienna and/or London,
with the increasing presence, acceptance and popularity of African pop-culture (made evident in entertainment and fashion particularly), as well as the global fame of African – particularly Nigerian – celebrities, Afropolitan millennials seem to have managed to create a new kind of group identity: now belonging to each other; no longer trying to fit in anywhere *given*, but simply picking and choosing aspects of available cultures, be they local, ethnic or global.

Having witnessed this trend and how my younger brother, Michael, grew up very differently from me, I thought it insightful to hear from him too;

“The thing is, I constantly have to prove myself. Although I was born here, grew up here and have lived here all my life. Wherever I go, I have to prove that I’m Austrian. But why bother? Truth is, they’ll never really accept you as one of them anyway, so why try? Amongst the younger ones it’s no big deal. It has actually become cool to be Black or have Black friends. There are also so many mixed race teens in Vienna now. We have our own culture, in a way. It’s cool to just be amongst your own, you know. You listen to the same music, talk about the same things, eat Nigerian food, and wear African or American clothes. I mean, we’re all the same. It’s a type of new culture, you know, being Austrian Nigerian.” *(Makinwa, personal communication, April 2016)*

In sharing my desire and passion about Nigeria, my plans of returning and my hopes of making a difference where I thought I could the most, he shared that his thoughts and passions about identity and group belonging were very different;

“You see, I don’t feel as strongly about this as you do. Yes, I am Nigerian, but I really do not have this strong desire to go back home. For a holiday, sure. I love to party and have fun, go to the beach, meet people and make friends, but beyond that, I don’t have such strong a passion to “return”. To me, this is home and I’m okay just being an Austrian Nigerian. I would be lying if I said anything else.” *(Makinwa, personal communication, April 2016)*

Similar sentiments were shared by another actor – one of the youngest I spoke to – who felt secure enough in her British Africanness;

“I’ve been back [to Nigeria] twice and the last time was six years ago. My mom lives there but I haven’t gone back in a while. You see, it’s not as important to me as it is to others. Going to Nigeria is really not important to me.” *(Lawal, personal communication, February 2016)*
She consequently goes on to narrate that, having grown up in South London, she had always been surrounded by British Africans, predominantly British Nigerians and Ghanaians. As it wasn’t as popular to be West-African as it was to be Jamaican, classes were indirectly always split into British Africans versus others, enforcing group belonging and effectively creating of a strong sub-culture. Having been part and parcel of this large British West-African culture more or less all her life, she felt very much at home there. There was no need, no longing, and no searching for more.

7.4 Reflections on the Fluidity of Identity

While I was aware of the fact that most of my life-decisions were generally made with my cultural identity (Afropolitanism) at the very core and a profound consideration of how certain decisions will impact upon my personal life, my cultural group and the perception of Afropolitans, European Africans or Africans in Europe in general, I had not quite realized just how strongly and deeply rooted my Afropolitan identity in terms of lived experiences was. Constantly seeking to remain authentic and yet representative, I was forced to examine myself in light of how I measured my life and what I truly stood – or wanted to stand – for.

“There was indeed a time I thought myself as a representative of both cultures, but I really don’t like being in the spotlight and speaking for an entire community. I can’t do that and I won’t do that. It took me some time to consider this and get to the point of saying ‘That’s not my job and that’s not what I stand for.’ Yes, I’m creating a space for other black people to come into the ministry and to see there is a chance; maybe I am even preparing the ground. However, I’m not and I will not be a spokesperson for an entire community.” (Dorren O., personal communication, March 2016)

Right there, in those words, I realized just how personal my research, my desire, my questioning had been. Contrary to my belief these issues of racial contact, accommodation, integration and sub-culture creation to be prominent elements and points of concerns amongst my fellow (Austrian Nigerian) Afropolitan peers, I had to reconcile that they were not at all; they were to me.

In speaking to my brother, Michael Makinwa, in relation to identity and group-belonging, I likewise realized just how different our experiences really were. With my sisters and I attending prestigious Austrian private school, we were brought up with a somewhat strong Austrian culture as part of our formative years. Being exposed to Nigerians and Africans only as a teenager with a set mind and somewhat formed persona, my Nigerianness became an “add-on”. Less than a decade later, however,
things had changed: there were now many more young Austrian Africans, much more awareness, and many more millennials of different cultural backgrounds interacting with each other. While my formative years were predominantly shaped by a mono-ethnic society, his was shaped by a more multi-ethnic one.

Moving to an international bilingual school as a teenager, my environment became much more diverse: forming close friendships with Austrian Italians, Chinese, Indians, Russians, French and Koreans, I realized that while many viewed us as different, what we saw were similarities: in values, our socio-economic background, our collectivist attitudes and our shared lived experience of being called strangers in a land we ourselves called home. We found group-belonging in our shared differences which ironically made us equal(s).

My brother, on the other hand – just as my friends’ younger brothers, I was to find out – was not particularly concerned with fitting in, with finding his place in mainstream society. He and many others were content. With multiple large groups of Serbs, Slovaks, Croatians, and Albanians in Vienna, it was only natural that he would seek out his own: West-Africans. His social reality, thus, was and still is very different from mine. Just as it was with Mariam Lawal in South London, my brother had become part of a West-African sub-culture: a group of people who were content being neither, nor, but themselves. They thrived in this identity; the newness and freshness and coolness of it. Propagated and endorsed by social media and other mediums of mass communication, these millennials connected with like-minded youngsters around the globe, creating new trends and forming new identities.

Although I understood the unconscious motivation for this, it did and still does make me worry: for the future of many Afro-Politans or African millennials in Austria, and second-generation nationals within Europe in general. With large numbers and groups of people feeling comfortable being in a nation, yet not identifying as being part of it, where did the future lie? Of recent there has been an increase in groups formed of sub-cultures turning against their own nations: nations they no longer saw themselves part of, or perhaps never did. A house divided against itself cannot stand.

This realization propelled me to zoom out even further: beyond the self, my identity, community and society, what did these changes or this fluidity of identities mean for Europe at large? With multiculturalism within Europe spreading, sub-cultures increasing, and nationalist tendencies rising, I thought it important to create yet another intersection: multiculturalism and Europe.
8 MULTICULTURALISM AND EUROPE

Having looked at subcultures and integration, I will now zoom out of the research question even further; examining the landscape. Beyond the issue of cultures and identities, immigration and integration have been prominent topics of discussion within recent European politics. In light of the inflow of Syrian migrants, the current BREXIT debate (UK), as well as the rising popularity of far-right parties (Austria and beyond), there is a dire need to additionally examine nations and cultures in a brief context within this paper. As there is little room for discussing this matter in a detailed manner, I will merely offer a brief overview of how (im)migration has shaped and is shaping European attitudes.

We live in a world that has become progressively urban. According to the European Commission (2015), immigration from non-EU nationals was 1,455,953 in 2010, 1,391,147 in 2011, 1,352,027 in 2012 and 1,372,789 in 2013 (all data excluding asylum seekers). Of these individuals 50% were male and 50% where female, with approximately 85% being between the ages of 15 and 64 years (working age population); making up a total of just under 5% of Europe’s total working population (Eurostat, 2015). In 2013 a total of 871,293 individuals acquired the citizenship of an EU state; with the top 10 countries of origin of non-EU nationals being Morocco, India, Turkey, Colombia, Albania, Ecuador, Pakistan, Iraq, Peru and Nigeria.

The IOM’s World Migration Report (2015) “Migrants and Cities: New Partnerships to Manage Mobility” discusses to what extent urbanization and increased migration brings both risks and opportunities for migrants, host communities and the governments affected. This reports specifically looks at how migration shapes cities, the livelihood of migrants in cities, as well as examining internal and international migration, given that migration really is an urban affair.

Contemporary Migration Policies and Public Attitudes

MPI’s “Engaging the Anxious Middle on Immigration Reform: Evidence from the UK Debate” Report (2016) furthermore confirms that immigration has become an increasingly relevant issue in UK politics and studies indicate that the population’s trust in politicians’ ability to manage these inflows has fallen to miserable levels. Within the report, Katwala and Somerville (2016) argue that although the UK government had introduced tough legislations (Immigration Act 2014) and presented drafted legislations (Immigration Bill 2016), the great majority of citizens fall within the anxious middle regarding government effectiveness in handling immigration policies and migrants. Neither for nor against immigration per se, there is a worry as to what it will mean for citizens, labour and the economy.
"It would be more accurate to describe the public as anxious, conflicted, and worried about the impacts of migration" (MPI, 2016)

Defending the public’s stance towards immigration, it is argued that the perception of the “hostile public” is based on simplified accounts of headline measures of whether the public wants more or less immigration on the one hand, and the prominence of immigration in national politics on the other (Katwala & Somerville, 2016, p.4). As discussed earlier in the paper, whenever the number of migrants seemed to rise in a concentrated area over a short period of time, resentment towards that group of immigrants rose too (Butler, 2005). In presenting polling data, Katwala and Somerville (MPI, 2016) describe three tribes of public opinion: a) migration rejectionists who abhor all kinds of immigration, support a return of all migrants to their home-countries, tend to be white, more male and without a university education; b) migration liberals, who rate the overall impact if immigration as positive and are satisfied with current migration levels, tend to be young, urban and support the idea of a borderless world; and c) the anxious middle, who make up about 61% of the entire population, believing immigration brings both pressure and economic benefit and must thus be controlled in order to maximise the nation’s interests (pp.5-6).

Amongst those more negatively outspoken about immigration, a differences in classes could be seen too: low-income households were more likely to be affected by rising number of immigrants as the access to social housing, wages and jobs now decreased, thus raising concerns and affecting attitudes (Katwala & Somerville, 2016, p.7). Considering the fact that the number of foreign-born individuals within Britain has increased faster than any other nation in Europe or North America in the past 30 years, the country’s diversity has significantly increased as well. With increased number, comes increased coverage, and an increase in public concern (p.8) and a perceived failure of government to adequately respond to the migration issue and reduce the number of net migrants, as officially announced and proposed. With a referendum set to be held on June 23, 2016 (BREXIT), immigration is among the key considerations that led to the referendum’s call (MPI, 2016).

Within Austria the discussion about EU-membership, open borders, migration and migrant’s role and place within the Austrian society is not less heavily discussed.

MPI (2016) reports that according to a 2001 census, more than 730,000 (or 9.1 percent) of Austria’s 8.04 million population were foreign residents. Austria’s proportion of foreign-born residents in 2001 reached a total 12.5%; making it one of “the leading western industrialized immigration countries” (Biffl, 2004, p.1). Over Europe’s recent history, Austria has repeatedly found itself at the centre of migration crises due to its
geopolitical position; as well as having generously granted citizenship to many foreigners. Biffl (2004) recalls Austria's liberality of the 1980s, issuing residence permits after 4-5 years of permanent employment in Austria, and of the 1990s after ten years of residence in Austria.

Today, however, immigration in Austria has become an increasingly political issue. The victory of Norbert Hofer of Austria's rightwing Freedom party (FPÖ), might thus have taken Europe – but certainly not many Austrians – by surprise.

**Austrian presidential election preliminary results**

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<th>Share of vote, %</th>
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<tr>
<td>Social Democratic party (SPÖ)</td>
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<td>Independent - Irmgard Griss</td>
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<td>11</td>
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**Figure 8.1:** “Austrian far-right party's triumph in presidential poll could spell turmoil”  
Source: The Guardian (April 26, 2016)

With steady media reports covering incidents caused by migrants and asylum seekers, from sexual abuses in swimming pools, to thefts, robberies and murders, Hofer managed to successfully play into the public's anger and rising discontent in relation to managing the numbers and placements of migrants and refugees in the past year. Oltermann (2016) reports that Hofer's victories in the border states – Styria, Burgenland and Carinthia – was due to the fact that these regions were primarily affected by the refugee trail coming from the Mediterranean; thus gaining Hofer 40% or more; with right-wing politicians in the Netherlands, Italy and German welcoming the results.

Van der Bellen's eventual victory and election as Austria’s new federal president, although tight – winning 50.3% of the ballot (2,254,484 votes) to Hofer’s 49.7% (2,223,458 votes) as reported by Hume and Morgan (2016) – sparked widespread talks, confusion, and concerns. It is an accurate reflection, I believe, of Europe's growing disenchantment with political figures (by-and-large centrists) and a reflection of the population's growing frustration with the EU’s management of Europe’s ongoing economic and out-of-control migrant crisis.

Now, how does this fit into our discussion of Afropolitan professionals within Europe? While Butler (2005) discussed the issue of the positive correlation between incremental migrant numbers and negative migrant-perceptions, Padilla and Perez (2003) highlight
the difficulty – in fact, often impossibility – of hiding certain aspects of one’s cultural identity or heritage. Thus, while Afropolitan Europeans might well describe themselves as fully integrated into a system – speaking local languages fluently, having grown up to be and see themselves as belonging to the local environment, embracing its mannerisms and norms – certain elements of their being (such as the colour of one’s skin) simply cannot be done away with. Thus, although integrated, migrant debates and revived nationalist tendencies bring about a resurfacing of long laid-too-rest racial sentiments affecting larger groups of migrants, including Blacks – regardless of whether these be Afropolitans (in-group) or Africans (out-group). Dyer (2015) in his article “African immigrants in Paris fear stigma, anti-Muslim sentiments after attacks” describes many of the fears migrants experienced and shared following the deadly terrorist attack in Paris at the end of 2015. In quoting Mohammed, a Nigerian migrant, he shares that these migrants, already living “in the shadows because they are marginalized by race, ethnicity, religion, class and culture” are now experiencing mounting fears. With many of these stigmatized individuals sharing experiences and therefore sentiments, a steadily growing out-group is created. This group – being but one of many – is consequently strengthened through solidarity and the need for survival (Butler, 2005), creating more stigma and, unsurprisingly, a vicious – if not dangerous – cycle. A cycle I do not wish myself – nor any Afropolitan at all – to be part of.

Although there is an obvious need for politicians, organizations, institutions and societies to do more in terms of integration and accommodation and acceptance of migrant groups (whatever generation), much of the fear spread through the media in relation to immigration is unfounded. Migration has generally been found – whether voluntary or forced – to be beneficial to societies. According to IOM’s “Migrants Contribute” website, we live in a world more global than it has ever been: from travelling to each other’s countries, eating each other’s food and learning each other’s countries, we are much more connected and common than we are made to believe. The “migrants contribute” campaign is an initiative aimed at tackling the challenges and perceptions of migrants – economic or political – the world over. By debunking common misconceptions about migrants, such as the beliefs that migrants are mostly uneducated, steal jobs, are welfare cheats, and are overcrowding developed countries, the campaign aims to show the real face and share the real facts of migration; thus increasing acceptance, stilling fears and fostering integration.
9 CONCLUSION

As a Black Austrian or European Nigerian, I wondered to what extent Afropolitan women were driven by their lived experiences, familial backgrounds and cultural identity. Strongly identifying with the concept of Afropolitanism and constantly torn between my Europeanness and Nigerianness, I sought to understand how other Afropolitans’ engagements and entrepreneurial activities fit into the wider context of their personal and cultural identities. From uncovering layers of factors for motivation, to influencers, and perceptions of identity, my study aimed to untangle the conscious, unconscious and subconscious web of personality; decoding how attitudes and perceptions drove entrepreneurial engagements. Although this paper took a U-turn in including a complementary perspective as well as continuing along the lines of multiculturalism in Europe and issues of migration, the central points remained unaltered: identities, attitude formation and belonging.

Regarding identities, it can be asserted that individuals generally prefer to define themselves in terms of their self-identity. This was especially true for my Afropolitan actors who preferred to carry forward their entrepreneurial identities which – in the majority of cases – were much better reflections of their personal identities than their cultural identities or sense of ethnic group belonging were.

Regarding attitude formation, it can be affirmed that my actors were predominantly shaped not by the colour of their skin or sense of ethnic group belonging (in this case, Afropolitanism), but their environment and upbringing. What shaped their minds, influenced their opinions and created their perceptions were their lived experiences: the attitude they carried into the world based on their set of cues, frames of references and formulated links between these two (Weick, 1995). Rather than ethnicity, they were shaped by their life stories (crucibles).

Regarding belonging, it can be resolved that my actors did not feel as influenced by the concept of Afropolitanism than I had initially purported. Rather, their sense of belonging was found in their embodied entrepreneurial engagements: their making sense of their lived experiences and finding individuals who could make sense of these and indeed share visions created out of these too. This sense of purpose and responsibility, in many ways, outweighed any sense of loyalty to any ethnic group or identity.

And isn’t this just how it should be?

Prince Ea, a social media personality who has garnered over 8.8 million views with his inspirational spoken-word poem “I am not Black, you are not White” addresses the concept of race and how individuals are – over the years and through society – taught to view and ultimately judge themselves and others in terms of colour and cultural identity. He challenges the force-feeding and swallowing of labels and our almost
ignorant acceptance of these – labels that emphasise extreme differences (black versus white), thus making us believe we are these labels. Labels, however, are never skin-deep. As an aspiring Afropolitan entrepreneur, I aim to represent a different kind of Black person and be both accepted and appreciated for it. I feel as much Austrian as I do Nigerian, and as such – being proud of both cultural heritages – feel a sense of responsibility to both nations: to be the best of me for the sake of both. But beyond that, I feel a sense of responsibility for issues that transcend my skin colour, culture and ethnicity. I am much more than just an Afropolitan: I am a woman full of dreams and determination. Although many individuals within my social circle have moved around in hopes of finding places where people have learnt to overlook differences, I am determined to use precisely this difference to make a difference. Rather than running away, I am determined to build, be a spokesperson, be a change-agent; all-the-while remembering that Rome wasn’t built in a day. A dear friend, Jenny Lee, once told me, “Your multicultural heritage is not by mistake”. I have heard her echo this for almost a decade now. Thus, this research was a journey of the discovery of self – for my actors as much as it was for me. In allowing myself to be an active participant within the research (reflexivity) I came to see, discuss, analyse and realize aspects of my persona hitherto unknown. Thus, it was therapeutic in many ways. The research question “To what extent does one’s identity influence one’s entrepreneurial activities or professional engagements?” can therefore simply be answered with “to every” if one considered identity as the perception of self by self, rather than perception of self by others.

9.1 Outlook

The EU has invested many years creating the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) – intended to safeguard the rights of refugees under international law – but has failed, as pointed out by Parkes (2015) in his paper “European Union and the Geopolitics of Migration”, to build a unified European migration strategy. With the 2014-2016 refugee crisis and the flooding of hundreds of thousands of needy people into Europe, we have failed to realize that many of these migrants are neither helpless not hopeless. Bringing educations, qualifications and skills obtained from their home countries into Europe, they are in many ways filling both generational/age gaps, as well as meeting labour needs. With Europe’s decreasing and aging population, migrants hold the key to unlocking many of Europe’s population and labour challenges. The question of whether Europe(ans) will allow them unlock this door though, remains.

Concluding my research, my actors were asked to share their vision for the Europe they wished their children to grow up in. Surprisingly, their hopes were all centred around strong and independent personal identities that were neither subject to ethnicity,
undermined by external or structural restrictions and limited by false self-perceptions. In supporting a better Europe, they unanimously agreed that although an adjustment or removal of certain systems could make a difference, the self could achieve so much. Taking responsibility for the world they envisioned their children living in; vision that needed to start with the renewal and resetting of our collective minds. Once again, I could not but approve.

“I would rather they primarily saw themselves as citizens of the world who have a mission to the world. The people who have had the greatest impact were never myopic in their thinking.” (Soremekun, May 2016)

I strongly believe that the answers to European migration as well as the challenges of multi-culturalism and group-belonging lie in changing people’s mind-sets and expanding their frames of references. While there was neither time nor scope to discuss human resources matters in a detailed manner within this paper, this is – by and large – very much a human resources issue. From attracting new talents, to managing, rewarding and growing these, the need for broader thinking and adjusted systems and concepts needs to be carefully scrutinized. Beyond work and systems, however, it is an issue of altering the collective mind through changing myopic beliefs and practices.

9.2 Limitations and Opportunities for Further Research

With this study I aimed to discover and uncover the unique personal, professional and entrepreneurial experiences of a select group of people, discovering to what extent their engagements were influenced by their perception of self as well as a natural result of their background, upbringing and lived experience. Having used a phenomenological approach, this research was naturally heavily biased and subjective, and is hence not to be seen as representative of any whole. Although additional perspectives were discussed beyond the initial scope of this research (race and gender), limitations such as the fact that my main actors were all of Nigerian ancestry, Christian, and highly educated cannot be ignored. Whether the experiences of non-Nigerian Africans or non-African Blacks would have been the same, cannot be said. To what extent non-Christian entrepreneurial engagements would have been different – or whether at all – cannot be discussed either. To what extent the experiences of individuals outside of my social circle and extended relationships would have been contrary, is unknown too. Additionally, entrepreneurial literature mentioned within this paper predominantly referred to the narrow (American) view of entrepreneurship, posing a considerate limitation too. Thus, beyond the fact that the concept of Afropolitanism is new and Black professionals’ experiences in Europe thus far unfamiliar, this study brought about a plethora of opportunities – and indeed the need– for further research.
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