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Community for Two Ghanaian Migrant
Businesses**

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NETS AND NETTLES: TWO CONCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY FOR TWO GHANAIAN MIGRANT BUSINESSES

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In this paper, I present two distinct approaches to migrant entrepreneurship. I conducted an ethnography of two Ghanaian migrant businesses, one of which draws on the Ghanaian community, and the other which distances itself from it. I show that our current understanding of social capital romanticises the notion of community, and that from the perspective of particular entrepreneurs, the same mechanisms by which social capital provides benefits for businesses can as well lead to detrimental effects. I argue that the nature of community as well as the resources that members have at their disposal, has implications for the particular entrepreneurial strategies that members adopt. There are multiple, sometimes conflicting, tendencies in any particular entrepreneurial context, and I propose that the configuration of factors, like individual and community resources, leads to the dominance of one or other of the various tendencies that constrain entrepreneurial strategy. In this study, two entrepreneurial approaches emerge: community-orientation and market-orientation. I propose the notion of strategic coethnicity to explain the operation of the two identified entrepreneurial approaches.

Bio:

Kofi Asante has a B.A. in sociology from the University of Ghana and an MSc in Sociology from the London School of Economics (LSE). He is currently a PhD candidate at the Sociology Department at Northwestern University, where he is writing a dissertation on colonial state formation in Ghana (then known as the Gold Coast of West Africa). His research interests include economic sociology, political sociology, political economy, and cultural sociology.

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM

Because migration involves an exit from one's community and an encounter with alien – sometimes hostile – ways of life, it typically results in a sense of mental and emotional displacement. But the migration literature indicates that people hardly ever migrate into a social vacuum. Studies have found that the very process of movement is often a social one which implicates a host of people in the decision-making that precedes and necessitates migration. Moreover, the decision to migrate has also been shown to be influenced in large measure by the existence of networks of people already living in the country of destination, whom the potential migrant already has some ties to (Bashi 2007; Massey *et al* 1993).

Upon arrival, these networks are crucial, first for the adjustment of the new entrant, and subsequently for their economic integration into the host society (Bashi 2007; Massey 1993; Portes 1998). When migrants decide to start a business, their communities are expected to provide a strong basis of support. For one, the migrant community becomes a target market for ethnic goods and services, particularly food, dresses and entertainment from the home country. It is also a source of cheap and flexible coethnic labour, and an easy source of credit and information (Portes 1998; Waldinger 1989; Aldrich and Waldinger 1990). Alejandro Portes' (Wilson and Portes 1980) concept of an 'enclave economy,' which functions almost as a self-sufficient niche, point to the most extreme manifestation of this supportive role of communities.

From this perspective, the migrant community is a mainly positive thing for its members. Of course, some scholars have recognised the limitation of such an overly romantic conceptualisation of community (Gold 2005). However, this recognition is inadequate. Community is conceptualised as either good or bad. A more complex conceptualisation sees the community as good for some segment of the population but negative for others. Specifically on entrepreneurship, Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) cite as an example Otavalo merchants who switch religious affiliation from Catholicism to Protestantism in order to escape the undue demands that is made on their businesses by virtue of being members of the Catholic community. But does a monolithic representation of community as either good or bad for business explain how entrepreneurs will orient their businesses to their communities?

This paper represents an attempt to better understand the impact of community on migrant businesses. I draw on an ethnography of two Ghanaian migrant businesses in Chicago.

One is a restaurant, and the other is a garment shop. They differ markedly in terms of entrepreneurial strategies. The restaurant is ostensibly *community-oriented* while the garment store uses an explicitly *market-oriented* strategy, although these differences are heuristic rather than watertight.

A caveat before proceeding: the account presented here could be held up, quite mistakenly, as providing an instance of how formal education, or more specifically the lack thereof, could prove consequential for entrepreneurial activities. This would be incorrect, not because it is inaccurate in the current case, but because it overlooks a lot of complexities. Historical studies in West African entrepreneurialism (Dumett 1973) have showed that businesses, both small-scale and large, are not always entangled in social claims from family and community; and that communal ties have been strategically activated by entrepreneurs to further business ends (Hopkins 1988). These studies provide evidence that during the colonial period, many illiterate or semi-literate entrepreneurs run viable businesses and competed with other indigenous entrepreneurs who were literate and foreign competitors. It is important to keep this in mind, that business savvy, a characteristic of entrepreneurs, is not cultivated only through formal education, or even necessarily through it.

The American business environment differs substantially from Ghana's. Running a small or medium size business as a migrant comes with some demands, many of which have to be met by interacting with bureaucratized agencies. In addition, migrant communities are very tightly knit, more so than most communities back in the home country. Herein lies the great benefit of the migrant community to members who may lack the requirement to launch out onto the mainstream market on their own; but in this strength also lies the limitation that it imposes on migrant business (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). The consequence is that the impact on the business of the migrant community is likely to be more intense than that of communities in the home country.

In the following sections, I review arguments in the literature on the benefits that derive from communities, paying attention to conceptions of social networks and social capital. I follow this with findings from my ethnographic study of the two businesses. I then sketch out the features of the two models of migrant entrepreneurship and conclude by proposing a theory of *strategic co-ethnicity*.

MIGRANT ENTREPRENEURSHIP, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Economic sociology sharply differs from disciplinary economics by its insistence that economic activities cannot be divorced from social life. Although this point was most forcefully made in sociology by Mark Granovetter's (1985) seminal concept of embeddedness, economic anthropologists have almost a generation earlier grappled with the same issue in the acrimonious substantivist-formalist debate; a debate about whether economic actors should be perceived in a formalistic sense as atomised rational individuals or as individuals substantively going about the task of making a living (Polanyi 1957; see also Firth 1965 and Plattner 1989). Later generations of scholars, especially in economic anthropology, have questioned the strict opposition that belligerents in the debate assumed between these two approaches to viewing economic activities, there are both elements of rationale calculation and social considerations in the decisions of economic actors (Cooper 1978).

Following Granovetter's insight, sociologists have found a variety of social ties important in how formal and large-scale firms operate. Scholars like Brian Uzzi (1997; 1999) found that in industries as diverse as banking and textiles, close ties could allow transacting partners to circumvent the obstacles of contractual requirements and lead to better and quicker decision making. The recognition of the importance of social ties has also spawned a large literature in social networks analysis in areas such as seeking for jobs (Granovetter 1995a) and management of formal organisations (Burt 2004; 2005). Although the discovery of social ties in formal organisations and businesses was something of a revolution for these strictly formal settings, studies in ethnic and migrant entrepreneurship take it as a matter of course. Indeed, the literature on migration is replete with theoretical and empirical analysis of social ties, in part, as Portes and

Sensenbrenner (1993, 1327) observe, because of the feeling of uprootedness among migrants, and thus their ‘heightened sense of community’.

The migrant entrepreneurship literature argues that the migrant community presents a wealth of resources available to entrepreneurs for exploitation. These include a personal network of family and friends that immigrants can call on for assistance, and the cultural setting within which they are submerged. Before discussing how social networks and social capital have been conceptualised, and how they are theorised to result in beneficial outcomes for migrant entrepreneurship, I first turn to a discuss of the concept of community, from which these desirable outcomes are expected to spring.

The Concept of Community

The concept of community has remained central to sociological analysis since the foundation of the discipline. One preoccupation of the classical thinkers was the fate of community in the face of the industrial revolution and the onslaught of urbanisation. This was translated in the early 20th century into research agenda driven by a concern over the loss of community (Hunter 2007; Wellman and Leighton 1979) epitomised in the works of Robert E. Park and his students. Albert Hunter (2007) outlines three senses of community. There is the *ecological* dimension of community, which emphasises the spatio-temporal attributes of community. There is also the *social structural* dimension which pays attention to ‘*interpersonal networks* and *institutional density*’ (pg. 21, emphasis in original). These include the number and types of ties that individuals develop, as well institutional features like churches, schools, businesses, recreational centres and the like. And finally, there is the cultural symbolic dimension, which refers to individual identification with the community on the one hand, and on the other, collective consciousness, norms and history which might serve to hold the community together.

The assumption underlying many community studies is that community represents an unmitigated good, and that these benefits accrue to both the community (in the form of safer neighbourhoods, clean streets, strong, functioning institutions) and individual members (in the

form of informal assistance from other community members) (Heller 1989; Hyde and Chavis 2007). These benefits are seen to be transmitted through mechanisms such as sense of community, neighbourliness, informal norms of social control and a variety of social ties. These strands are crystallised in the concept of social networks and the social capital which emerge from these networks, to which I turn in the next section.

Social Capital, Ethnic Communities and Trust

Granovetter's social embeddedness thesis was purposed to demonstrate to economists that unlike their atomised, a-social *homo economicus*, economic actors were actually socially conscious individuals who were more concerned about social factors like reputation and loyalty and might in many cases prefer to incur debt than to injure an ongoing social relation. Jens Beckert argues that this view need not be taken as incompatible with the image of the economist's atomised, calculating individuals; what it does is to place the maximising efforts of rational actors within a social context, i.e. to socialise individual calculations of self-interest. Because the likelihood of failure is greater when transacting in an a-social marketplace, 'social devices' like norms and networks become indispensable to the pursuit of private interest (Beckert 1996). As noted earlier, studies have confirmed that social ties have implications for successful economic outcomes, even for formal firms that were supposed to operate on the principle of economic rationality narrowly defined (Uzzi 1997, Burt 2005).

When applied to studies of migrants, this insight takes on added significance. The social networks and social capital that these communities generate are said to be vital elements affecting immigrant businesses. Within these networks, individuals have increased access to valued resources by virtue of their membership. According to Portes (1995), these benefits and resources do not themselves constitute social capital, but the ability to acquire them on demand. For immigrants, these constitute resources which can be channelled into business activities, and they increase the chances of success (Light and Bonacich 1988; A. Portes 1998).

Social capital refers to 'those expectations for action within a collectivity that affect the economic goals and goal-seeking behaviour of its members, even if these expectations are not oriented towards the economic sphere' (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993, p. 1323). Portes (1998; see also Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993) distinguishes four types of social capital; value introjections, reciprocity transactions, bounded solidarity and enforceable trust. The first form,

value introjection, depends upon the internalisation of norms during the process of socialisation, which impels individuals to act in an altruistic manner rather than in naked self-interest towards group members; a portrait which draws close to the ‘oversocialised conception of human nature’ that Dennis Wrong (1961) criticises. In the second source of social capital, *reciprocity transactions*, however, individuals are not expected to act out of an altruistic ethos or some higher standard of group morality, but by a system of exchange of information and resources in which they accumulate social ‘chits’ and draw on group norms of reciprocity (Portes 1993, p. 1324). The third form of social capital is based on group solidarity emanating from a common experience of adversity, a *bounded solidarity* which results in ‘observance of norms of mutual support, appropriable by individuals as a resource in their own pursuits’ (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993, p. 1325). Because of the heightened sense of loyalty to the group, this source of social capital does not require the enforcement capabilities of the group. By contrast, the final source, *enforceable trust*, consists of a ‘disciplined compliance’ of individuals to the norms of the group, although the motivation here is personal rather than ‘value convictions,’ because violations of trust are collectively sanctioned by ostracism or some other informal mechanism of social control which curtails further access to group resources (Portes 1993, p. 1325; Portes 1998; Zhou 2004; Granovetter 2005)¹.

Ghanaian immigrant communities in Western countries could be conceptualised as rich in many of these types of social capital. Dodoo (1997), for example, has shown that African immigrants are especially disadvantaged in the US labour market, and are less likely, even in comparison with other Black groups, to benefit from foreign university qualifications. With specific reference to Ghanaians, an appropriately titled article, ‘London the Leveller’ (Vasta and Kandilige 2010) reveals that in the UK, many Ghanaian immigrants, even those with graduate degrees, are restricted to low wage and low paying jobs, and they are highly conscious of systemic discrimination against them. It is exactly in such situations of perceived and actual discrimination that *bounded solidarity* arises. Additionally, Akosua Darkwah (2002) demonstrates how an effective system of sanctions and trust, or *enforceable trust*, in Ghanaian

¹ Although social capital yields benefits for members of a community, Portes (1998) also identified some downsides, especially for immigrant entrepreneurs who are the very ones likely to lack access to mainstream sources of credit and other resources. These disadvantages including excessive demands on successful businesses and a ‘downward levelling pressure’ which prevents individuals from aspiring beyond a tacit ceiling of success. Also, the tendency to extend broader social relations into the realm of business also poses challenges to the viability of ethnic businesses (Waldinger 1986).

communities all over the world allow transnational traders based in Ghana to coordinate complex business transactions involving large sums of money in countries that they visit only briefly.

As the above discussion of forms of social capital shows, social capital is maintained by ‘coercive’ mechanisms as well as by loyalty and trust. Indeed, Granovetter (1985) has noted that it is specifically within the context of close social relations that economic actors might get not only the motivation but also the opportunity to commit malfeasance. In *Cooperation without Trust*, Cook, Hardin and Levi (2005) propose that ‘trust’ rarely forms the basis of cooperation in any venture, economic or otherwise. Their notion of trust as ‘encapsulated interest’ suggests that people only feel confident enough to engage in a cooperative venture if they can somehow infer that their own interest will be served by their partners in the course of those transacting partners seeking their own interest. In other words, I can only trust you enough to cooperate with you if you can only achieve your own interest by ensuring that mine is served. This notion of trust includes the use of negative sanctions like ostracism, loss of prestige or severed access to informal credit to ensure compliance. For Cook and colleagues, just as for Beckert (1996), mechanisms like *enforceable trust* are simply ‘social devices’ produced to overcome the apparently insurmountable obstacle of cooperative action in a context of rampant pursuit of individual interests and mistrust. It is within this context, therefore, that we have to understand the operation of informal mechanisms like social networks.

Social Ties and Social Networks

Although social ties are certainly important, there are conditions for optimal success. Information that circulates in close-knit networks tends to be redundant (see Granovetter 1973). Burt found out that those managers who were so positioned in their organisations that they acted as bridges between their own networks and other networks (i.e. if they bridged the ‘structural holes between their own networks and other networks by acting as brokers) occupied a strategic positions of influence in their firms: ‘brokerage increases the risk of having a good idea’ (Burt 2004, 359; see also Uzzi 1997, 1999). These studies have shown the importance of social forces in strictly formal settings.²

² Gold (2005) argues that bridging of structural holes is beneficial for immigrants as well because it links them to potential out-group employers.

Vilna Bashi (2007) studied immigrant networks of black Caribbean immigrants in the US, Canada and the UK. She demonstrated that networks were extremely crucial for both prospective immigrants and recent arrivals. Her ethnography showed that these networks were so extensive that they connected people in the country of destination with others they barely knew in the countries of origin. Critiquing theories of immigrant chains, she argues that these networks were not dualistic, but were so arranged that several potential and recent immigrants (the spokes) were linked to a central figure (the hub), who had the resources at their disposal to assist others to migrate and find jobs. She illustrates how this hubs-and-spokes network structure became the framework within which people migrated and secured jobs, acquired legal residence and got housing. Akosua Darkwah (2002) observed a slightly differing pattern between the Ghanaian transnational traders and Ghanaian migrants in the countries where these traders travelled to do business. She christened them ‘transient nationalistic networks’ because the basis of solidarity was shared nationality, and the networks constantly changed membership, although the structure of cooperation and the sanctions that ensured adherence to norms of trust remained.

In contrast to the networks set in formal organisations and market institutions that Uzzi and Burt studied, these immigrant networks are at least as much ‘nationalistic networks’ as they are directed towards the attainment of economic ends. For Bashi’s (2007, 3) hubs, the aim was to build in the host country, a community whose members possessed what they saw as ‘character traits best adapted for survival in the new environment,’ including ‘piety, diligence, future orientation, and ability to defer present gratification in pursuit of long-term goals’; as well as to build up their own status in their immigrant communities and back home. What she did not examine, however, are the implication of these ties for the self-employment activities of the immigrants involved. Darkwah’s (2002) study followed the transnational practices of traders, but these were traders based in the country of origin. My purpose in this paper is to show how migrant networks, and the social capital that derives from these, are used by migrant entrepreneurs to start and run their businesses.

METHODS

This paper draws on data from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in two Ghanaian businesses in Chicago. One is a restaurant located in Uptown and the other is a garment shop

located in Woodlawn. The ethnography lasted for about a year, starting from February of 2011 to early January 2012. When I started fieldwork in the restaurant, I used to sit quietly by myself to observe interactions. But very soon, I started making friends and was drawn into the life of the restaurant. I spent a lot of time talking to customers and a few of them took me to their homes. As I grew closer to the owner of the restaurant, I started assisting with some chores like washing dishes, but I was never allowed to clear the tables or serve customers³. The owner of the restaurant took me to a number of events in the Ghanaian community. For instance, when she did the out-dooring ceremony for her baby,⁴ I attended and she put me in charge of collecting donations and writing the names of those who gave the donations.

At the garment shop, in addition to my observations inside the shop, I also attended a number of events organised by the Hyde Park community and the City of Chicago, in which the shop participated. During these events, I helped with packing of stuff to and from the events. The shop had an emailing list for customers, and I got on this list. Announcements of events they organised or participated in were made via this list. The nephew of the owner of the shop is my age-mate, so I spent a lot of time with him, and visited him many times at home. Business was very slow on weekdays in the shop. I normally spent such times in the inner offices where they did the sewing or chatting with the nephew of the shop owner. Customers came in their numbers on Saturdays. There was, therefore, more opportunities for interaction on Saturdays.

I spent about 5 hours at the restaurant every week, and visited about twice a week. During the summer, I visited about three times a week. I most arrived around 5pm or 6pm and stayed till they closed around 10:30pm. The restaurant opens around noon but don't start coming until early evening. I spent about 7 or 8 hours doing fieldwork at the garment shop once a week, usually on Saturdays. The shop opens at 11am till 7pm. I always stayed till closing and helped Betty's nephew to close the shop. Over the summer, I went there about twice a week, sometimes more depending on whether there was an event, like the African festival, which they participated in.

³ I think accepting my assistance in the 'backstage' of the restaurant (doing dishes, cutting vegetables) rather than in the 'frontstage' activities (formally serving customers) was a way for the restaurant owner to maintain the friendly relationship we have developed while preventing any expectations of service that customers might come to have of me.

⁴ Custom among many ethnic groups in Ghana at which a new born baby is formally presented to the public. It is performed seven days after birth. In Chicago, however, the temporal element is relaxed and most of the ceremonies I attended were performed when the babies were at least 6 months old.

Towards the end of my fieldwork, I conducted interviews with the owners of the two businesses. This supplemented the more informal data that I had gathered through conversations with them. I also did some interviews with a handful of customers, although I also draw on a far larger ‘unstructured interview’ data by virtue of the countless conversations I have had during the period of fieldwork. My participation in community activities that owners of both businesses took part in, like the naming ceremony of the restaurant owners’ daughter and the community events in Hyde Park was a great way for me to meet with and interact with people from the communitiess who did not necessarily patronise the businesses, or who I did not meet when I was in the shop doing observations. I analysed the data using the Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software tool.

In what follows, I present my two case studies. The cases present us with different images for thinking about migrant businesses. The restaurant conforms to our expectations of how migrant businesses would operate, relying on dense network ties and informal relations at the workplace. In the garment shop, however, we have a case of a migrant business which, as a strategy, deliberately tries to distance itself the migrant community. We, thus, see two approaches towards business and community. The restaurant *maintains a community by running a business* whilst the garment shop *runs a business through community*. As will be obvious in the sections below, community, as used in this paper, is a fluid rather than fixed concept or entity. For instance, the restaurant is embedded in the Ghanaian community whilst the garment shop is not. However, this observation applies only to the Ghanaian community, since the garment shop is also embedded in the Hyde Park community where it is located. It is important to keep this qualification in mind as I discuss the various ways in which calculation, maximisation and community operates in both field sites.

COMMUNITY-ORIENTED BUSINESS: Royal House Restaurant⁵

Royal House Restaurant is located in a neighbourhood in Uptown, an area on the north side of Chicago with a large presence of African migrants. Whites make up over half of the 6,570 population with Blacks making up 22.4% and Hispanics 18.2%. It is a relatively well-off neighbourhood, with 70% of the population 16 years and above employed, and mean family

⁵ The names of the businesses and people used in this paper are all pseudonyms.

income estimated at about \$75,528.⁶ The US Census Bureau gives the population of Ghanaians in Chicago at 2,535. The restaurant serves a mainly Ghanaian clientele, and the atmosphere invokes a strong sense of Ghanaian community. It has all the ostensive trappings of a Ghanaian communal space. Once you enter the restaurant, the first sounds you are likely to hear are that of Ghanaian popular music, i.e. highlife or hiplife. The music is sometimes played a bit too loud to allow for a conversation in whispers inside the restaurant. Most of the time, the sound of the music totally drowns out all sounds from the flat screen TV which is attached to one of the wall of the restaurant. Sometimes customers dance or sing along to the music aloud. The restaurant also displays Ghanaian art works, including carvings of *adinkra* symbols, and a framed picture of a Ghanaian mother and baby with the words 'Akwaaba!' meaning 'Welcome!' There are two paintings which seemed out of place in such a 'Ghanaian' environment: one showing the American map with various national monuments sticking out of it and another painting showing instruments for scientific experiments with the American flag in the background. I later learnt that these were painted by a prominent Ghanaian artist in Chicago.

I argue that the restaurant functions as both a business place and a site where the active construction of a Ghanaian community takes place. Conversations between customers across different tables are not uncommon, even when those conversing may not have been previously acquainted; and they sometimes had to raise their voices, more so if the music was playing loudly. Also, conversations abounded with references to Ghana. Many people talked about their recent trips to Ghana, and their listeners would eagerly ask for news about Ghana.

Customers and workers in the restaurant were even more concerned about happenings in the Ghanaian community in Chicago. There is a bulletin board in the restaurant, and this is one way by which people were kept abreast of happenings in the community. Interestingly, the bulletin board has no notices or displays connected to the restaurant in any way. There were, however, countless posters of events ranging from funerals, holiday bashes and musical shows, baby showers and 'outdooing' ceremonies. With the exception of a couple of flyers and campaign posters for alderman elections (winter 2011), all the notices were for Ghanaian events. One of the posters for a church proclaimed:

⁶ Estimates from the 2010 US Census, accessed from the website of the US Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov/>

ARE YOU A CATHOLIC?
OR ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO WORSHIP?
THEN JOIN *THE GHANAIAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF CHICAGO*
FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS
(emphasis in the original)

Interactions in the restaurant were usually on very expressive and personalistic levels among Ghanaian customers and between the management and Ghanaian customers. Customers will normally greet others they find in the restaurant upon entry, including those who might be in the middle of eating, whether they already knew them or not. A white customer, John, explains to me why he felt compelled to greet others anytime he went to the restaurant: *'Everybody smiles at you here, even if you don't know them. So when I also come, I smile at people, so that I don't disrespect the tradition. When you go to other restaurants, you don't get that.'* For him, that was the attraction of this restaurant.

Beyond greetings, customers also engage in conversations with others. Sometimes, this involves what might look to others unfamiliar with the setting as interfering in someone else's business. Baaboni once poured a little water into his soup. Another customer sitting at another table noticed this and immediately asked him:

'Why do you put water in your food?'

'No, pepper', Baaboni replied, 'I don't take too much pepper.'

'You could have asked them to make it less hot for you,' the interrupter said, before turning back to the group he was sitting with.

Akos also assumed the matronly role sometimes and chided some customers for 'wasting food.' While clearing the table, she once remonstrated a customer thus, *'If you're given a little food, you complain; and if you're given a lot, you waste it.'*

Entrepreneurial background

Akos, the owner of RHR, has had only basic level education. Her own grandmother started a small scale business selling cooked food, which she later expanded to a kind of a 'restaurant,' popularly called *chop bars* in Ghana, targeting low income patrons. In recent times, some entrepreneurs have tried to reproduce the *chop bar* ambience but in a more 'sanitised/polished' setting like a restaurant, and is supposed to appeal to the youthful population of the middle class who have only recently experienced upward mobility. As her grandmother's

business had expanded, it had taken on more of this latter character, and she employs a number of workers, so that she does not have to do the cooking herself.

She, thus, learned the most important principles of entrepreneurship in the context of her family business. Her husband, Kwabena, plays an active role in running the business. He has had more education than her, but not significantly higher. He has an A-Level certificate, which is the equivalent of a high school diploma in the US, and is currently in a community college studying for an associate bachelor's degree. Before coming to the US, he had worked for 18 years with a prominent Ghanaian businessman who ran a number of factories and shops. However, these were quasi-official business experiences and their applicability in the context of the US would be very limited, as we will shortly see.

Community Resources and Business Start-up

Akos worked for a few years to accumulate enough capital and then bought the restaurant from a woman who was returning to Ghana. She did not change the name after acquiring it from the previous owner, probably because at this time, it was already quite popular in the Ghanaian community, having been in operation for about 10 years before she bought it. She was joined by her husband from Ghana a few of years after she bought the restaurant. The motivation for starting the restaurant had sprung from an entrepreneurial urge, but its implementation was less driven by a calculation of profit: *'To make sure that our Ghanaian folks also have a feel of home. That is why we decided to do this business.'*

They kept the name of the restaurant. This move, in fact, makes business sense because, especially for customers, it provides them with a sense of continuity. But there was no indication of any change of direction or 'style' from the previous owners to the new one. Their approach to advertising is a case in point:

'In fact, we took over from the previous owners. And already, there are a lot of advertisements... Because some people come here with some journals I don't even know, that they advertise RHR [in].'

This view is actually consistent with their aim of serving a Ghanaian clientele, even though they get many non-Ghanaian customers as well. They rely on informal mechanisms, e.g. word of mouth, to market the business. For instance, when describing their internet presence, Broni, Akos' husband said:

‘we also rely on our clients who at times, they tell people what we do here. Somebody will just go and he’ll tweet, “Go to RHR, they have the best this, the best that,” yeah. We have a lot of people who do that.’

Although they belong to a Ghanaian church and Ghanaian associations, they do not actively advertise the business of the restaurant in these places. The reason for this is *‘because we’re [Ghanaian restaurants] not many, so we cannot be consigned to the corner.’* The most effective way of marketing themselves, he told me, was *‘to let our job [speak] for us.’*

This appears to be suboptimal approach to marketing a business. But this interpretation would only be valid if we assume the dominance of the profit maximising motive. As I argue, the restaurant is a social space for Ghanaians in Chicago as well as a business space. Thus, even though an entrepreneurial impulse might have spurred the start of the business, social considerations establish the bounds within which the pursuit of monetary goals should be pursued (Bloch and Parry 1989).

For instance, Kwabena, Akos’s husband, told me that they had plans to introduce some changes to the restaurant which would involve making the restaurant an even more authentically Ghanaian space.:

‘And by the grace of God, next year, you’ll see a lot of changes here...which will attract Ghanaians- and not only Ghanaians. We’re looking at other people coming in. So we have a lot of things on hand. But I think for now, what we have, we have to change certain things to bring more people in. So that’s what we’re thinking of now.’

These changes will involve excising from the restaurant *‘certain things here which are not Ghanaian’* and replacing them with those which are more authentically Ghanaian. This could be explained as a rational decision to create an welcoming space for especially white customers in search of authentic experiences; indeed, the aim is to *‘bring more people in.’* However, the real aim of these changes are Ghanaian customers. Consistent with their start-up decision to create a business where Ghanaians in Chicago could come and ‘feel at home,’ this changes target Ghanaians:

‘Some people have been here for more than 40 years and they don’t know what is going on in Ghana. Instead of putting these pictures here (pointing to the two paintings on the wall, mentioned earlier) we need to bring pictures from Ghana now, to let them see that

this is what is going on in Ghana. This is Dzorwulu, this is Kaneshie⁷. Then they know that something is going on in Ghana! *Then it will even facilitate their movement back to Ghana.* But looking at these pictures, it doesn't- this is American flag- it doesn't show anything Ghanaian. That's what I'm thinking of; we're trying to bring something Ghanaian... *So when you enter here, you know you're in Ghana.*'

The artist who did those paintings is a prominent Ghanaian living in Chicago, called Dr Darteh. I met him a number of times in the restaurant. He appears to be a well-respected figure in the Ghanaian community. In the summer of 2011, Akos organise a ceremony to outdoor her 6-month old baby, which I attended. A few days later, when I talked about the ceremony with her, she spoke with pride about how it was well attended and about the success of the ceremony, one indicator of which was that *'Dr Darteh came, and he even danced during the ceremony!'* As the quote above shows, however, the important question is not whether the painting is a work of a Ghanaian but rather, whether it depicts something about Ghana.

The Benefits and Limits of Social Capital

Data on RHR largely confirms our expectation about the reliance of migrant businesses on their communities. The members of the Ghanaian community as well as the resources within the community were crucial in the start up of the business. Information and advice on how to start up a business in America came from Ghanaian friends.

'[Y]ou can't just come in and start operating. You know, in Ghana, it's easy to open a restaurant.⁸ But over here, you'll have to- if you don't have the *contact*, you'll be halfway through and the authorities will come in and just close you down. Because you'll have to move through a lot of processes; you'll have to go to city, you have to go to the Department of Illinois, Revenue... *It's not as easy as in Ghana.* So if you don't have the links and you say, 'Oh, I've bought the shop, so I'm just going ahead,' you'll be in trouble with the authorities. *So we had the friends who guided us on what to do before everything was settled.*'

Money to start up the business came from personal savings as well as *'friends who volunteered some amounts.'* Here again, the monies flowed from ties to others in the Ghanaian community:

Kofi So these are Ghanaian friends?

⁷ Dzorwulu and Kaneshie are towns in Ghana

⁸ I strongly believe what is being referred to here is *chop bars* (explained above) rather than restaurants, which require formal registration with the Registrar General's department, like all formal entities.

RHR Yes.

Kofi You didn't get from others, like whites?

RHR No, no bank loans, nothing.'

At the moment, they have the possibility of accessing bank loans. However, they have friends who are *'very, very willing to give'* them credit, so they have a choice between two options now.

The restaurant has only had Ghanaian employees. When I started doing fieldwork in the winter of 2011, Akos had an elderly employee, Nana, working with her. By the spring, this employee was no longer working there. The circumstances surrounding her departure from the restaurant provides a good illustration of the extent to which social considerations might take precedence over profitability in a migrant enterprise. Nana had left the restaurant while I was away for about a month from the field. When I returned, I Akos narrated to me what had caused the split. Apparently, she had been dissatisfied with the work of Nana for a long time. First, some customers have complained on various occasions that Nana had been rude to them. In fact, Akos has herself on several occasions been a victim of disrespectful behaviour from Nana. Second, she was not as hardworking as Akos wanted and did not cook well if Akos left her alone to do it. Also, she sometimes spent time and resources at the restaurant doing her own side job: she fried fish which she sent for sale to the Ghanaian grocery shops in the city.

Interestingly, her exit from the restaurant was not because she was fired. Business was getting slow, so Akos had asked her to not come for a week. Nana did not report for work after the stipulated week, so Akos called and she said she was not feeling well. But she never returned after that. *'So you see, I wasn't the one who sacked her. She sacked herself.'* What is surprising about this incident is not so much the circumstances surrounding Nana's departure, but the fact that in spite of her poor job performance, as perceived by Akos, Nana was not fired. Cultural expectations of treatment of elderly persons meant that she could not reprimand Nana who is elderly openly or directly (Assimeng 1999; Nukunya 2003), although this did not make much sense in the context of running a business. Later on, she told me that Nana was having difficulty getting a job, but that she was not going to take her back if she returns. But this seemingly sterner stance is a result of the fact that Nana having taken the first step of leaving her employment, Akos could now not be held responsible by the community for treating her inappropriately.

We see here that community ought not to be necessarily viewed in a rosy light for businesses, especially migrant businesses. The benefit of her embeddedness in the Ghanaian community was access to ready and flexible coethnic labour force. But if coethnics extended community expectations to the employment relationship, the effect on business could be the opposite of what is desired. In other words, the migrant community was a safety *net* but could as well be a bed of *nettles* depending on the particular circumstances of different entrepreneurs.

Over the summer, Akos had a high school graduate, Gifty, working with her. At least, that was what I understood, until she later informed me that '*I was teaching her how to cook.*' Be that as it may, she also waited on the tables and run errands. Hence, the relationship was more of an apprenticeship, and when, at the end of summer, she was ready to go to college, Akos threw a party for her in the restaurant. Food for the party was provided by Akos. The idea for the party was to raise funds for her entrance to college. I was put in charge of collecting the donations and writing the names of those who made donations. We raised about \$2,000 from the party, which was a sort of parting gift to Gifty.

In the fall, after this employee/apprentice left for college, Akos's eldest daughter, about 16 years old, came to assist her sometimes. From the summer of 2011, her father also started helping with work in the restaurant. He worked as a security officer but the late hours and strenuous nature of the work affected his health. He sometimes waited on the tables, helped in food preparation and cleaned the restaurant. Her husband also helps, but he is also taking classes at a community college, and during the weekdays, he comes in the evening after classes. At the moment, they have one more employee, a middle aged woman, who joined during the last weeks of December 2011.

They have tended to stick to employing Ghanaians because it was the easiest approach for them. This was not only because of coethnic solidarity which might lead Ghanaian employees to be more willing to take lower wages when working for other Ghanaians:

'Mexicans have been coming here, they want, you know, some jobs to do. But even the Ghanaians who come here, we have to teach them- you know, not everyone knows how to cook. So to bring somebody totally different will compound- you have to train the person for 3/4 months before the person can do whatever you want.'

When it comes to suppliers, however, they have to rely on both coethnic and non-coethnics. And here, their experience with Ghanaian and non-Ghanaian suppliers contradict expectations from the literature about co-ethnic mutual assistance. They have two broad categories of suppliers: standard and subsidiary suppliers. And these map very roughly onto wholesale and retail suppliers. The subsidiary suppliers include some mainstream retailers like World Market. Their Ghanaian suppliers can be found at the retail end of the distribution chain. We observe here an interesting pattern respecting the nature of relationships they have developed over time to these partners. For the standard suppliers, they maintain a mixture of formal and informal ties:

‘You’ll be surprised that sometimes they call us, like, ‘You don’t need anything?’ And we say ‘Ok, we need this, we need that, we need that,’ they’ll just deliver, then we pay them. At times when they come and we don’t have money, they go and come back later for the money.’

When it comes to money, however, coethnic relationships yield under the weight of individualistic calculation: *‘No, no, they don’t deal with that. We’re all Ghanaians but you have to have your money before they serve you.’* The relationship is the same with a Ghanaian who supplies them with international calling cards:

‘This guy comes in and he takes his money. You know Ghanaians, we don’t joke with our money. He comes in and whatever you buy, he just takes his money. If you don’t have [enough] money, he just calculates and gives you whatever you have and he goes away.’

They, thus, prefer doing business with the large, mainstream, non coethnic suppliers. What is happening here is that the small, coethnic suppliers are not able to match the competitiveness of these larger companies who are able to employ economies of scale to offer cheaper prices. The paradox which this raises, and which I shall attempt to address in the section on ‘Community’ below, is how an entrepreneur who holds such strong reservations against some coethnics as business partners and who would rather do business with mainstream companies; how and why would such an entrepreneur consciously want to create a social atmosphere at the business place attractive to these same coethnics, turn the business space into a community space, embrace extra-business influences from the community, even if these run counter to the business logic, and indulge exuberant expressiveness in the space for the business?

Their current insurer is Farmers, but they are currently considering State Farms and Carnegie Insurance, all of them formal, mainstream insurance companies. Here again, due to the complexities involved, Kwamena told me he has had to seek help: *'because I don't want to take any steps without the lawyer's help, because the whole system is very complicated, so everything I do, I want to consult my lawyer.'* Their accountants are Ghanaians; and although they say the relationship between them is quite formal, they admit that it is nevertheless cheaper to do business with them than with non-coethnic accountants.

Community

The lives of the couple owning and running RHR sits right in the heart of the Ghanaian community. Akos's father, who also works in the restaurant, is an elder in one of the Ghanaian hometown associations in Chicago. Kwabena is a keyboardist in one of the Ghanaian churches. The extent of their embeddedness in the community was evidenced by the large turnout which the outdoor ceremony of their Akos's daughter drew. In the course of my fieldwork, I have witnessed on several occasions some women coming to Akos with interpersonal issues to settle. During such times, she shares her time between cooking, serving, taking orders and attending to her guests. She normally gives a free food pack to friends who visit her at the restaurant, when they are leaving.

The Ghana National Council of Chicago organises Ghana Festival (Ghanafest) in the summer. The restaurant takes part in this event, and their community involvement here does not entail simply participating in the festival:

'It would interest you to know that we normally do Ghanafest, and the Ghana National Council chairman himself has to come to RHR to have us assist them get the licence from the City to vend food at the festival.'

Considering the central role they play in the Ghanaian community, I asked Kwabena what their community contribution was. Interestingly, his immediate response to the question was that they paid taxes. I followed up with a more direct, if leading question:

Kofi And what about contributing to the Ghanaian community here in Chicago?

RHR The restaurant?

Kofi Yeah. I'm thinking of Ghanaians staying here in Chicago forming a community. I know on the north side, there's a large Ghanaian community. Do you think the restaurant contributes in a way to building community?

RHR No.

It took a good amount of prodding until he finally acknowledged their community-building role. He admitted that the main reason why many Ghanaians patronise their business was the desire for a space to *'feel at ease... they meet friends;'* they did not need to come regularly to the restaurant because they could cook the same food at home. One of the customers echoed the exact same sentiments:

'I love coming here. I'm from work now, look! But I'm here. I can cook; \$10 can make me soup that can last me for almost a week. But I love coming to spend it here.'

And for the Ghanaian cab drivers, who were the largest and most loyal group of customers, the restaurant becomes a place where *'they take their break over here,* listening to soothing music, watching videos, watching television, then talking to each other before they go to work again. So yeah, I could say it also helps.'

However, they are largely oblivious to their community roles; although this is a matter of pride when once they reflect upon it:

'When I went to Washington, I met one guy there. He saw me and just came to me. Oh, I enjoyed the food I ate at your place. I was very proud! I didn't even notice him, but he noticed me. 'I came to Chicago and came to your restaurant, the food was good!' The food and the music and the way we treated him, he said he'll come back to Chicago. When I hear certain things like this, I feel proud.'

For RHR, then, the community, like the business, possesses intrinsic value first, before its more instrumental role as supporting a business. The community, for them, is what the water is to the fish. So essential is it to their existence that they are not self-conscious in terms of how they relate to it.

As I have shown in this paper, this is just one model of migrant business. There are other possibilities, one of which is exemplified by the other case to be shortly presented below. Migrant entrepreneurs might face a similar set of conditions, which presents them with a set of constraints but also opportunities. Migrant entrepreneurs exhibit heterogeneity in background characteristics and the strategies, resulting from these characteristics, which they adopt to run their businesses. To be able to adequately explain how these background traits structure the eventual nature that their enterprises would take, a better appreciation of the concept of

community and the ties formed therein, is essential, since the community is not simply a *tabula rasa* background against which businesses are established, but exerts influences which are consequential for the nature of the business.

Customers

As indicated earlier, the customer base of RHR is predominantly Ghanaian. But Ghanaians are not the only patrons of the business. There are '*our Nigerian brothers,*' other Africans, and Americans, mostly:

'Those who go on Peace Corps; they come in and they just want- they mention the food as if they know what they want. So they also do come in. Their friends, maybe they come in about 7, 8; some are new to- they're introducing their friends to our food, because they want to take them back to Ghana.'

I have actually observed a few occasions where white customers have made attempts to order their food in Twi, one of the local Ghanaian languages. These are invariably repeat customers, and as Kwabena says above, they normally have spent some time in Ghana. Among the various customers, Akos feels that non-coethnic customers, like non-coethnic suppliers, are the best business. Also Akos told me once, '*Gifty*⁹ *likes them because they give her bigger tips,*' although throughout her time at the restaurant, I always observed playful interactions between her and the Ghanaian customers. What explains this ambivalence might have been well put by Kwabena when I asked whom among the customers he preferred:

'Home sweet home, I prefer the Ghanaians. They're very troublesome, but you get your satisfaction. Our white brothers and sisters, they're trying our food. They come in for everything. And in fact, they do appreciate whatever we do for them. And the price is also normally very good for them. But we get most of our jobs from the Ghanaians. The whites, maybe one or two, they come in. Maybe a Ghanaian will introduce them to it and they'll also bring in someone. But they don't come in that much like the Ghanaians.'

Why would Ghanaian customers patronise the restaurant more? A restaurant is simply a place to buy and consume food. However, the most important function of the restaurant for them was its *emotive* and *symbolic* role. Perhaps this is best illustrated by the fact that most of the Ghanaian respondents I spoke with had made new friends by regularly visiting the restaurant, but more significantly, it had reunited many old friendships:

⁹ Her former apprentice/employee

‘I met this guy that I went to college with back home before we moved here. I was sitting down right here, and I saw him coming in. so sometimes, you know, it brings old faces together, that you don’t even know, or you haven’t seen them in a while.’

That the restaurant is not just *a social space*, but *a social space for Ghanaians in Chicago* is evidenced by the fact that although almost all the Ghanaian customers I spoke with had made new friends by visiting the restaurant repeatedly, these have mostly been with other Ghanaians. Importantly, Nigerian customers told me they enjoyed the friendly atmosphere and sometimes joined conversations, but have not made any lasting friendships there. On the other hand, a Ghanaian customer told me:

‘I meet African people, people come here and we talk about Ghana. We chat and do everything, you know. Why should I stay here, I’ve finished eating, why should I stay here? But I feel like home, that’s what I’m saying, I feel like home.’

The question he kept asking me, *‘why should I sit here, I’ve finished eating?’* is significant. The answer is that food is not the primary reason for coming here. The reason?: to *‘feel like home.’*

I am not the only one who has noticed the boisterousness of interactions inside the restaurant. One customer who I became close friends with once asked me, on our way to watch a Ghana-Brazil soccer match at his friend’s home in Bolinbrook, what I thought about the social activities in the restaurant. But without waiting for an answer from me, he answered that it was a great and wonderful space for Ghanaians. However, he felt the interactions were *‘strange’* for whites, especially Americans, who might not have been to Ghana before and who will, hence, be much perplexed when they enter and observe two customers *‘shouting’* inside the restaurant. He felt this drives some white customers away.

Why would a business allow such activities which had the potential to be hurtful to its bottom line, especially when the owners have clear misgivings about doing business with some coethnics, and find it more beneficial having mainstream business partners. One explanation will be that the primary goal of the restaurant is to provide a communal space for Ghanaians in Chicago; profit being a secondary goal, or rather an epiphenomenon of the main goal of creating community. An equally plausible explanation will stress the resources, not merely financial, but most importantly knowledge and experience, at the disposal of migrant entrepreneurs that constrains their business strategies. Considering the resources at their disposal, they have to stick

with the community and within the constraints and opportunities that are available therein, carve out a strategy for their business. They adopt a passive approach to advertising, for instance, relying on members of the community to spread out word about them. They had relied upon Ghanaian friends as a source of start-up capital, for information and advice to navigate the City bureaucracy, and they relied for labour on the community. In this sense, as I have argued above, the community provides them with a safety *net*. The misgivings I have noted above might be petty considered against this more crucial benefits deriving from the community. In the following section, I present another migrant business that has both the motivation *and* the resources to be able to take a break from the migrant community.

MARKET-ORIENTED BUSINESS: Betty Dogbevi Boutique

Betty Dogbevi Boutique: Where Africa Dwells is situated in the heart of the African American community on the south side of Chicago. It is located in Woodlawn, just south of Hyde Park; and draws most of its customers from the more affluent Hyde Park. The 1,441 population of the Woodlawn neighbourhood where the store is located is overwhelmingly Black (95.6%), with only 2.6% Whites, and an even more negligible Latino population of 0.5%. Only 53.7% of the population over 15 years are employed, and the mean family income is \$23,703. By contrast, the Hyde Park area just north of this neighbourhood has 55.7% of the working age population employed and a mean family income of \$116,393. It also has more White residents (53.3%) than Black (30.6%), and a Hispanic population of 6.4%. The artworks displayed in the shop are from all over the African continent. There are also a number of paintings on the wall from Ghanaian and Nigerian artists and ritual masks from all over Africa. The layout of the shop seems designed to give an air of cosmopolitan Africanism and to create an atmosphere for professional business. The music in the shop plays softly in the background, and displayed for sale on a small rack are CDs of music from all over Africa. There is a counter at one corner of the shop, with jewelry and body oils displayed for sale. There is a computer on the counter where purchases are entered.

Along the walls and in the centre of the shop, there are racks of clothes. A few of the clothes have West African tie-dye and batik designs. But most are mainstream fabrics designed

with an African touch. Each item of clothing has a label attached, with a price tag. Prices range from \$15 to \$1,000. Near the racks, there are bowls with beads or copper rings or chains for sale. At one corner of the shop, close to the counter, there is a tall rack with clearance clothes on discount. Directly opposite that rack, there are two changing rooms, the doorways of which are draped with fabrics with African designs. There are other items on display, like black soap from West Africa and liquefied pure shea-butter cream.

During weekdays, there are usually only a few customers at a single time. Customers normally would trickle in to get buy a dress, or to pick up an order they had placed earlier. On weekends, however, there is a lot of traffic. There are always friendly interactions taking place in the shop. By contrast with the restaurant, interactions are not exuberant. I never witnessed here the sorts of lively discussions and debates that I saw at the restaurant. The garment shop, therefore, gives a sense of a business being run professionally. For instance, there is a stricter separation between business and family here. Unlike in the restaurant where the husband, father and children of the owner were usually around and also help with work, Betty's family were hardly at the store.

The atmosphere I have attempted to describe above is one that has been very consciously crafted. Betty, the owner of the shop, alludes to some of the logic underlying her decisions. For instance, she had moved from the predominantly Ghanaian neighbourhoods on the north side of Chicago when she started her business. This was largely a smart business move based on rational calculation. When I commented about how expensive her garments were, we talked about the quality of her garments and so on, but she also alluded to her intention to deliberately ward off potential Ghanaian customers by choosing her current location:

'Ghanaians will not be willing to pay the amount of money that I charge for my products. Because they are familiar with the fabrics and designs and are used to buying it at low cost, they'll want the same thing with me here.

Alejandro Portes, who otherwise celebrates the presence and utilisation of social capital in migrant communities, observes a similar trend among Ecuadorean entrepreneurs. Successful Otavalo garment merchants in the Ecuadorean Andes cut themselves off from their social circles by switching religious allegiance from Catholicism to Protestantism, thus, effectively estranging themselves from their own communities and thereby being insulated from undue communal

demands (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1998). As we observed above, however, this separation is not fully possible in the restaurant. For instance, almost every day, an unemployed Ghanaian named Oscar came to the restaurant and she gave him food. One night, Oscar came very late when we (Akos's dad, husband and I) were in the car waiting to drive off and she was putting off the lights in the restaurant. Akos's husband and dad told Oscar to come back the following day. As we were driving off, they narrated what just happened to Akos. She replied, more sadly than angrily, *'You're the same people who say you'll feel bad if you find out one morning that he's dead. Yet you're also the very same people who sometimes treat him harshly,'* wondering why they didn't give him something to eat.

Entrepreneurial background

Betty, owner of the garment shop, lives in Hyde Park with her husband and children. She told me that her entrepreneurial spirit might have resulted from the fact that she grew up in a home where both parents ran their own businesses. Her mother was a seamstress and her father retired from his formal sector employment to start a hotel business. She actually did not have any formal training in garment designing before starting her business; she picked it up watching her mum. However, it was not until she was out of Ghana studying in Nigeria and with insufficient allowances from her father that she felt compelled to start a business. Her formal training was in econometrics at the University of Lagos, where her entrepreneurial character blossomed.

It was in college that she started her own business and developed her business sense, acquiring the diversity of qualities that would help her build the business competence which she currently deploys in running her business. She started by retailing picture frames, which was a small success (she sold about 400 frames) until she was scared off that business by competition when others started imitating her after her business became a success. She then became a fashion photographer, and went on to start a small modelling agency on campus.

She entered them in casting calls and got 30% of whatever contract they got. When one of her models won a competition and got a free trip to the US, she negotiated a deal with the organisers of the competition and was allowed to come with the winner as a chaperone. *'It was an all-expense trip, it was a nice exposure, all expense trip, and I got a stipend too! So that was a nice exposure.'*

Thus, in addition to her formal education, she had acquired this rich mix of experience of starting and running a business from scratch and dealing with large firms and bureaucracy. More importantly, she had acquired the skills to develop and maintain ties with formal firms. As I shall show below, this attribute makes her systematically different from the owners of the restaurant. The literature on migrant entrepreneurship (Dhaliwal 2006) notes that migrant businesses are often constrained because most of them make limited use of formal resources. But as will be obvious in this analysis, adequate utilisation of these formal resources requires the possession of other resources, for instance education, but also the requisite experience dealing with other formal organisations. For migrants, this demands in a sense the ability to navigate multiple ‘worlds,’ one grounded in intimate ties and solidaristic relations of the migrant community, and another quite the opposite, having a cold, grey bureaucratic front. The experience of Betty in college, starting up an agency which recruited models for advertising companies, negotiating with these firms over terms of contract with her recruits, and also bargaining to be included in the benefits that accrue to her models who won prizes, were invaluable experiences which will be useful when she started her business in the US.

She got an MBA after coming to the US. Since starting her job, she has taken a number of City-sponsored courses for garment designers and small-business owners. She has, therefore, accumulated, over the years, a set of useful experiences. This is one important respect in which she differs from Akos, and these differences are consequential for the type of ties these entrepreneurs develop and maintain; and how they utilise the social capital that emanates from these ties. Additionally, and importantly, it influences whether and how they can access the formal resources at their disposal.

Strategic Cultivation of Community Ties

Betty did not start her business immediately upon arriving in the US. She worked for about two years as a high school math teacher and a prenatal health consultant, during which time she saved up for the eventual start-up of her business. After two years, she continued doing these jobs, but also started vending at arts and crafts shows and also in the black churches on the south side of Chicago. But this was not simply to accumulate start-up capital; she called the activity doing ‘*a little market research*’:

‘So for about two years, I was out in the field to meet new people. Because I was pretty new in the country, I didn’t understand the culture much, so I felt that with that exposure, I’ll have a better understanding of people’s taste, people’s price points and, you know, the sorts of things people wanted.’

She started selling the African garments, as well as arts and crafts during these events. But she was quite strategic about which events she peddled her stuff at:

‘I chose particular ones; ones that sort of targeted my market. And at that time, my market was mainly middle income African American professional women’.

This was quite a rational business move, because *‘they were the ones that were more interested in Afrocentric wear, more enlightened about Afrocentric clothing and stuff.’* As I will show later, this narrow target market, and the ‘professional’ type of business she wanted to create, would lead her to flee the Ghanaian community on the north side of Chicago, in order to escape the social pressures and expectations that results from locating her business within that community. She felt, for instance, that *‘they always will say, “Oh, I can buy the same things in Ghana for \$2. Why are you selling it for a \$100.”’* In fact, those excluded include other Africans as well. Her African customers number less than five, and of these none is Ghanaian.

To further widen the gulf between the shop and the Ghanaian community, she is currently consciously attempting to shed the ethnic image of her enterprise. For instance, she has now dropped *‘Where Africa Dwells’* from the name of the shop. Communities guarantee mental, physical and sometimes financial security, but there are also costs to communities. Especially for migrant communities, these costs might be too heavy to allow for a vibrant business. Migrant entrepreneurs will, therefore, have to balance the demands of the community with the need to run a business in a manner that makes economic sense. As this paper argues, the possession of some attributes like higher education and experience dealing with formal firms and agencies may make it possible for some migrant entrepreneurs to escape these pressures because they are equipped with the tools to access the resources they lose after fleeing the community.

However, it would be wrong to see BDB as a migrant business disembedded from community. Betty had to flee from the Ghanaian community, the store is as much embedded in the African American community on the south side as RHR is in the Ghanaian community, although BDB is located in a community where the business could successfully adopt a profit maximising approach to business while still maintaining ties to customers and significant others.

Community Resources in the Market

Unlike RHR, the garment shop was started with no capital from family or friends. Without any capital injection from these sources, Betty had to rely on her own savings. *'I just recycled what I had'* by reinvesting her profit back into the business. As shown earlier, she did a bit of her own 'market research' before starting the business. This 'research' partly involved relying on the ties she had built in the course of her vending activities. But this was a more strategic use of the close ties she had developed. For instance, one of her customers, Sharon, became the conduit for her entrance into the African American market. This customer became a unique course of important 'information.'

'She wore Afrocentric clothes and everything... she was a big help to me in understanding, you know, the market I wanted to work with.' For instance, Sharon has a big frame, and since 'I make a lot of clothes for women who are full figured... having more women who are full figured around me helped me.'

Sharon also belongs to the Trinity United Church, and Betty attended most of the shows the church held with her. She also wore and showcased the garments that Betty produced at church.

After vending for a while, she acquired a shop in downtown Chicago on Michigan Avenue, and then to Hyde Park. She moved to two different shops in Hyde Park before moving to her current location further south in Woodlawn, which is just about 10 minutes bus ride from Hyde Park. Most of her customers are still in Hyde Park.

The migration literature assumes that community is a monolithic entity, which is more or less tightly bound, with variations by migrants' ethnicity. The literature on social capital similarly assumes that this community is either all beneficial or all costly to migrant businesses (see Gold 2005). What we find here, by contrast, is a very agentic process whereby an entrepreneur chooses *an aspect* of the community to organise her activities around. Although she had moved her business to Hyde Park, she was being quite explicit about who in the community would form a meaningful part of the business: *'middle income black people.'* For this business, emphasising *'middle income black people'* means that the types of social capital accruing to her from the black community in Hyde Park will be systematically different from a similar enterprise but one which wholly embraces all classes in the black community. In turn, this also has implications for the character of the business that she builds.

There are only four employees. One is her nephew, Kodjo, who handles the financial aspect of the accounts. He graduated from his MBA programme during the period of my fieldwork. She told me that she employed him not simply because he is family, but because he was *'good at what he did.'* He also helps with some technical details of the business, like IT. Betty's husband, who is African American, is an artist, so he designs the labels that they use for other products like shea butter and black soap that they carry in the shop.

Betty initially tried getting employees by asking around, but that did not yield any positive result. She subsequently started advertising job openings on the internet. She has had a few interns, whom she has had to train, but she prefers employees who already come with some experience. The African American man who currently works with her used to be an intern. In the past, she has had to turn down many applicants for not possessing the requisite skills.

Given the specific nature of her target clientele upon starting the business, I wanted to find out whether she took into consideration whether potential recruits were knowledgeable about African American ways of life. But apart from Sharon, who she had worked closely with way before she started got a shop, the other employees were recruited based on the skill that they had for the particular job they applied for.

She also employs models, both for her promotional materials, like flyers, and also for the fashion events. All the models in the fashion events I have attended are Blacks. However, she informed me about making changes to suit her plans to enter the mainstream market. One of such changes has been getting White and Latino models. Her most recent promotional flyer and the new website sport a Latina and a white woman among her models.

BDB, like the restaurant, also has two lines of suppliers: large companies and smaller suppliers who mostly deal in arts and crafts. She gets supplies from companies located in Canada, and in many cities across the US. Her relationships with most of these companies are mediated through the relevant sales agents. There are companies in Canada that she gets supplies from, and there are sales representatives who intermediate between them. She also gets suppliers from many cities in the US. *'I met them through trade shows. I go to the trade shows. That's the way I get my products, I make contacts. I go to Las Vegas, LA, New York.'*

Sometimes, as a businesswoman, she is faced with the option of sticking with the sales representatives or going directly to the companies and getting a slightly better deal. She decided to choose the most beneficial in the long run:

‘...as a business person, I’ve realised that you don’t necessarily have to undermine the middleman. You could still enjoy benefits from the middleman, if the middleman has your best interests; if the middleman has your best interests, so the middleman knows what you want, how to get it and negotiate for the best price. A lot of companies now, the big companies that sell fabrics, they have reps in different regions, so you can’t- even if you go directly to them, you probably might pay more. And so they maintain the integrity of the business.’

Ultimately, there are other benefits, because she gets more flexible and personalised service after sticking with a sales rep over time. For her then, the crucial thing is about getting to that point in the relationship with the sales rep that they develop the confidence that *‘you’re not going to go behind their backs’* to establish direct relations with their companies.

She also buys items from smaller suppliers, mainly Africans. Most of the items she acquires from these suppliers are fabrics or art works. She buys these during the African festival which is held over the summer. In addition to that, her sister in Ghana also designs garments from recycled fabrics, and she gets supplies from her too. But she carries these only in the summer, as they are designed for tropical climate. She wishes she could deal with more African or local supplier but she thinks she compensates for this by the fact that *‘many African vendors bring me mud cloth, my kuba cloth, I buy jewellery from them. So I still work with my African vendors, a lot of them. I really do.’*

During the interview, she mentioned that she tries to develop stronger relationships with her African and African American vendors, but was quick to add that *‘I don’t think it affects the business.’* That said, she stressed that most of her relationships with even the bigger suppliers grow better over time:

Some of them I can go into their stores, their local stores and just pick the products up. I leave my credit card and I say ‘Charge it in 30 days,’ or even with my vendors in New York, I do the same. They have my account number. I say ‘Please don’t charge me today, I have no money; you know, I’ll pay- charge it in 30 days.’ They call and remind me, ‘Oh, you know, it’s 30 days, are you ready to pay,’ I say ‘Yes.’ and then, they go ahead and charge my accounts. So yes, over time, I find out that as long as you maintain your integrity and everything, it gets better, because everybody wants to keep a customer. It’s

a hard economy, so everybody is doing whatever they can do to maintain whatever relationships they've built, business relationships.

The question of maintaining strong ties with transacting partners but at the same time ensuring that it does not impact negatively on the business is an issue I take up below in my discussion of her relations with customers.

She insures her business with a mainstream insurance company, but maintains an African American broker. Part of the reason for choosing an African American broker was because *'if I can, I try to support African American businesses, if that's possible.'* The explicitness of this choice reflects her consciousness of her place and role in the community; and I argue below that it is because she does not feel she is an organic member of the community. In other words, having departed from the Ghanaian community on the north side, she is very aware of her place in the black community on the south side, as well as her community involvement activities, because she is not a 'organic' member of the community.

Community

To determine the value she places on the different transactional ties, I asked her to indicate one after the other, which ethnicity among her customers, employees, suppliers and ancillary services providers she preferred doing business with. Maybe because of the tediousness of having to go through each single transactional tie and make a preference, or maybe because she really felt that strongly about it, she snapped. And in her reply, she made reference to an implicit tension between Africans and African Americans in the US:

'I really, truly do not want to separate suppliers, customers, in terms of African Americans, Africans; I think it's become so- a lot of Africans I know when I was here, a lot of Africans come here, they try to make that separation, they try to always state how African Americans are this, African Americans are that; and I think that has been the detriment to them actually assimilating into the culture and helping build up the communities.'

One difference between the garment shop and the restaurant, in this sense, is that there is as explicit an attempt at emphasising harmony of Africans and African Americans as there are sometimes tacit and other times more explicit attempts at the restaurant to highlight the difference. At the restaurant, this attempt at differentiation is further complicated because a number of the Ghanaian customers are still good friends with African Americans and some are

even married. But Betty's claim is that it did not matter who she had to interact with. She stresses that she can easily '*assimilate into any society*' but she *made* a choice to '*centre myself around more of my kind*' because '*it's comfortable.*' But even more important than comfort, this choice was also informed by the need to be a part of, to build and to strengthen a community with a positive self-image, especially for the benefit of her children.

I tried to gauge at the extent of her community involvement by community organisations she was a part of or participated in. As a small business owner, she belonged to the Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce. She is actually located in Woodlawn community, but her rationale for joining the Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce was because '*Hyde Park has a higher level than Woodlawn.*' This is possible because they are just on the borderline between Hyde Park and Woodlawn. Hyde Park being an economically more developed area than Woodlawn, this can be seen as an instrumental choice.

The black churches on the south side have also been very instrumental in the history of the business. As mentioned earlier, she started the business designing dresses for the women in the churches, and Sharon was helpful in granting her that access. She promoted her garments at church shows and similar events way before she even got a shop. Currently, she takes part in many events of the church, and most of these are now in the form of '*giving back.*' For instance, there is a not for profit resale boutique affiliated with one of the churches, and she contributes to this. This boutique helps provide funding to support a transitional home for girls. She also participates in church fund raising events. She still does a little marketing of her business during these events, but not as heavily as she used to do. And although she gets involved in church fundraisers, she never allows the premises of her own shop to be used for church fundraising. But:

'I help support artists in my store. I just have local artists come in, feature their work and that, I feel, is my way of contributing also. We don't charge them anything. We just allow them to come and showcase their work.'

In addition to giving them a space to showcase their work, I observed after one of these events that she had actually provided the wardrobe of the artist who had done the show. But she is not blind to the business side of this benevolence, either: '*it's an indirect way for us to advertise and promote; so it's like two-edged.*'

She is not a member of any of the Ghanaian association in Chicago, but that is something she would love to do when and if time allows for it. She used to attend Ghanafest. But she has not been able to attend this for a long while. Her nephew, Kodjo, told me they used to vend during that festival. Even though they do not vend anymore, he still makes time to go anyway, since he gets to meet other Ghanaians there, and sometimes old friends. There is also an African festival over the summer, which she participates in. Because she started her business with a particular target in mind, *'middle income African American professional women,'* she had been attending this particular festival from the very start because it attracts a large number of African Americans, especially those interested in her style of fabrics. In recent times, she tries to be even more specific about what events she attends:

'We do our share of marketing in the community. And I've started being more creative, because of the lack of finance. So in the past, we'll do anything, but now, I'm very particular about what shows we're involved in.'

This strategic move is consistent with larger changes she was then anticipating, and which are now underway; she now intends to enter the mainstream market, and is redesigning her business to have a broader appeal.

Her attempts to give back to the community are not limited to church fundraisers, resale shops, and joining the range of businesses which provide institutional support to the south side communities. She feels that the support she gets from the African American community by virtue of being a black entrepreneur has to be reciprocated to other black businesses:

'It's very important for me now to go to an African American restaurant on the south side, or support a business on the south side than go and eat downtown, you know. I don't do that as much as I used to years ago, because I realised the importance of supporting a small business, and we thrive on that support, that support!'

Customers

As indicated above, the customer base of BDB is almost entirely made up of African Americans. There are a few Africans among these, who according to Betty, do not make up even 1% of her clientele. These are friendships dating back to her vending days, or even prior. The woman who introduced me to the shop is an elderly Nigerian woman who has been friends with Betty since her vending days; this woman herself vends part-time. The other African I have seen at the shop is a younger lady who was friends with Betty even before she started her business. I

never once saw a white customer during the period of my fieldwork, but Kodjo, Betty's nephew, told me that they have had a few white customers in the past. In particular, a white lady was getting married to a Ghanaian and so had come to the shop to get some African dresses designed for the occasion. During the interview, Betty also mentioned that they have even had Canadian and German customers, as well as those closer to home. *'[P]eople who live in Chicago come in here and they're pleasantly surprised that we're here, because they didn't know about us. So yes, we have customers outside the African American market. Some of these white customers come on the recommendation of friends, but others 'just show up.'*

Because traffic from African and white customers, and customers of other ethnicities, are infrequent and fleeting, she is only able to develop and maintain ties with her African American customers. Over time, they have grown close, *'too close,'* as she puts it. Maintaining these relationships require a very delicate separation of the sometimes competing demands of community and commerce:

'... because we have customers who think they're family members and, you know- but I mean, it's nice. And I really enjoy my customers, all of them. I've shown- they appreciate the business, they don't take us for granted, they don't disrespect what we're about. I think in that aspect, yeah over time, we've built a better relationship.'

And in terms of my argument about how community expectations and demands are balanced with the demands of running a profitable business, even though her relationships with her customers have grown *'too close,'* she maintains that they still *'don't take us for granted.'*

This is because she has put mechanisms in place to prevent the intrusion of social demands into the workplace. One of these is by adopting a *professional* approach to the business. The other side of this approach is by presenting this professional image in a friendly face. For instance, a customer wanted to buy a pair of ear-rings at \$10 but did not have change. Her friend told her that she had accumulated enough *'Betty Bucks,'* which she could redeem by purchasing the ear-rings for her friend. Essentially, *'Betty Bucks'* are discount points which customers accrue over time, not very different from the cards that major supermarkets give out to regular customers, on which you earn points with every purchase. This way, she is able to balance the expectation of her customers for a warm, friendly atmosphere at the shop, with that of keeping the business afloat:

‘I gave them freebies, nobody has abused that privilege. I give them discounts. I make sure they understand that this place is a real business; you can’t take advantage of it. And they don’t, they don’t. I don’t give the- I mean, I run it as a professional business, so those who get discounts, they get discounts based on merit; because they’ve been long term customers, not because of anything else...So we’re trying to keep it professional’

This also applies to her one African customer. I did not notice any difference throughout my period in the field between her interactions with them and with her African American customers. And they are also subject to the same terms. Talking about one of her African customers, she said *‘you can see she pays for whatever she takes. So it’s not like she can walk in here, and say “I’ll pay you tomorrow.” If you’re in the system, it’s documented.’*

But as I have said above, this does not mean that the ties she maintains with her customers are strictly transactional. Indeed, I have observed friendly, intimate interactions between customers, and between the customers and the personnel of the shop. This is not as expressive and as exuberant as in the restaurant, but it is intimate nevertheless. The closeness of the ties generated is indicated by the fact that one of her customers, Sharon, ended up as an employee. Sharon clearly does not need a job, being well to do; moreover, she is retired. And she decides to work just one day in a week. The fact that she does this at all is indicative of the need to keep the bonds she had created with Betty and with other users of the space.

On the part of the customers, they usually talk about the shop as a link in their connection to their African roots, and a search for that authenticity which will consummate that link. As one customer observes:

‘I like this place because the environment is relaxed. So we get to talk and socialise. It’s almost like a communal space. And I like that Betty has the West African environment. And for me, the African authenticity is very important. I thirst to be more connected with the culture of West Africa, and Sarah represents West Africa. I desire to be more spiritually connected with my roots.’

The trope of authenticity was also brought up in an event organised by the Hyde Park community to showcase and promote local businesses. When introducing Betty’s business, the MC said, *‘This is Betty, our sister from Ghana, West Africa, the motherland; who has ‘infiltrated’ into Hyde Park.’* This quest for authenticity on the part of the community fitted nicely with the strategic nature of her choices. She targeted the black community because at the time, ‘Afrocentrism’ in attire and appearance was valued by the black community. Her Ghanaian

background and the type of clothing she was producing was her competitive advantage into this particular market.

She also benefits from the community-development and self-help sentiments of members of the Hyde Park community. *'I think some of them really want to support a black business. They don't care that I'm African or whatever. They just want to support a black business in the community. And most of them come because it's a damn good product! That's why they come.'* But as I shall also argue below, this notion of her having 'entered' the community from outside can explain why she is very conscious of her role and place in the community, in contrast with the operators of the restaurant, who are largely oblivious to their community roles, owing to the extent of their embeddedness in the Ghanaian community.

It is needless to say, therefore, that she most prefers to do business with her African American customers. As already explained, she has just a few African customers because she thinks they are not good business. And customers of other ethnicities are not any better than the Africans either:

'White people will come here and admire; they don't really spend money. Chinese people will come in and admire, they don't really spend money. My African American customers support me and provide my bread and butter, you know.'

TWO MIGRANT ENTREPRENEURIAL STRATEGIES

What is obvious from the above analysis is that rather than talk about migrant entrepreneurship, we should talk about migrant *entrepreneurships*. We see evidence above confirming many of our expectations from the literature, for instance that migrants will depend heavily on informal community resources for loan, information and other forms of assistance in order to start and run a business (Aldrich and Waldinger 1990; Portes 1998). However, we equally have enough evidence to contradict fundamental assumptions from both the migrant entrepreneurship and the community literature. Rather than depend upon the resources of the coethnics, we see Betty, owner of the garment shop moving away from the community and practically drawing a boundary between her business and the Ghanaian community. And although she develops ties with customers, suppliers and others in the place where the business is

located, she makes strategic use of these ties in ways more akin to *homo economicus* than to the romantic image of the community-conscious migrant entrepreneur.

I argue that RHR is a typical case of a *community-oriented migrant business*. BDB, on the other hand, is a *market-oriented migrant business*. Why do these two businesses differ so much? They are both migrant entrepreneurs, from the same country of origin. Furthermore, even though they operate in different sectors, one in the garment and the other in the food industry, both businesses could be together categorised under a broader umbrella of ‘authenticity industry.’ That is, they provide services with strong ethnic associations and to which customers seeking an ‘authentic’ experience of a particular ethnic goods or services might turn. The difference, therefore, cannot be explained simply by the nature of businesses that they run.

A few explanations could be offered. First, resources matter. This is most crucial in the case of RHR. A restaurant has to satisfy a number of requirements, especially health and sanitation, in order to acquire and maintain a licence. Further, because of standardisation, meeting these requirements go beyond keeping a clean environment; they involve following specific guidelines and going through a lot of paperwork. This could be more than a little frustrating even for those with the requisite background dealing with these bureaucratic entities. For the owners of the restaurant, especially Akos, having limited formal education, and with prior experience in the informal economy in Ghana, going through all these alone could be daunting. Little wonder, then, that *‘we had the friends who guided us on what to do before everything was settled.’*

On the other hand, the owner of BDB could be said to have too much of a good thing. With her educational background, experience dealing with formal firms from her college days, meeting such requirements as the restaurant had to meet would not be a problem for her. Actually, there are very few requirements her shop has to meet relative to the restaurant. Nevertheless, she makes very good use of her human capital, making sure she gets as much help from formal agencies like the Apparel Industry of Board, Inc. (AIBI) that organise events to promote local businesses and also sponsor free training for local entrepreneurs. Armed with such crucial resources, and also not having to depend on the Ghanaian community to start her own business, she could easily move out of the Ghanaian community on the northside of Chicago. In

stark contrast, the owners of the restaurant stick as close as they can to the Ghanaian community and make almost no use of official resources for promoting local businesses:

Kofi *Do you take part in City programmes or events to promote local businesses? The other shop I study takes part in some of those.*

RHR *No, I don't know about it. Maybe it's something new.*

Kofi *It's a fashion show organised by the City, but only for garment manufacturers.*

RHR *For restaurants, there's something called the Taste of Chicago, but we've not been there before. We'll see whether we can join next year.*

Kofi *When do they do the registration?*

RHR *I don't know, I'll have to check.*

A second explanation will turn away from the individual entrepreneurs and the resources at their disposal to the nature of the community in which they are located. And here, it will pay to stress again that although BDB is estranged from the Ghanaian community, it is deeply embedded in community nevertheless, for as we see above, the garment store is as intimately enmeshed in the life of the community in Hyde Park as the restaurant is in the Ghanaian community.

There are differences in the manner in which emotions are expressed in these different communities. Eliasoph and Lichterman (2003) argue that particular groups have distinctive 'styles' by which they express collective representations which might be shared by the wider society. They show through two ethnographic case studies how two groups expressed civic engagement in radically different ways. Especially for the purposes of this analysis, one group expressed themselves through 'timid affiliation,' while the other did so through robust, even uncouth ways. Fine (1979: 734) explains this phenomenon with the concept of '*idioculture*,' which 'stress[es] the localised nature of culture, [and] implies that it need not be part of a demographically distinct subgroup, but rather that it is a particularistic development of any group in the society.'

Related to the *idioculture* concept, Hochschild (1979) has argued that particular styles of emotional expressions are distinctive to particular social groups. She specifically talked about social classes, and maintained that the socialisation process of people from certain classes makes them unsuitable for some occupations because they are unable to appropriately express their emotions within those contexts. In the case of the two groups that I study, this difference in emotional expression is so wide that one entrepreneur, seeking to attract a certain type of

customers, has had to flee that Ghanaian community. As she said, she was bent on running the business '*professionally*,' and any extension of the type of interaction which we witness in the restaurant into her shop will undermine this business strategy.

A Heuristic Device

Above, I have argued that one of my cases be seen as *community-oriented* while the other be considered to be *market-oriented*. The explanations I have advanced thus far might suggest that these are 'pure-types,' with clearly distinguishable empirical referents. But these labels apply only approximately, rather than rigidly. Accordingly I propose that we imagine a continuum from left to right, with 'deeply-embedded enterprises' on one end, and on the other hand, 'fully-atomised enterprises.' The restaurant will be positioned towards the left of the continuum while the garment shop will be positioned towards the right, but none of them quite gets to either extreme end of the continuum. Indeed, as I have argued above, we have both market and community tendencies existing in each field site. Depending on the environmental conditions, as well as the particular mix of resources of the entrepreneur, certain tendencies might come to predominate, even though the other tendencies still remain and contribute to influence the quality and texture of social life in the business.

This qualification is important because upon cursory examination, it might seem that the distinguishing features of these two businesses are water-tight. Indeed, I had earlier thought of BDB as a space for purely business transactions. Over time, however, I found that although the interactions in the shop were not as nosily or exuberant as in at RHR, this did not mean that the store as a site for construction of community and identity was any less salient. For instance, most of the customers I spoke with invoked the trope of 'family' to describe the ties they have developed with Betty and other customers. For them, therefore, as for the Ghanaian customers at the restaurant, the store was a communal space, in addition to being a site for business. Perhaps, this attachment for the African American customers of BDB was even more intense than for the Ghanaians at the restaurant. For them, Betty and her fabrics become the means by which they could become '*connected with the culture of West Africa*' and to become '*spiritually connected*' to their African roots, as one customer noted. Kodjo, the nephew of Betty, told me that in the past, they had organised a couple of tourism trips to Ghana for their customers.

What might seem to be a contradiction would be clarified if we allow that multiple, and sometimes competing goals, may be successfully accommodated within such a setting. In other words, Betty's main goal of turning a profit does not necessarily have to conflict with the desire of her customers to have a community in her shop. Indeed, as she notes above, she ensures that she makes her customers feel at home without hurting profitability. We could go so far as say that she turns this to the benefit of her business, drawing on her image as portraying African authenticity to promote her business. And although her contributions to community could be seen as her 'corporate social responsibility,' or part of a strategy to maintain a positive image in the community (Dolan 2009; Garsten and Hernes 2009), the fact that her children live in the community means that some of her community building efforts are for intrinsic reasons. As a matter of fact, the notion of 'communities of limited liability' emphasise that the connection between the individual and the community is often effected through the family (Janowitz 1952).

At the RHR, we observe that consideration for community does not totally suppress calculations of profitability. For instance, they were aware of the cost involved dealing with Ghanaian suppliers, and were clear that when it came to financial dealings, coethnic solidarity was a weak appeal with these Ghanaian suppliers. Similarly, they were sometimes equally calculating when dealing with customers. For instance, Akos told me that she only sold *shito*¹⁰ to African American customers, '*because Ghanaians will not be willing to pay*' the price that African Americans and white customers paid to buy it. In fact, most of the Ghanaian customers have no idea that she sells *shito*. The price discrimination system that we see operating here is similar to what made Betty leave the Ghanaian community.

These qualifications imply that rather than an either-or approach to analysing businesses, we will be better off seeing them as more or less embedded in their various communities. Similarly, rather than evade the question of the drive for individual maximisation, we need to pay attention to the ways in which this drive is socialised by a variety of 'social devices' (Beckert 1996). And beyond the question of embeddedness, the orientation of a business, which is another important element to consider, should be understood as complexly variable. Such an approach will show that an embedded business is not necessarily a community-oriented one. For

¹⁰ Hot pepper sauce eaten with most Ghanaian dishes.

instance, even though BDB is embedded both socially and spatially in the life of the Hyde Park community,¹¹ it still is market-oriented.

A Theory of Strategic Co-ethnicity

In this paper, I have outlined the features of two entrepreneurial approaches of migrant businesses. The *community-oriented* approach privileges pleasant interactions over profit-seeking, although this does not mean that the profit motive is totally absent. The *market-oriented* approach is built on a more explicitly instrumental foundation, although we also see that even here, community sentiments are present, and may even possess intrinsic value for both entrepreneurs and customers. Even though they are not as explicit, or maybe even conscious of it, the owners of the restaurant are also dependent on the Ghanaian community.

The notion of *strategic co-ethnicity* might be a useful conceptual tool to help us understand how migrant entrepreneurs develop their social networks and use the social capital arising from these. A rational choice explanation may interpret these actions in cynical terms, as solely an attempt by the individual entrepreneur to gain as much personal advantage as possible by incurring the least cost possible. Indeed, as Hechter (1987: 42, 44) puts it:

‘The greater the extensiveness of obligation, the greater the tax that members must pay to consume the joint good... A rational member will seek membership in a group only if the benefit derived from access to the joint good exceeds the cost of the obligations- that is, the member’s share of the costs of producing that good... If they could obtain [the desired good adequately] at less cost... by joining (or forming) a different ... association, then it would be rational for members to desert the first group and “vote with their feet.”’

Integrating this rational choice explanation with a community approach will help us to elaborate an explanation based on *strategic co-ethnicity*. Hunter’s (2007) three dimensions of community suggests that the ties that connect people and the values, norms and culture that a group hold could be as important as the locational requirement of community. Since BDB is deeply intertwined in the local institutional matrix of Hyde Park, and because of the complex ties to members of the community that Akos has developed, the store is as much a part of the community as RHR is to the Ghanaian community. As I have also argued above, both businesses operate in a manner consistent with the culture of the communities in which they are located. RHR has more explicit markers like *adinkra symbols*, Ghanaian carvings and highlife music that

¹¹ Ironically, not in the Hyde Park community where it is more proximally located.

function as symbols of Ghanaian identity; at BDB, the symbolic attachment to the community is achieved through the very person of Betty, her Ghanaian nationality, and other indicators of West African authenticity like paintings from Nigeria.

Although all the dimensions of community are evident in these cases, a shift of focus from the territorial basis of community to the social network dimension will highlight one issue: *the intentionality of community*. Scholars have noted that especially in contemporary times, individuals are reaching beyond the bounds of locality to create their communities. As Hunter notes, 'the local community is but one component of collective life alongside more intimate associations of family and friends and more distant linkages to occupations, formal organisations, and locally transcendent institutions of numerous kinds' (Hunter 2007, 26). In these 'communities of limited liability' (Corcoran 2008; Hunter and Suttles 1972), it is argued that 'individuals will rationally invest in their local communities (socially with time, money, and effort, and psychologically with identity and identification) only to the limited degree that they perceive they are receiving valued benefits from their engagement in local community' (Hunter 2007, 26).

Here, the juxtaposition of individual interests with those of the community does not inevitably lead to tensions. What some studies that uphold romantic notions of community fail to note are empirical findings that 'people in distress are supported by some, but not all, affiliative links' (Schreiber and Glidewell 1978, 442). In this regard, it is noteworthy that Betty did not choose to target Whites as her customer base, but rather African Americans. Apart from the fact that they provided a ready market for her business, this was also a community that she could somehow claim membership in by invoking Pan-African 'brotherhood' that embraces the entire African diaspora.

It should be stressed, however, that strategic coethnicity operates differently in different businesses. At the boutique, this is more overt, partly because of the intentionality of her presence in the community. It is less obvious at the restaurant because the restaurant, and its owners, form an organic part of the Ghanaian community. However, the strategising aspects of their relations with different members of the community start to emerge when they talk about the advantages and disadvantages of transacting with Ghanaians versus other ethnics, and in the

price-discrimination motivation that informs Akos' decision to sell *shito* to African Americans and Whites but not to Ghanaians.

CONCLUSION

I started this paper with sceptical remarks about romantic conceptualisations of community. It is often assumed that community, and the social networks and social capital that they consist of, will yield benefits for members, especially for migrants. We are made to believe that migrants will, therefore, heavily depend upon these ties (Bashi 2007) and draw on social capital from the migrant community when they desire to start a business (Portes 1998). What I have argued, however, is that to better appreciate the way in which a business community resources are utilised by migrant entrepreneurs, we will have to pay attention to the individual entrepreneurs themselves, and the set of resources at their disposal, as well as their communities and the manner in which the business is embedded in these communities. As I have shown in this paper, the attributes of some entrepreneurs, like amount of formal educational and formal business experiences, have implications for the type of strategies that they develop to run their businesses. However, the communities in which they are located furnish a context which provides opportunities as well as constraints for the strategies they adopt.

Drawing on rational choice theory and the notion of communities of limited liability, I have proposed a theory of *strategic co-ethnicity*. Entrepreneurs inevitably have to depend on a number of ties to further the ends of their businesses. For migrant entrepreneurs, this strategic use of social networks might be even more crucial considering that many lack the ready access to the range of formal resources accessible to citizens. But community is a desirable end in itself, thus entrepreneurs will have to balance the demands of community and business logics. This could be resolved in a number of ways. The two cases I present here provide two means by which migrant businesses can be organised to resolve this tension.

Depending on the type of business that an entrepreneur wants to run, the community could either be a safety *net* or (a bed of) *nettles*. For the RHR, the Ghanaian community was a safety *net*, but the very character of the community which makes it a net for the restaurant makes it *nettles* for BDB. What I have shown, therefore, is that the way social capital is deployed and

what effect it yields are mediated by the distinctive nature of the community or the social networks from which it derives, as well as the particular characteristics of the beneficiaries and the resources at their disposal. Arguments about the benefits or costs of social capital and of community are not necessarily wrong. As I have shown, they are the right answers to the wrong question. A better way of addressing the issue is by looking both at the nature of the communities and networks from which social capital emanates and the attributes of the beneficiaries of these capitals.

A particularly interesting line of further research which ought to be taken up following the findings and arguments of this paper concerns the question of possibility versus probability of outcomes. One of the cases in this research provides evidence supporting expectations from the literature about the beneficial outcomes of community resources for migrant businesses. But we have equally observed another entrepreneur who flinches from the migrant community in order to develop a business which is oriented toward the market. This paper contributes to the literature by showing that it is possible to have migrant entrepreneurs who deliberately avoid coethnics as a business strategy. As I have already noted, these two strategies are just two possible configurations; what makes these two cases interesting is that they lean towards two different ends of a continuum and provide us with a suggestion of other possibilities. But then *possibilities* are not necessarily *probabilities*. In a distribution of migrant businesses, which are the strategies that are more likely to be prevalent? This is a question which falls beyond the scope of this paper. A study involving a vast sample of businesses will be better positioned to answer this question. Intimations from the economic sociology literature suggest that this is a potentially fruitful research avenue. Brian Uzzi's (1997, 1999) studies of mainstream business firms show that successful ones maintain a mix of close and arms-length ties. It is, therefore, likely that exclusive reliance on strict transactional relationships is a rarity, even for formal firms. This indicates the existence of a potentially diverse enough distribution of migrant entrepreneurial strategies depending on their embeddedness and utilisation of community resources, making possible future efforts to categorise and typologise entrepreneurial approaches.

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