

The struggle to belong
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**Contested masculinities – Immigrant entrepreneurs from Nigeria
and Ghana in Northern German Cities**
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1. Introduction

This paper presents a case study on the experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian men who migrated to Hamburg and Bremen and are pursuing business activities there. By presenting a typical narrative from an interview and a generally well-known story I provide insights into the goals that are pursued by establishing a business, and analyze how gendered identifications and gendered strategies of success are renegotiated and challenged in the context of migration and urban labor market integration. My considerations are based upon an approach to social geography (Weichhart 2008) that uses the theoretical considerations of E.E. Boesch's symbolic action theory (Boesch 1991) to interpret human actions in a socio-spatial context. This theory looks at different aspects of the meaning of action and enlarges earlier theoretical concepts of action: First, action implies goal orientation, albeit there is no single goal triggering one single action: Concrete goals are over-determined by other goals of higher importance like e.g. goals connected to identity construction. This concept of over-determination is of major theoretical importance: Because of it, actions are inherently polyvalent: they have multiple dimensions of meaning. Furthermore, the interaction between an individual and the world has major implications for the people involved: It continuously builds up the potential for further action and also leads to the progressive structuring both of the individual identity and that of the social partner. I thus argue for social geography to take into account that human action in social space is inherently connected to identity construction.

My focus here is on the experiences of immigrant entrepreneurs in Hamburg and Bremen. Considering immigrants and entrepreneurs is important in the debate around reconstructing gender identities and gender relations for a variety of reasons. Migration research shows that immigrants are often simultaneously incorporated into local, national and transnational social fields (Glick Schiller et al. 2004) and renegotiate their ethnic and gender identities according to the different contexts in these spaces. At the same time, they shape the character of these spaces through their actions. The labor market is a main space of action where masculinities are acted out, so I argue that the inclusion into a local or transnational labor market as an entrepreneur matters for masculine identity construction. Entrepreneurs, on their part, have to continuously redefine their business ideas as 'special', 'innovative' and 'different' to succeed on the market; they have to constructively use public representations and at the same time surprise and contest usual expectations to gain popularity and visibility (Bröckling 2007:68-75). Thus, in researching immigrant entrepreneurs, I expect varied and complex renegotiations of gender and – in an intersectional perspective – ethnicity and cultural otherness.

But why do I foreground the topic of masculinities when researching immigrant entrepreneurship? There are two main reasons for this which I will briefly explain in the following section.

The first one is a classical reason when dealing with qualitative data in the social sciences. Qualitative social research is about being open and receptive towards the concerns of the people that we do research with (Silverman 2006). At first, I was interested in migration and entrepreneurship – and how people become entrepreneurs in the country of immigration. Then, when I did narrative biographical interviews (Schütze 1983) with different immigrant entrepreneurs from Nigeria and Ghana in different German cities, some of the male entrepreneurs started elaborating on how "being a man" was not easy for them. So I took this

observation as a starting point for further analysis. In the process of comparative analysis of my research data, I moved on to comparing and contrasting their narratives with relevant theoretical literature as well as other scholar's empirical results. So my first reason for focusing on masculinities is grounded in my data.

My second reason for focusing on masculinities points to the theoretical value of delving deeper into specifically male experiences in space. Geographical and more generally social science knowledge production has for a long time considered male experiences as universal and has frequently overlooked specifically female points of view (Monk & Hanson 1982; Rose 2003; Hopkins & Noble 2009). This male bias has been thoroughly challenged by feminist researchers and it has been widely accepted that analyzing the connections between space, place and identity is an important research perspective (van Hoven & Hörschelmann 2005:2–6). However, in this process, gender has oftentimes been confounded to mean only women (Miescher 2005) and thus there has been a notable lack of attention to the formation of masculine identities and spaces as gendered. Where, in migration research, men have been overrepresented in samples and among the people interviewed in qualitative research designs, their experiences are usually presented as “normal” and “the typical migrant case” whereas the women's experiences are taken to be influenced by gender orders. This is the case for example in Martin's research (Martin 2005) on Ghanaian educational migrants. In her detailed and thoughtful study, she analyses the “migration experience” in general using mostly men as her examples, and adds a chapter on “gender specific experiences and expectations” focusing on women. Furthermore, in a critique of feminist studies, McDowell (2001:182) points to the fact that oftentimes, studies focusing on female experiences have used a universalized and stereotypical male experience as a background against which multiple and contested femininities were constructed. She emphasizes: “masculinity, too, is an uncertain and provisional project, subject to change and redefinition” (ibid.).

Therefore, the study of masculinity as a gendered category of experience adds important theoretical insights to the growing body of literature in gender studies. But not only that: Studying masculinities in the context of immigration to urban centers and the positioning of immigrants in the urban labor market is part of a more ambitious project of tracing social change. Meuser (2006:13) stresses that the fact alone that men start talking about “being a man” indicates that assurances and convictions about gender orders are being contested in the given context. It is this theoretical assumption that adds importance to the above mentioned empirical reason for focusing on masculinities in the context of my research.

After outlining the rationale for my focus in this paper, I will now move on to a short overview of the theoretical framework of masculinity that I use in my research. After that, Bremen and Hamburg as targets of Nigerian and Ghanaian immigration and some gendered settlement patterns are discussed. To explain methodological challenges faced when doing fieldwork with and interviewing Nigerian and Ghanaian men, I present a short introduction to my methodological concerns in chapter 4. As my research is still work in progress, but already based on 1-3 months fieldwork periods in Hamburg (1 month, 2005) and Bremen (2 months, 2011) as well as Leipzig (1 month 2005) and Chemnitz (3 months, 2009); I can reflect on several periods of intensive fieldwork. In chapter 5, I will present my results that will focus on the above mentioned socio-spatial constructions of masculinities among Nigerian and Ghanaian immigrant entrepreneurs.

2. Theoretical Considerations: Masculinities, Work and Migration

From a theoretical perspective, I use Connell's (1995:71) definition as a starting point:

"Masculinity, to the extent the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture."

Connell acknowledges the temporal contingency of masculinities and Berg & Longhurst (2003:352) additionally stress their geographical specificity. Thus, masculinity can be seen a result of diverse practices, relations and contexts, "which come together in the structuring of identity in different times and spaces" (Berg & Longhurst 2003:352), that is always constructed in a relational manner (Wastl-Walter 2010:42; Meuser 2006:13). Relationality, however, should not be understood to mean that masculinities are only constructed in relation to femininities, but also that there are competing masculinities which are structured in relations of dominance (Hopkins & Noble 2009:812). This is emphasized in Connell's idea of the plurality of masculinities (Connell 2005). Connell (2005:56-82) elaborates on the social organization of masculinity, stressing the power relations in which gender identities are lived. He introduces the concept of hegemonic masculinity that he defines as the configuration of gender practice which embodies

"the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women." (Connell 2005:77)

Furthermore, Connell introduces three different non-hegemonic positions inside masculinities: subordination, complicity and marginalization. He takes subordination to mean that some men (e.g. homosexual men) are culturally stigmatized but also subordinated by quite some material practices. Complicity means that most men, even though they may not meet some culturally normative standards, gain from their position of hegemony as men, they benefit from the patriarchal dividend, the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women (Connell 2005:79). Connell's fourth category of social organization is that of marginalization. Here, he refers to the positions of masculinities in subordinated classes or ethnic groups, whereas the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group enjoys processes of authorization.

It has to be considered, though, that Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity has been formulated for western, industrial societies and that we have to be careful to transfer it to other gender relations in transnational social spaces that include African societies as a context of out-migration but also as a continuous frame of reference. It is also necessary not to overlook the inherent dynamism in gender relations (see e.g. the critique of Connell's concept in African Gender Studies (Cornwall & Lindisfarne 1994)). However, as we always need to be watchful not to summarize divergent empirical cases under a theoretical umbrella that does not fit them, I will carefully use some concepts as a frame of comparison that have been elaborated in the context of western industrial societies with a bourgeois hegemonic class. Since the values and concepts that shape western gender ideals and practices have interacted with Western African concepts not only through migration patterns but also throughout colonial times, through missionary and NGO work, I argue that these concepts are not completely "foreign" to use in my field of research.

As a general theoretical frame I use the ethnomethodological approach to *doing gender*: masculinity in a social sense is not achieved through biological attributes of a person, but it must be constructed by performing certain actions: Men and women have to act in certain ways to be accepted by relevant others as men and women (Meuser 2007:15). Furthermore, Meuser (2006:312) has found that one of the main strategies of men's *doing gender* includes rendering the gendered nature of male action invisible and thus universalizing the male experience. In a framework of unquestioned universalism, men are hardly questioned in their habitual security: They know how to act to be accepted as a man and in the context of industrial modern societies this unquestioned habitual security usually rests upon a professional career and the role of a material provider for the family (Meuser 2007:35). It is this position of the man in the family, in a marriage, that is very important for male identity construction. Marriage is a social arena in which cultural norms of hegemonic masculinity are acted out in everyday interaction. Meuser also points to the fact that the structure of the relationship towards the spouse is a decisive factor to determine whether masculinity is seen as unquestionable or a biographical problem (Meuser 2006:103). As I have shown, the world of work is a social arena that is usually interdependent with the family. Here, several studies have shown that general processes of labor market restructuring result in more precarious job opportunities especially for young working class men but not in a reduced importance of work for male identities (McDowell 2002; Batnitzky, McDowell & Dyer 2009).

Taking habitual security as a main characteristic of men's *doing gender* migration can be seen as one possible challenge to this security: Immigrants are confronted with differing normative gender interaction orders in the host society, often with questions about their position in the family, and about the norms of public self-presentation, but also with complicated issues of labor market inclusion. Thus, as Datta et al. (Datta u.a. 2009) have argued, migration entails a constant reworking of masculinity between gender ideologies of the homeland and country of settlement as well as a renegotiation of work and social life within changing networks of family and employment. This renegotiation is often difficult and challenging, as further research shows (Charsley 2005; Mungai & Pease 2009; Prömper u.a. 2010). As I will argue in my analysis, the experience of migration and the situation of belonging to different socio-spatial contexts - local, national, transnational - makes 'being a man' a discursive topic, an issue that is no more unquestionable. In this way, migration may seem somehow risky for masculinities, but research has also shown that in some cultures, migration has become a *rite de passage* that actually forms masculine identities, possibly because migration is usually connected to the accumulation of social and economic resources used for other actions that symbolize responsible masculinities like getting married, building a house for ageing parents and the like (Monsutti 2007; Miescher 2005).

3. Nigerian and Ghanaian immigration to Hamburg and Bremen – gendered patterns of settlement

Hamburg and Bremen are two northern German harbour cities with a long tradition of trade and migration. Hamburg even has a tradition of trade with Ghana that goes back to colonial times. The competition between the two cities and their harbours is somewhat a recurring topic in local media, even though they compete on very different levels – with 547,352 inhabitants (31.12.2008), Bremen is far smaller than Hamburg (1,786,278; 30.11.2010) and does not have the international reputation as a metropolis and the long-term demographic

growth tendencies that Hamburg enjoys. As for migration from Ghana, Hamburg is the city with the largest Ghanaian population of Ghanaian descent in Germany, one quarter of all Ghanaian nationals registered in Germany (5,673 of 20,392; 31.12.2007, Melderegister) lives in Hamburg. As for Nigerians, 1,238 of the 17,903 Nigerians registered in Germany live in Hamburg. Nigerians and Ghanaians are the two largest groups of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa in Germany. Additionally, the number of Nigerians has seen a strong increase between 2004 and 2008 (with +12.5 % the highest increase among sub-Saharan Africans). Furthermore, some immigrant organizations claim that there are another 2000 illegalized Ghanaian migrants in Hamburg. For Nigerians just as for the situation in Bremen, to my knowledge, there are no estimations published, but the numbers may also be considerable. Generally, in a large city like Hamburg, the opportunity structures for undocumented migrants should not be underestimated. In Bremen, however, the opportunity to reside there as an undocumented migrant has become connected to a local narrative of identity for the city. When I asked about the reasons for African migration to Bremen, I was confronted with the image of Bremen as a very liberal and left-wing city – I was told that in the beginning of the 1990ies, undocumented migrants could stay in Bremen without being bothered by racial profiling activities that were common in other cities. In Bremen, there are 964 Ghanaians and 464 Nigerians registered (31.12.2008; Melderegister), so the numbers in Bremen are much smaller. However, another 900 people with a Ghanaian background and 374 people with a Nigerian background have been naturalized in Bremen (31.12.2008; Statistisches Landesamt Bremen).

From the figures alone, one can detect some gender differences between the two groups, as I have summarized in the following table:

Hamburg	Nigeria	Ghana
Male	860 (ca. 69 %)	2,763 (ca. 48 %)
Female	370 (ca. 31 %)	2,910 (ca. 52 %)
Bremen	Nigeria	Ghana
Male	308 (ca. 66%)	449 (ca. 47 %)
Female	156 (ca. 33 %)	515 (ca. 53 %)

Table 1: Male and Female Nigerian and Ghanaian Nationals in Hamburg and Bremen.

Source: Melderegister, Statistisches Landesamt Bremen, figures for Hamburg: 31.12.2007, for Bremen 31.12.2008

Sub-Saharan African migration to Germany tends to be male-dominated, which is clearly evident for Nigerians, but the figures seem to be reversed in the Ghanaian case. There are different explanations for this. The first one relies on a view of Ghanaian women as more emancipated than other women from Africa and thus more likely to migrate. This view portrays Ghana as a very modern society when it comes to the status of women in the country. At the same time it points to traditional matrilineal societal structures among Akan societies of Southern Ghana. Especially women traders are considered to be financially independent and likely to pursue independent migration. Nieswand (2008:103) reports that several of the female pioneer migrants he met during his fieldwork were women from trading

families. The second reason is the relatively long migration history that Ghana has. Migration statistics indicate that the majority of Ghanaian pioneer migrants were men and the increase in the share of women occurred with a temporal delay because they depended on men to sponsor their migration after they had established themselves in the country of destination (Nieswand 2008:103). Ghanaian men often married women with German passports or a legal residence permit to secure their status in Germany in the 80ies and 90ies, but these marriages have tended to break apart after some years and the male migrants' remarriages resulted in marriage migration of Ghanaian women – and thus an increase in the number of Ghanaian women in Germany. An interview partner in Nieswand's study (2008:127) described it a bit laxly, but very vividly:

At the parties at the beginning [the late 1980s] we were sometimes fifty-fifty; Germans fifty and Ghanaians fifty. Then we became about seventy percent Ghanaians and thirty percent Germans. When you go now to a Ghanaian party, it is one hundred and five percent Ghanaians because the intermarriage with Germans has stopped. Before, we were forced to marry here in order to get papers. Now, they pick their wife from home and, I mean, there is the difference. (IT Ralph Boakye, 02.05.02, Berlin).

But why should there now be more Ghanaian women than men? I argue that this is a statistical effect of gendered patterns of naturalisation. In Bremen, for example, almost 500 men from Ghana were naturalised according to local statistics, whereas only 400 women became German citizens. Because naturalisation requires – among other things – a certain amount of years of residence before it can be realised, the male pioneer migrants naturally have an edge over the women to change their status. In the case of Nigerians, the male-dominated pattern and also the strong increase in numbers during the past years indicates that migration from Nigeria to Germany started later than migration from Ghana (Hillmann & Goethe 2008:10) and is still going on as pioneer-migration. My own observations point to the fact that there are still quite a number of “newer” German-Nigerian bicultural marriages. It is thus in the context of these bicultural relationships that Nigerian men construct masculine identities.

Labor market integration of men and women from Anglophone West-Africa in Hamburg and Bremen, as for migrants in general, is a difficult issue, unemployment is high among people from sub-Saharan African descent in Germany in general (23 % for the male, 21 % for the female population in 2007, Hillmann & Goethe 2008 23). From 2007 micro census data it can also be shown that the percentage of people who are not active in the labor force (neither employed nor unemployed and looking for a job) among sub-Saharan Africans is much higher than the figures for people without a migratory background (age group 25-35: 39,9 %, age group 35-45: 20 %) (Hillmann & Goethe 2008:22). Reasons for this are both the lack of secure residence permits, specific qualifications and language skills for the highly regulated German labor market as well as general preferences for native German applicants. Only 28 % of the Ghanaian nationals and 24 % of Nigerian nationals have jobs that are subject so social insurance contribution (Prothmann 2009: 70), there is only a small number of professional medical doctors, lawyers etc. Most others do jobs that can be described as dirty, difficult and dangerous (McIntyre 2004): They work in the harbor, as cleaners, and in restaurants. In Bremen, a number of Nigerians works in the Mercedes production plant that is located there. However, industrial jobs are declining due to a general restructuring of the urban labor market and jobs become more and more precarious. Often, migrants can only find odd jobs in the service sector, e.g. cleaning, called *Aprapra* Jobs in Twi. Especially

women from Ghana and Nigeria that come to Germany to join their husbands have hardly any chance to enter even this part of the labor market because they usually soon have children and are thus facing difficulties to get employed on these grounds (“What if your child will be sick?”). Furthermore, there are two strong stereotypical images that usually rely on skin color for their relevance and represent highly gender-specific activities: Men from sub-Saharan Africa are often suspected to be drug dealers and women to be sex workers, if they move about in certain parts of the cities. While the issue of drug dealing is an openly discussed topic (even a group of Africans trying to launch a public event for Africans and Germans made jokes about it), sex work is a topic that is largely silenced among the West-African community itself and rather discussed among Germans wanting to help the women involved in such work. Among West-Africans, it is especially the Nigerian community that is known for its involvement with international drug trafficking, which is also evident from criminal statistics (Bundeskriminalamt 2010:221–222). Among Nigerians, however, these activities are further localized, or rather, ethnicized: Nigerians usually claim that it is the “people from the East”, e.g. the Igbo people that are active in these sectors of the underground economy. This situation adds to a general suspicion towards sub-Saharan Africans and Nigerians in particular, even though it is only a very small number of people actually involved in such activities.

4. Methodological Considerations

In this chapter, I present my methodological guidelines and a reflection on my own position as a researcher in the field. However much any researcher tries to develop multiple perspectives on a topic and a very close reading of the data, his or her results will continue to depend on his/her own positioning in the field. When researchers enter into the social context they want to learn more about, they change the situation, they are participants in the interaction that they want to study (Kahn 2009). This fact cannot be stressed enough and needs to be reflected upon in any study involving fieldwork as a method. Thus, data and knowledge production in a fieldwork context always depends on the person of the researcher.

In ethnographic fieldwork validity is achieved not through standardization of methods or data construction. In contrast, reliability and significance of a datum is “guaranteed by the ethnographers’ broader knowledge of the cultural context in which it is embedded” (Nieswand 2008:13). As Nieswand (2008:13) further explains, meaningful connections of different types of data and the embodied knowledge of the researcher are thus instrumental in achieving intersubjective plausibility of the fieldwork results. In this sense, ethnographic and qualitative data are meant to represent a deep and multifaceted understanding of a social situation (Glick Schiller 2003:116). Furthermore, triangulation (Flick 2004) of different types of data gives the researcher an opportunity to look at a social phenomenon from different perspectives and to get more differentiated results. This means applying a method-mix for the research process. In my ongoing research, I combine ethnographic fieldwork with different kinds of informal and formal interviews, I observe internet forum discussions and business network meetings, as well as mass media representations in newspapers, magazines and television.

As for my own position in the field, I will reflect on four different issues: 1. being a white German, 2. being a woman, 3. being a university student, and 4. being the wife of a Nigerian and a mother of two Nigerian-German kids. All these different social identities have repercussions on which spaces of interaction I can enter as a member and in which spaces I will be considered an outsider. Furthermore, the social categories of whiteness, gender, social status and marital situation, even if reflected upon partly separately below, cannot be separated from each other: The lines of difference intersect and are inevitably interdependent (Yuval-Davis 2009:51). Further, I see these categories as social constructions depending on the specific social situations that I am acting within – thus, it can already be considered as one of the results of my study that these lines of difference seem to matter.

1. As a white German, I have to reflect my position as a member of the hegemonial group in a critical way (Castro Varela 2007). Not surprisingly, in my research, I am often met with the suspicion that I could be a police informant or some other official person trying to “find something to destroy the business” of the people that have set up shop in Germany. In the course of my research, I was continually confronted with a discourse of insecurity: That black businesspeople were not safe, the German government could decide arbitrarily to try to get rid of them and would consequently succeed in finding minor (e.g. tax or Meldepflicht) offences to shut down the respective businesses (during my time of research in Chemnitz, officials actually shut down a shop in Dessau after the shop owner had joined left-wing political campaigns). In this discursive context, phone tapping and other highly intrusive police surveillance tactics were usually considered to be ubiquitous. Thus, if I entered Ghanaian or Nigerian shops that are often seen as points of refuge and socializing (Prothmann 2009) and as potentially safe spaces (Ellerbe-Dueck 2011) that provide a break from everyday racist experiences in the wider German society (Goffman 2007:31) my entrance into these spaces makes them potentially less “safe” and changes the atmosphere. That remains the case as long as the people in the shop know no further details about me as a person and I have not yet been incorporated into networks of trust and reciprocity (cf. point 3 and 4). Furthermore, as noted by Nieswand (2008:10), interviews seemed to remind some migrants of interrogations by German state officials and they react to this by an avoidance of interview situations or Germany by keeping the answers short and simple and leaving out certain events like the actual process of migration. Additionally, there seems to be a particular Ghanaian or Nigerian ‘culture of silence’ about experiences perceived as problematic or painful – especially towards me as a white German representative of the majority society, and a young woman, because of gender- and seniority principles. The last point has already shown that the different lines of differentiation intersect and thus I want to move on to point number two.
2. Being a woman I am usually seen as an outsider in the homosocial spaces of masculine identity construction like drinking spots or Kiosks, Internet cafés, barbing saloons or Afroshops. As I know from other studies (Prothmann 2009) and from my own interviews about these gatherings, these places are important for masculine identity construction and men speak about the houses they built in Ghana/Nigeria, business plans and also about their relationships with women. As a woman I thus cannot take part in these gatherings without triggering very different kinds of conversations, like e.g. flirtative approaches.

3. As a university student, I am generally considered to be of an upper class position and since education is highly valued in Ghana (Nieswand 2008) and also in Nigeria, people usually first approach me with some respect and also distance. There are usually some demands for reciprocity when people spend time with me as for interviews and longer periods of discussing my research (see also Lentz 2003). That is where I as a student was sometimes asked to be a lesson teacher for children, which I have accepted to build trust with some families. In this way, I was able to enter the space of the home of some families without being out of place because I had a social role that was acceptable for everybody.
4. When my research partners get to know that I am married to a Nigerian with two children, their first reaction is often filled with joy: They take me as part of their group (“our wife”) and I have a good immediate connection. Also, with my private ties “into the field”, fieldwork and private visits to Afrosshops etc. cannot be separated, so I am not the typical “lonely fieldworker”. Furthermore, the children can be instrumental in opening avenues of discussion, especially with women, that would otherwise have been closed, e.g. about practical aspects of mothering and working. But especially for men who have had bad experiences with white women in their own relationships, I represent e.g. the “bad German woman” they had to depend on for their papers and thus experience very reserved reactions as well. Generally, my interview partners also try to assess my own family situation, ask me questions, comment on our sharing of housework and my activities as a researcher (“ah, these days women do all the things that men do”). Furthermore, my interview partners usually want to meet my husband, to know if he is trustworthy or not. As Nieswand (2008:144) described, there is a certain discourse of mistrust among Ghanaians and the same is true for Nigerians: People suspect fellow countrymen and –women to intend to “pull them down” or to “destroy their personality”, if they allow themselves to come too close to the wrong people. Thus, telling the wife of a fellow Nigerian something about yourself is potentially even more risky than telling an outsider something (I already elaborated on the risks of opening up to outsiders). If my research partners allow me to get close to them, this means that they allow my husband to get close to them as well (because they will rightly suspect that I would discuss matters with him), thus they have to know if he is trustworthy. Fortunately my husband is also a student, so that the risk of him “stealing the business idea” of the person I talked to was considered quite low, but I did experience reservations on this ground.

As a summary, my position in the field is shaped by intersectional attributions and embedded into gendered as well as racialized power structures. In this way, reflecting upon my own position in the field already takes me towards my results and my own experiences serve as invaluable frames of comparison for interpreting my data.

5. Results of the Case studies: Masculinity matters

In the following two case studies I focus upon the goals that are connected to setting up a business in Hamburg or Bremen and stress how these goals and motivations are connected to overreaching goals of masculine identity construction, just as Boesch’s (1991) theory suggests.

The first quotation is taken from an interview with a 35-year old man from South-Eastern Nigeria who has set up a small shop selling HipHop Clothes and offering Call Center services. He has come to Germany “illegally” as he called it in the interview, and discovered that to secure his status in Germany for a while; he had to “go through the process of asylum of a thing”. During his time as an asylum seeker, he met his wife-to-be and they had a child that was around one year old at the time of the interview. Through his fiancée’s acceptance of shared custody for the child he was able to get a temporary residence permit that also allowed him to formally set up a business. I asked him how he came up with the idea of actually setting up a shop like this. And he answered

“How I came, ahm, I came up with the idea, by telling my woman, but my woman find it very difficult.” (John Chima, Nigeria)

In this small sentence, it becomes clear that there was no lengthy decision making process involved in setting up the shop – rather, there was a lengthy discussion process with his fiancée, whom he calls his wife throughout the interview. Later in the interview it becomes clear that Mr. Chima did not see any job opportunities on the local labor market because he saw how many foreigners, even those with permanent residence permits, had problems finding a job. Further, he refers to others whom he does not want to join because they are selling drugs.

He continues like this:

“So how can you make it? And even the time I’m starting this business, though she supported me, but you know a white person. How can a black man. Will you achieve this thing? And you know that ah business is not so easy like that to/ to cope up with it.” (IT John Chima)

In this short passage, Mr. Chima frequently changes the footing (Goffman 2005) of his talk: He animates his fiancée’s voice to show her attitude towards his project of setting up a business: She questions his ability to achieve success in business. When he introduces her voice at first, he categorizes her as “my wife”, who “finds it very difficult” and quotes her: “how can you make it?” The second time of quoting her, he introduces her as a “white person” who will naturally doubt his abilities to succeed in business: “How can a black man.” Thus, he puts her doubts towards the business or her risk-averseness in a frame of explanation that shows how much racism and racist ideologies are perceived to be at work even in intimate relationships. His identification as a man gives the racist stigma an extra turn: As a man, he expects himself to work in a respectable job, to do respectable things to provide for his family, to protect the image of his family, to represent the family. Mr. Chima calls all this “to play his part” with the result “to get respect”, as he says later in the interview:

“So, for me not to do what, because in a family like this. Yeah? If a man does not play his part, as a man, he become a fool, but if a man play his part as a man, he get respect. Understand? The reason why I ran, I do. Because of me, because some people are here with their residential visa, with their residential permit, understand? And they are not doing anything. Understand? The next thing they will do they will join one group/ group of doing/ committing one crime or the other. So for me not to/ avoid it. Because if you are a man if you are doing anything in this world, first of all try to protect the image of your family. Understand? For me to protect the image of my family, is what makes me to THINK. That let me find something. So let/ let this young girl that I’m married to, have future, and let my daughter have future.” (John Chima)

Therefore, racist prejudices and racist barriers towards fulfilling these roles question his ability to fulfill his duties as a man as he perceives them. This makes the narrative of proving all racist prejudices wrong a narrative of asserting his masculinity as well: Setting up a legal business successfully means providing for the family and at the same time avoiding all illegal activities. This story of succeeding and proving one's masculine identity can be taken as a mythicising narrative. Mythicising narratives or mythico-histories are concrete and narratively condensed stories, which are used as incidental evidence for the validity of a general identity discourse (Nieswand & Vogel 2000:168–169, quoted after Nieswand 2008:135). It evidences the general identity discourse that a “black” man can be accepted and respected in a “white” world and by his “white” wife, if he is successful and fulfills certain expectations as a man, but will be a “fool” and completely marginalized, even in his own family, if he does not. Identity discourses on national, gender, ethnic or racialized groups stabilize identifications and organize identity discourses on ‘how to be a successful member of such-and-such identity group’.

Evidence of the fact that this narrative is embedded in more general narratives of identity can be taken from a generalized story that I heard twice during my fieldwork in Hamburg, when I spoke with other Nigerian men together with my husband. The story goes like this:

“This man, in Hamburg, he really made it! He came as an asylum seeker. Then this white woman he met, she really loved him, but she was underage. She was still 17. All the people around her, also her parents, were against the relationship. They told her: What do you want with a black man, an asylum seeker? But the woman stayed with him and as soon as she turned 18, they got married and they had a child. He got his stay and found a job. Then, after some time he told her that he wanted to open up a business and that he needed her help for the loan. That was really difficult for her and she was afraid. But he succeeded, and was able to pay back the loan very fast. He really made it and became rich! Now, he has bought her a Jeep and you can see this small white lady driving this huge car like that. Also, her parents have now accepted him as her husband; they do not give him trouble anymore.” (Field Protocol)

The impression that I got from hearing the story twice was that through re-narration it had already been condensed and transformed into a mythical narrative: It contained several generalized identifications or ‘types’ of persons (the racist German parents in law, the doubtful German wife when it comes to setting up a business, the Nigerian man succeeding against all odds and proving all doubtful people wrong). As a moral discourse, it motivates the German wives to trust in their men's business ventures and to stay with them until they succeed. For the West-African men, in turn, it gives them the moral guideline to strive for success to get rid of racialized and status-dependent aversions from his German family in law. It also motivates the men to try to achieve success to reward their German wives for staying with them against all odds and against the wishes of their parents (which is something they would generally not expect from a woman in their country of origin).

As for the similarities between the two stories and in the general situation of other Nigerians and Ghanaians, I have argued above that marrying a German citizen or a person with a residence permit is often the only way to get the legal right to stay in Germany. This is the case especially for asylum seekers, because the quota of people who are granted asylum is generally very low and both Ghana and Nigeria are by now considered safe countries of origin. Both John Chima and the man in the ‘story’ married native Germans out of a position

as asylum seekers. Thus, they depended on the women for their right to a residence permit as well as for their social and economic wellbeing and integration. Often, men in such situations have to put up with a female breadwinner model that is usually not considered as ideal by both partners in a binational relationship (Menz 2008). This position of dependency has been discussed at length in relation to women that migrate for family reunion (Han 2003: 227). Thus, also in western academic research such a position of dependency is connected to femininity. If my research partners see such a position as a challenge to their male habitual security, this is not a particularly 'Nigerian' or even 'African' perception of the situation. This insight may be a hint to be careful not to interpret the men's narratives on the basis of having to navigate between gender orders of their native country and the country of arrival only: As have argued, the challenge to these men's habitual security is oftentimes mainly connected to their marginalized position in relation to other men of native German descent (Connell 2005) on the labor market. Connected to this position on the labor market are the challenges in the family that include perceptions of white female dominance and black male dependency.

To summarize, I have shown that successful labor market inclusion is one very important aspect of masculine identity construction for immigrant men from Nigeria and Ghana. Thus, the goals that they pursue with setting up a business are oftentimes inherently connected to goals of masculine identity construction that strive for a position of hegemony, in the family, in the wider context of the German society as well as in the respective African Diaspora Communities. This is especially important for African men in the Diaspora since their social position is a marginalized one in a context of racialized power structures in their country of settlement on the labor market and often even in the arena of the family. Consequently, they experience that their abilities and capacities to fulfill certain normative ideals of male identity like providing for and protecting the image of the family are questioned. The men's habitual security is thus challenged in the process of migration and masculinity becomes a discursive topic (Meuser 2006).

Setting up a successful business in the country of settlement implies a capacity to fulfill ideals of responsible manhood towards the extended family in their home countries as well as towards the family in Germany. From an action theoretical point (Boesch 1991), it can therefore be argued that the goal of labor market integration that is achieved with the action of setting up a business is overdetermined by other goals connected to masculine identity construction. For further research on migration and masculinity, I argue is that it is advisable to be careful of approaches that only focus on explanations stressing 'cultural difference' and 'having to navigate between normative gender orders of the home country and the country of settlement' but to also scrutinize the power positions of immigrant men in the arenas of work and family to get a grips of the challenges for masculine identity constructions.

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