



Pathway to Self-Employment: Entrepreneurship among Sub-Saharan Africans in Ohio

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ABSTRACT: - Research indicates that structural conditions push immigrants such as sub-Saharan Africans into ethnic businesses in constructing or making their space, which is their environment. Among such ethnic businesses are entities like African grocery stores (African markets). This study was designed to explore the influences that prompted sub-Saharan African immigrants to open African grocery stores in four Ohio cities in the United States. Q methodology was used to render or indicate the behavior of immigrants in opening stores as action-based and real. Interviews with a number of grocery store operators generated some of the statements used in the study. Literature on three models of business creation, namely the structural, cultural, and interactive models, were used to generate additional statements for the study. The statements were given to 20 operators of African grocery stores in the four cities to rank how these experiences affected their decision to open grocery stores. Three factors emerged, suggesting that three groups of experiences prompted the operators to open the stores. These factors were related to the interactive model of business creation and were labeled demand-opportunity, cultural-resources, and independence-aspiration. These results suggest that the pathway to entrepreneurship in the space of sub-Saharan Africans in Ohio cities is influenced by not just one factor, but by several experiences/factors that encouraged the immigrants to open businesses such as African grocery stores.

KEYWORDS: African grocery stores, demand-opportunity, Q methodology, concourse, entrepreneurship, ethnic businesses, self-employment, sub-Saharan Africans.

I. INTRODUCTION

African grocery stores exist in some cities in Ohio. What prompted the opening of these African grocery stores? Did they sprout up for no apparent reason? Was their opening a result of low wages among recent immigrants, work-related discrimination, or hard work? Were they started because of expanding opportunities related to market conditions, based on the presence of people who had a demand for the stores' products? Or were they created as result of a gap in the retail landscape of culturally specific food ingredients for sub-Saharan Africans that African grocery stores can fill? The interactive model of ethnic business development suggests that ethnic businesses flourish because of the existence of demand and resources that are needed to support market conditions (Agrawal and Chavan, 1997) that are created by the immigrants in the hosting countries.

Bad times in sub-Saharan African countries caused many citizens of the region to migrate globally to countries such as the United States of America. The bad times included economic problems, political conditions and religious persecution. Deteriorating economic conditions during the "lost decade" (Adepoju, 2001) caused many sub-Saharan African countries to become indebted. As the government was the major employer in these countries, government cuts in public services (Stock 2004) led to retrenchment of many employees. Cost-reduction tactics and other deregulation measures such as the removal of subsidies on social services put a lot of stress on the countries. Many sub-Saharan Africans became impoverished and their standards of living fell, causing both skilled and unskilled individuals to leave for prosperous countries like the United States (Takyi and Konadu-Agyemang, 2006; Konadu-Agyemang, 2003; Adepoju, 2001). These economic dislocations caused severe stresses that affected the political conditions on the sub-region.

Bad governance also contributed to the migration of sub-Saharan African immigrants to the United States. Curbing of political dissent in countries prompted migration of individuals who bore grudges against their home governments. Full-scale armed civil combats erupted in countries like Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, South Africa, and Uganda (Takyi and Konadu-Agyemang, 2006; Konadu-Agyemang, 2003; Akokpari, 1998). These disturbances generated thousands of migrants who found themselves in the United States. For example, the civil

war in Liberia caused over 700,000 Liberians to flee and become refugees in neighboring countries and the United States. Between 1996 and 2005, some 25,260 Liberian refugee applicants were granted permanent residence in the United States (DHS, 2006). In the case of Sudan, attempts by the ruling government to rule along Islamic Sharia laws in opposition to the Christianized south forced many Sudanese into exile (Akopari, 1998). Some of these arrived in the United States, and in 1999 alone, 3,262 Sudanese applied for refugee status in the country (INS, 2002).

In the 1970s and 1980s massive droughts occurred in the Sahelian region of Africa and resulted in crop failures, which forced thousands of people to migrate (Konadu-Agyemang, 2003; Akopari, 1998). Among countries that experienced these acts of God were Ethiopia and Sudan, forcing some to migrate to the United States. Furthermore, xenophobic attitudes toward some sub-Saharan Africans compelled them to flee from European countries like Italy, Portugal, Germany, and France, and migrate to the United States (Okome, 2006; Adepoju, 2000).

Not all sub-Saharan Africans who entered the United States were pushed out of the African continent by bad economic conditions; pull forces from the United States also encouraged them to come. The United States serves as a cauldron that constructs fertile and stable conditions that draw immigrants, including sub-Saharan Africans.

After independence of colonial Africa, economic reconstruction became paramount and highly qualified sub-Saharan Africans were needed to replace the colonial manpower. Consequently, these governments sent some of their citizens to countries like the United States for higher education (Takyi and Konadu-Agyemang, 2006). Though these students completed their education, some did not go back to Africa but instead chose to stay in America because of the country's economic progress.

The United States has high living standards. These economic and social developments manifested themselves as centripetal forces that pull and beckon immigrants such as sub-Saharan Africans to the country. The Internet, print paper, and films provide a great deal of information about the United States. Information about the United States is also spread in the sub-region by others who had previously lived in America. As a result, their compatriots on the African continent are attracted by the automobiles and electronic gadgets some returnees from America bring when they go back to visit or stay (Konadu Agyemang, 2003). As a consequence of these images and real goods, some become enticed and seek ways, legal or illegal, to enter the United States.

The immigration laws of the United States portray favorable policies towards immigrants such as sub-Saharan Africans. These laws have direct implications on the transformation and growth of their population in the country. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) abolished the quota system of apportioning visas to immigrants. This document gave emphasis to job skills, refugee standing, and family reunion as important criteria for the entrance of immigrants into the United States (Frazier, 2006; Akwawua, 2003; Konadu-Agyemang, 2003). This legislation thus enabled sub-Saharan Africans to file for and sponsor their immediate relatives, be they spouses, children, or parents (Akwawua, 2003; Konadu-Agyemang, 2003).

Family reunion, however, has an unintended effect of creating a chain migration among the sub-Saharan African immigrants. This is because the kinsmen already in the United States form a bridge between the United States and the place of origin (Chacko and Cheung, 2006; Konadu-Agyemang, 2003). In such a process, sub-Saharan African immigrants who arrived first in the country help to support individuals by sponsoring them. Some of those sponsored even reside with their sponsors when they arrive in the United States, helping to stabilize their stay and adaptation to the country.

The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 was the first refugee legislative instrument enacted by the United States Congress (Refugee Council USA, 2004-2011). This was to help individuals who had been displaced from their countries because of political opponents, civil wars, and ethnic strife. Since that Act, many individuals from sub-Saharan Africa countries that have been plagued by military regimes, political conflicts, and civil wars have entered the United States as refugees.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 helped to regularize the status of immigrants, who had arrived in the United States illegally before 1982, had abused their legal status, or overstayed their visas (Konadu-Agyemang, 2003). These included students, businessmen and tourists. This law enabled about 39,000 Africans to regularize their stay and become legal and permanent residents in the United States (Konadu-Agyemang, 2003). This process also set in motion a chain migration for other sub-Saharan African entrants to enter the United States.

The 1990 Diversity Program, also called Visa Lottery, is sponsored by the United States Congress, which makes available 55,000 visas to countries that have low rates of their citizens in the United States (INS, 2002). This law has allowed and is allowing many sub-Saharan Africans to enter the United States. For example 36,265 sub-Saharan Africans were given Diversity Lottery visas to enter the United States in 2008 alone (DHS, 2009).

Others have arrived with the support of voluntary agencies (VOLAGs) that provide a regular stream of immigrants to some American cities. Their arrival has helped to increase the number of sub-Saharan Africans in some cities, some who accessed their information with the Internet.

Information technology development has shrunk the size of the world and through globalization all countries have been brought closer together. One outcome is that individuals from sub-Saharan African countries have knowledge about opportunities in the Western world. Among such awareness is the imbalance in the wages between countries for identical jobs. For example, nurses in the United States are paid \$3,000 to \$4,000 a month (Schrecker and Labonte, 2004). As a result of such information dissemination, many health practitioners from Ghana – about 50 per-cent of the doctors from that country – are practicing in the United States (The Guardian, 2005). In addition, the World Bank data on immigration indicate that about 12,000 Nigerian health professionals are working in the United States (Adepoju, 2000). Some health personnel from Zambia and Tanzania are also in the country. All these professionals and other immigrants have helped to swell the number of sub-Saharan Africans in the United States, thereby creating a huge economic opportunity for American and ethnic businesses.

Thus, bad times on the African continent and favorable conditions in America have combined to shape sub-Saharan African migration to the United States. Some Midwest cities like Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Akron eventually became the destination and beneficiaries of this influx. Such concentrations created in the minds of some immigrants, images of opportunities enabling the development of businesses such as African grocery stores. The ethnic businesses generated from such opportunities helped in the construction of the landscape that forms a part of the fabric of the economic and physical space of the cities.

It must be noted that some American grocery stores have aisles with culturally specific foods for people from Asian, Hispanic/Mexican and Mediterranean regions. However, such an aisle for African food products is conspicuously absent from these grocery stores. This gap indicated that ethnic African food service was a huge market, but without providers. This situation was recognized by a number of immigrants from the region and some with investment zeal decided to fill that void. Thus, the presence of immigrants who are loyal to their ethnic foods and the lack of grocery stores to satisfy this demand created images in the minds of some of the immigrants. Also, the would-be investors envisioned hiring ethnic labor available in the community as a means to advance themselves economic and financially. This paper discusses how some sub-Saharan Africans recognized and used these images to organize and open African grocery stores from which all (the storeowners and their fellow country folks) could obtain exotic foods they were used to in Africa.

Migration from Africa does not divest the immigrants from their social obligations such as participation in cultural activities and meetings. Social activities such as marriages, naming ceremonies, deaths and obituaries, and religious meetings bring the immigrants together. At such gatherings, people take notice of things such as the size of the immigrant population, and comments about, for example, the lack of African businesses and suggestions that investing in a business that would provide some of their retail needs, could be profitable. This panoramic view of the concentration of this group about the market condition perhaps convinced some immigrants to venture into African businesses. Among the migrant-based businesses that could emerge is the African grocery store that is designed to serve culturally specific African cuisine ingredients like 'prekese' that are conspicuously invisible in mainstream stores or Asian and Hispanic grocery stores.

For many immigrants to the United States a motive for arrival is social and financial upward mobility (Kaplan, 1997). They use opportunities and resources they find or that manifest themselves at the destination as a means to create niche economic activities. Factors that encourage such activities are the concentration of people from the sub-region whose presence made the creation of the stores possible. The immigrants arrive in the cities, through regular migration, relocation, and resettlement of refugees and asylum seeking. It should be noted that these immigrants already have their taste buds accustomed to African food ingredients. The immigrants also teach their children to eat these foods. Behaviorally, there are huge prospects for the establishment of the African grocery stores in some of these cities.

As already indicated, there is a demand opportunity, a market condition created by the sub-Saharan Africans, yet there is no American penetration in African food sales. This has left a huge gap in this service, an opportunity that needs to be filled. The migration process of sub-Saharan Africans creates a pool of labor, a continual flow that comes through family reunification and resettlement schemes. For the immigrants, consumption of African food ingredients is very important and this cultural identity would be lost if American foods are eaten. Servicing this community for whom ethnic food ingredients is a special cultural turf is thus an advantage and an opportunity. A venture into this market would be a benefit to the community and would also help the investors to better themselves financially as they become entrepreneurs.

As indicated earlier, these African grocery stores did not pop up without reasons. Thus, there is a need to discover why the stores were opened. Were they started because the owners did not have access to other jobs? Those who opened the stores have answers and could give reasons why they opened them. This discovery of why these stores were opened is an issue of subjectivity, which uses the science of Q methodology.

Q methodology is an exploratory method that seeks to provide an orderly examination of human subjectivity through statements of opinions that are ranked by an individual (Brown, 1980). This probes the decision making process of individuals by grouping those who share similar opinions (Durning and Brown, 2007). Q methodology is used in disciplines such as political science, communication, psychology, advertising, health science, public policy, and other fields (Tolymbek, 2007; Brown, 2005; Oswald and Harvey 2003; Thomas and Watson, 2002). In addition to its popular usage in several social sciences, it is now making inroads among human geographers (Bischof, 2010; Eden, Donaldson, and Walker, 2005; Robbins and Krueger, 2000). This research technique was invented by William Stephenson for studying human behavior in 1935 (Stephenson, 1935). This method allows groupings of commonalities and differences in subjective opinions of a sample to be analyzed (Brown, 2004).

Q methodology studies can be intra-subjective or inter-subjective (Brown, 2004). Intra-subjective data are obtained from an individual on numerous issues of interest (Brown, 2004). The inter-subjective studies, on the other hand, aggregate the viewpoints of a group of people on single or multidimensional issues (Brown, 2004). This method, which reveals traits of a cluster of like-minded people on a particular issue (Brown, 2004; Brown, 1980), fits this study about African grocery stores. This is because the study seeks to find principal opinions that encouraged not only one sub-Saharan African entrepreneur, but several of them to establish African grocery stores in the four cities in Ohio. This research method, Q methodology, is therefore used to investigate the mental images that the sub-Saharan African immigrants had about this kind of retail job. This behavior is represented in a testable form by modeling them by Q sorts (Sunoo, 1972). Q methodology was appropriate as the researcher was interested in the self-referent reasons (Robbins 2005) that motivated the entrepreneurs to open their grocery stores. He wanted to find out if the opinions of the operators would coincide with the views embedded in the ethnic business models.

Q methodology accomplishes this by reflecting a mind in operation as the individual interprets and orders an array of items brought to his/her attention in the form of Q statements (Brown, 1980). To understand the opinions of the respondents involved using statements related to ethnic businesses and the number of these statements could be limitless. This broad collection of statements is the concourse, which comprises innumerable statements of opinion related to a single topic (Brown, 1980). These statements cover the length, breadth, and width of an issue. Thus, it is possible to generate relevant statements about a topic such as African grocery stores, whose activity landscape provides a huge number of statements that reflect the experiences of the respondents.

Objectively, several reasons interact when an individual makes the decision to establish a business. Such reasons may include a lack of entrance into a wage job, a presentation of an opportunity, a desire to continue an old job at the current destination, or the desire to be self-employed. These decisions, however, are subjective in nature as each individual has his or her own interpretations/images for making that choice. But how does one know what influenced an individual to go into a particular business unless you ask him or her? This knowledge is attained by discovering the individual's subjective viewpoints, because "subjectivity is the arbiter, the pre-selector, the grid of the various actions actually taken by the individual" (Sunoo, 1972: 417), a process that can be examined by Q methodology.

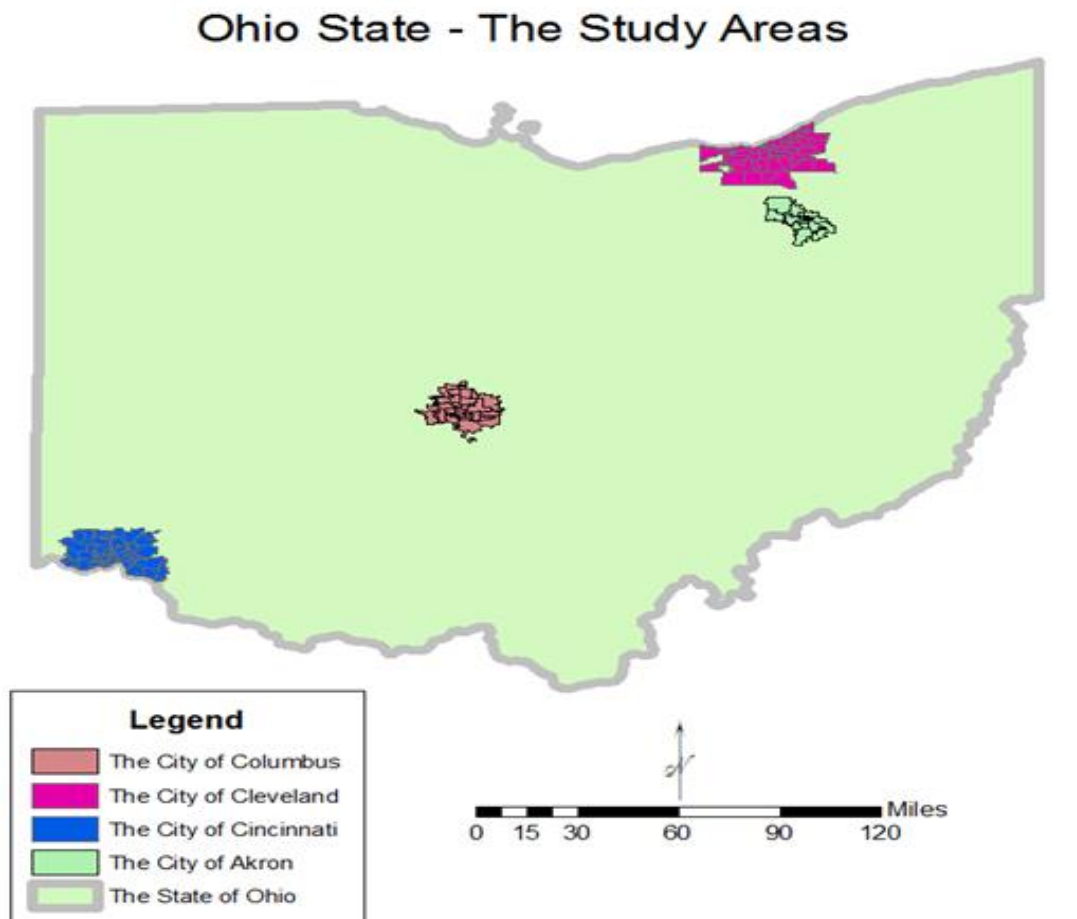
Subjectivity can be conceptions or wishes within a mindset of an individual. In terms of ethnic businesses such as African grocery stores, the operators may have varied reasons for opening the stores, such as the presence of other sub-Saharan Africans in the city or the absence of a grocery store that serves the needs of that group. Again, the decision to start a business may be due to lack of wage employment or the presence of an opportunity to better one's financial position. As these viewpoints are subjective in nature, Q methodology was used to test these opinions on statements that are related to ethnic businesses that include grocery stores.

Ethnic business studies deal with immigrants' involvement in economic activities at their destination. Generally the decision to participate in the economy of the host country is entirely dependent on the individual (although there could be counseling, the final choice rests with the individual decision maker) and Q methodology is used for investigating this human subjectivity (Tolymbek, 2007). According to Light, "Self-employment has still an undeniable appeal to the unskilled, the unemployed – indeed to anyone disadvantaged in the general labor store" (Light, 1972:4). Thus by Light's assertion, immigrants enter into self-employment because of problems they encounter in the host countries.

This study therefore sought to explore why the sub-Saharan Africans opened the African grocery stores. To find answers, the researcher decided to ask the immigrants themselves what prompted them to start these stores.

II. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The Study Areas Data was collected via fieldwork in the following four settlements in Ohio: Columbus in Franklin County, Cleveland in Cuyahoga County, Cincinnati in Hamilton County, and Akron in Summit County (Figure 1).



This information gathering was to capture the views of the store operators about the reasons they felt encouraged to open the stores. These firsthand responses help illuminate the sub-Saharan African entrepreneurs' motives for opening African grocery stores. As discussed earlier, a method that helps capture images of sub-Saharan African grocery store operators is Q methodology. This research technique ranks human subjectivity and through factor analysis, helps to build a commonality of individual opinions whose grouped views are similar (Brown, 1980). This operation starts with a set of procedures such as a P set, a Q sample, and conditions of instruction, and these processes provide data for understanding the behavior of the respondents, in this case the African grocery operators.

The P set

The store operators in the study form the P set (Brown, 1980). Finding information to understand attitudes of African grocery store operators involved contacting them for their views because the operators set up this kind of business and can explain why they started their stores. The 20-person P set for this study was made up of eleven males and nine females who were store operators (typically married couples) or their relatives, and who had been in the United States for at least five years. It was hoped that over this length of time they might have gained some knowledge about conditions and experiences that could impact their decision to start an African grocery store. These experiences formed the statements or stimuli that were used to generate the Q sample.

The Q sample

The African grocery store, a feature of ethnic business, can be profiled by statements and experiences, just as topographical features can be built by contours. The structural, cultural, and interactive models of ethnic business creation formed an introductory basis for the development of a comprehensive theoretical framework for generating some of the statements for the grocery store study. The Q sample structure comprised main effects and levels (Table 1), culled from the writings on ethnic businesses by Aldrich and Waldinger (1990), Teixeira (2001), Waldinger (1986), and Rajiman and Tienda (2000).

Conditions of Instruction

The respondents were to read over and rank each statement in terms of how it impacted their behavior in constructing their space – that is, in starting the stores. The statements carry the import of experiences of the respondents, which may range from favorable to neutral to unfavorable, as reflected in the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed with each statement because of its impact. In this study, respondents were to group the statements into three categories: (A) were statements that the operator agreed with; (B) were statements that he/she disagreed with; and (C) were statements that the operator neither agreed nor disagreed with – the neutral ones – which were to be scored under “0” on the score sheet.

Of the statements that the operator agreed with (category A), the operator had to select one of the statements that he/she regarded as most important in the decision to start the store, rank it as +5, and write that statement number on the score sheet (Table 2). After this, the operator was to select the next statement (in group A) that he/she agreed with but did not consider as important as the first statement. This was to be scored +4 and its serial number written under +4 on the score sheet; the score sheet had space for two such 4-point statements. After these two statements, he/she was to select the next three statements in terms of importance for starting the store and rank the three of them under +3. Of the next nine statements, four that he/she was certainly in agreement with but did not consider as important as the previous three statements were to be ranked +2 and their serial numbers written under +2 on the score sheet. For the last five statements, the operator was to write the serial numbers of the statements under +1, as their importance was diminished when compared to the rest of the statements with which he/she had already agreed.

The pile of statements that the operator did not agree with (category B) was sorted and scored in the same way, with a score of –5 assigned to the statement most strongly disagreed with, and so on. In the process of sorting, the operator was to work back and forth on the statements, making sure that each statement actually reflected his/her actual experience and was scored accordingly. Also, in working through the scoring, the operator could make changes if a given statement did not capture the real situation. The final score sheet shows the degree of importance of each statement in opening the grocery store (see example, Table 3). The individual score sheets were collected for analysis.

Table 3. Completed Score Sheet

Most Disagree					Most Agree					
- 5	- 4	- 3	- 2	- 1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
11	32	1	4	18	22	19	12	25	34	14
	13	29	33	2	15	24	3	5	17	
		26	31	8	23	30	10	27		
			6	35	36	16	21			
				28	9	20				
					7					

III. RESULTS

The PQMethod was used to analyze the data. In the analysis, five factors with eigenvalues in excess of 1.00 emerged, which suggested the selection of these five factors. However, not all five – or even four – factors were selected because a respondent of the study lacked one significant loading of 0.41 (Brown, 1980), affecting the results (see Table 4; Operators and factor loadings).

Table 4. Operators and factor loadings*

Operator	Factor A	Factor B	Factor C
A1	23	(84)	07
A2	(59)	40	21
A3	26	55	41
A4	77	17	45
A5	51	32	54
A6	(44)	35	21
A7	(77)	17	17
A8	(74)	12	00
A9	30	07	(75)
A10	08	(66)	27
A11	(42)	30	07
A12	06	18	(59)
A13	26	(45)	02
A14	(85)	29	06
A15	16	(66)	01
A16	63	53	35
A17	(76)	06	13
A18	07	75	46
A19	(68)	40	25
A20	69	52	03

* Decimals to two places omitted for the factor loadings.

Factor loadings in excess of ± 0.41 are significant at the 0.01 level. Defining factor loadings are in bold-face.

While a two-factor solution was possible, this would have accounted for few of the important reasons that encouraged the sub-Saharan Africans to open the African grocery stores. Finally the three-factor solution was selected because all respondents for these three factors had significant loadings of 0.41. This suggested that three viewpoints, as reflected by these three factors, existed among the sub-Saharan African grocery store owners and encouraged them to be self-employed. The eigenvalues of the three unrotated factors accounted for 61% of the variance in the total explanation of sub-Saharan Africans' entrance into African grocery stores. The percentage that Factor A explained was 42% of the component that had an eigenvalue of 8.3920, Factor B explained 10% of the second eigenvalue of 1.9387, and Factor C explained 9% of the third eigenvalue of 1.7896.

Another analytic option in PQMethod is varimax rotation. This statistical method allows a maximization of the differences between factors (Flitcroft *et al.*, 2007). In the varimax rotation, Factor A accounted for 29% of the variance in the total viewpoints of the African grocery operators; Factor B accounted for 21% of this variance; and Factor C explained 11%. These emergent factors suggested that three different views encouraged the respondents to open the grocery stores. These emergent factors were considered as attitudes that the respondents operantly defined in terms of their experiences as they ranked the statements according to their own opinions on African grocery stores (Brown, 1980).

Why would operators who were from the same sub-region have different opinions about starting a grocery store? The explanations for these different views are based on the scores given to the statements, ranging from +5 to -5, which indicate the strength of respondents' views. The factor scores are expressed as z-scores (McKeown and Thomas, 1988) that are converted into whole numbers that represent the locations on the scale used (-5 to +5) (Flitcroft *et al.*, 2007) (see Table 4). In this study, the highest score was assigned +5; the next two z-scores were assigned the value of +4; and the next highest three scores +3. In the case of negative scores, the first lowest score was assigned -5; the next two were assigned -4, and so on (Brown, 1980).

The factor scores, in three arrays under Factors A, B, and C, reflect the experiences of the operators regarding the extent to which these factors supported or hindered their decision to open the grocery stores, as the subjective responses to the 36 statements indicate (Table 5). Thus, understanding the mind-set of the operators on Factor A also demands an examination of each of the statements in comparison with the other statements on Factors B and C. This means the factor arrays "are interpreted directly by comparing and contrasting the rankings of Q-sample items (factor scores) in factor arrays" (Dziopa and Ahern, 2011). Thus, a ranking of +5 that was assigned to a statement was stronger than a +4, and therefore was more important to the individual than

the statement that received +4. These statements express the uniqueness of each factor and its differentiation from the other factors (Akhtar-Danesh *et al.*, 2008; Flitcroft *et al.*, 2007).

Place Table 5 here

Table 5. Statements, combinations, and scores of factors A, B, and C

Serial. No	Statement	Combinations	A	B	C
1	All the employees in this store are from my country.	eac	-2	+1	+4
2	The money I used to open this store was obtained from my country's rotating credit union (susu/tontine).	fbc	-5	-5	-3
3	My past store skills enabled me to develop methods to reach my customers.	gad	+2	-2	+3
4	I based my knowledge on the presence of sub-Saharan Africans and past skills in store management and decided to look for money to open this store.	fbd	+3	-3	+1
5	I wanted to be self-employed so I used my personal money and other resources to open this African grocery store.	ebd	+4	+4	+5
6	I opened this African grocery store because American grocery stores did not serve food products that sub-Saharan Africans need to prepare their cuisines.	fac	+5	+4	-2
7	The financial support from my extended family members helped in supporting me when I decided to open this store to serve the grocery needs of my country folks.	ebc	0	+3	-5
8	My decision to offer a friendly, efficient, clean, safe, and tidy premise will promote the loyalty of my customers.	gac	+2	+5	-1
9	My prior business knowledge did not help me to develop business strategies/methods to open this grocery store.	gbd	0	-3	+2
10	I wanted to be rich quickly so I decided to use my former skills to open this store.	ead	0	-4	-4
11	The people from my country did not provide me information about how to obtain money to start this store.	ebc	1	-2	-3
12	Sub-Saharan Africans demand for their traditional African foods encouraged me to use my personal money to start this grocery store.	gbc	+4	+3	+4
13	I was not able to obtain information that supported me to open this store through my family members, relatives, and friends.	gbd	+2	+2	-4
14	The prior business I had experience enabled me to obtain credit to begin this store.	gbc	-3	-3	0
15	The population size and hard work attitude of my people encouraged me to open this grocery store.	eca	+1	0	+1
16	I found no work in my professional area so I decided to start this store with the trading skills that I had.	fad	-4	-2	0

Table 5. Statements, combinations, and scores of factors A, B, and C – Continued

17	The presence of sub-Saharan Africans who wanted their traditional food and the desire of my family to help me enabled me to open this store.	fbc	+2	+1	+1
18	The information that I received from people from my country influenced me to open this store.	ead	0	+2	-2
19	Past business skills influenced my decision.	fbd	0	-2	-1
20	I encountered difficulty when I was looking for money to open this store and the problem prevented me from opening this store.	fad	-3	-4	-3
21	Immigrants such as sub-Saharan Africans have unique sets of wants and preferences that are best served by a member of the sub-Saharan African immigrant community member like me.	fac	+3	+2	-1
22	I was not satisfied at my former job so I decided to start this store sub-Saharan Africans in this city.	ebd	-4	0	-2
23	All the family and co-ethnic labour is free.	gac	-2	0	0
24	With my knowledge and skills about traditional African foods I am able to sell my goods at low prices to my customers.	gad	-1	+3	-1
25	I decided that with so many sub-Saharan Africans living in this city I would look for money to open an African store.	ebc	+3	-1	+2
26	I doubt I would have been able to make it without the financial support of my co-ethnics.	gbc	0	0	0
27	This group of people is a resource so I decided to use my money and past skills to open this store to serve the needs of the members.	ebd	-2	-2	+3
28	I wanted to open a store to serve the traditional food needs of the members of the sub-Saharan African communities in this city but I could not get financing.	fbd	-3	-1	+2
29	I decided to open this store so that members of my African associations (church/town/Islam) could shop there.	eca	0	0	-1
30	Low wages I was given encouraged me to open this African grocery store.	gbd	-2	+1	-2
31	I have worked in a store before so I decided to find money to open store and sell African food products to my people.	ead	0	-1	+1
32	My ties in the community enabled me to start this store.	fbc	-1	0	0
33	American culture I was exposed to enabled me to develop marketing strategies/methods to promote my store.	gad	+1	0	0
34	I wanted to be self-employed that is why I bought this store when the opportunity came.	fad	+1	+2	+1
35	I went into business largely with the support from my business friends who told me that the business was good.	fac	-1	-1	+2
36	I use the “customer is right” attitude as a strategy to attract, bring, and keep my customers.	gac	-1	+3	+3

The statements reflecting the operators’ experiences – both most important and least important – are those written at the ends of the scoring sheet, on the right and left respectively. In relating these to the study then, the statements at both ends of the scoring sheet reflect the reasons and behaviors considered most important to the operators’ decisions to open their stores. These statements (identified in Table 5), which represent the contours/experiences of the grocery store operators, were used in labeling and interpreting each factor (Akhtar-Danesh *et al.*, 2008).

IV. FINDINGS

Clarifying the Reasons for Opening African Grocery Stores

The decision to establish African grocery stores can be understood through the responses to Q statements that emanated from the experiences of the operators. The operators had different reasons for starting the grocery stores. The rotated field data provided information on respondents whose views were similar and these were grouped together, forming the pure cases (Brown, 1980). Eight respondents who had similar opinions defined the pure cases for Factor A. Four respondents defined Factor B, and their mental pictures about African grocery stores were different from those of respondents defining Factors A and C. Factor C was defined by two respondents who shared similar viewpoints about African grocery stores, which were different from views defining Factors A and B.

Based on important statements, characteristic of each of the factors as designated by the respondents, the three factors were labeled as follows: Factor A is demand-opportunity; Factor B is culture-resources; and Factor C is independence-aspiration. The next sections discuss each of the factors to explore the experiences and influences that encouraged operators to establish African grocery stores in the study areas, as reflected in their experience-based factor scoring.

Factor A:-The Demand-Opportunity Influence

Factor A, which is the demand-opportunity issue, accounted for 29% of the total variance in the experience of the respondents' decision to open the grocery stores. As noted above, eight of the 20 respondents whose images of African grocery stores were similar defined Factor A. These respondents represented their experiences as being dependent on the market conditions in the city in which they reside. In particular, the market conditions in the form of demand but with a corresponding lack of service encouraged some to start the African grocery stores. Important stimuli that depict aspects of the demand-opportunity conditions include: statement 6 – absence of an African grocery store (scored at +5); statement 12 – sub-Saharan African demand for their traditional food (+4); statement 5 – self-employment (+4); statements 4 and 25 – presence of sub-Saharan Africans (+3); and statement 21 – the unique wants and preferences of sub-Saharan Africans (+3).

It must be noted that globalization has fostered migration of immigrants such as sub-Saharan Africans to the United States. These individuals carry with them their culture, which includes taste and food preferences. The respondents whose entry into African grocery stores were represented by Factor A greatly valued the potential demand, especially the opportunity created by the presence of the immigrants, most of whom ate foods from their country of origin. The presence and concentration of the immigrants created the necessary and tipping conditions to influence them and make the establishment of the African grocery stores feasible. Unfortunately, typical American grocery stores do not provide a wide selection of exotic foods that are special to the sub-Saharan Africans. The arriving immigrants lacked African grocery stores that offered a large selection of tropical foods such as yams, fruits, and vegetables. Food varieties such as prekese and palm fruits were absent from Ohio grocery stores such as Giant Eagle, Acme, Marc's, or Save-A-Lot. The creation of African grocery stores that generally sell recognizable roots, tubers, meats, and fish – whether fresh, dried, smoked, canned, or ground – that the immigrants can use to prepare their cuisines would fill that void. The creation of the stores by the operators could help the sub-Saharan Africans satisfy the nostalgic urge for exotic ethnic foods in the cities where they live.

According to one respondent, not many of his country folk were in the city when he arrived. According to him, he was also interested in eating African foods. He found one or two such food ingredients at the local grocery stores. He discovered later that many people from his country were settling in his area. This discovery got him to thinking, as he knew that his people were interested in African food ingredients just like himself. He was of the opinion that other sub-Saharan Africans would buy such products as some whom he met often asked if there were places where African food products were sold. His conclusion was that the under-service of African food ingredients by American and other ethnic grocery retailers was a gap that should be filled. He discussed this with his spouse. To test the viability of the store, about six years ago he started selling some African food products from his home. He noticed an increase in the number of people from his country in his neighborhood and decided to increase the size of the store. He has moved two times, from his home to another location, each time increasing the size of the facility and then to his current location, where he keeps a bigger facility with his spouse.

It is the existence of such market conditions – both the demand for specific products and the lack of service by American and other ethnic groups – that encouraged the entrepreneurs to open the stores. The existence of the stores provides operators with the opportunity to serve their country folk, as they understand the needs and preferences of the community. The concentrated captive market for which these stores were created also opens access to labor and other ethnic resources.

Factor B: Culture-Resources

Factor B accounted for 21% of the variance in the total explanation of the attitudes that led respondents to start African grocery stores. Four respondents sharing similar views were grouped together in defining Factor B. They placed an emphasis on the culture and resources of the immigrant population as traits that supported another avenue to self-employment. These respondents expressed the view that the presence and concentration of the immigrants was a resource (Kaplan, 1997) that could be utilized to generate economic activity such as opening African grocery stores. The presence and concentration of fellow immigrants, who sought to follow their cultural traditions and eat their customary foods where they lived was an important resource that encouraged the respondents to open the stores.

By virtue of their concentration, the presence of sub-Saharan Africans brings into focus emergent needs that become resources that can unlock occupations for their compatriots. One such business activity is the African grocery store that serves specialized food ingredients off the radar of American food grocers. The desire to eat African food stuffs, a cultural trait, becomes a cultural resource that is converted into an ethnic economic asset, in the form of African grocery stores that dot the American urban retail landscape.

The customer is the basis for opening an African grocery store and the customer's continued security is important to the success of this business format. Therefore, the provision of a friendly, safe and clean environment is important in offering the customer a secure and welcoming place to shop. Customers are loath to shop in neighborhoods perceived to be crime-prone and hostile, which would affect the success of the business (Kaplan and House-Soremekun, 2006). Statement 8, tying health, safety, and environmental issues to customer loyalty, was scored +5.

Other responses included under Factor B that favorably affected the opening of African grocery stores were: statement 5 – money and other resources (+4) (an avenue to self-employment once they are opened); 6 – lack of service by American grocery stores (+4); 7 – financial support from extended family (+3); 12 – the demand of sub-Saharan Africans for their traditional food (+3); 24 – knowledge and skills about traditional African foods (+3); and 36 – the idea that the customer is right (+3). The respondents saw that they could use these situational contexts and characters (that is, the presence and concentration of this immigrant group and their lifestyle) as resources that could encourage and help them in providing avenues to self-employment. The respondents saw the presence and concentration of the immigrants and their attachment to the African food lifestyle as a cross fertilization of opportunities to open the stores.

One of the respondents reiterated that the geographic concentration of the immigrants was a potential resource loaded with benefits that were useful in his quest to start the store. According to him, a large selection of specialty and exotic African foods were absent from the American food market (statement 6) and this was a plus in opening an opportunity to start the store. African grocery stores require labor that comes from the co-ethnic population itself. That is, the employees came from the sub-Saharan African population. This operator was of the view that this labor is knowledgeable about the ethnic products sold; they know how to handle them and can advise consumers on the usage. Such characteristics are absent from Asian and Hispanic stores that may try to sell some of these products as a way of winning sub-Saharan African consumers (statement 12).

Another resource from the population is information. Social networks that exist among the immigrants often help communicate information. One respondent pointed out that some immigrants were supportive in the quest for location. He believed he could not do the location search alone and thus enlisted the co-ethnics to refer any information to him. Another respondent referred to frustration among co-ethnics about the lack of African food service stores. The immigrants discussed this issue and the family listened and eventually organized their resources to open the grocery store. Those who were able to recognize the cultural resources were able to open their own stores. The presence of the immigrants created the favourable conditions for the immigrants to open the stores and not low wages. For example, if the problem were low wages and the immigrants preferred to be self-employed, why would it be in grocery service provision? Could it be that they entered this sector because there were potential resources that could enable them aspire to a greater individual financial advancement?

Factor C: Independence-Aspiration

In this study, Factor C (termed independence and aspiration) accounted for 11% of the variance among the opinions of the respondents. Two respondents defined this factor, which emphasizes traits that they used as part of a strategy toward self-employment. A key statement that portrays a desire for independence is statement 5 – desire to be self-employed, which was scored +5. In pursuing the goal of self-employment, the respondents risked and invested their money to open the stores. Other experiences that encouraged this aspiration are reflected in the following statements: 1 – all the employees are from my country (+4); 12 – sub-Saharan African's demand for their traditional foods (+4); 3 – development of strategies because of past store skills (+3); 27 – the group as a resource (+3); and 36 – the customer is right (+3). These experiences of the respondents suggest they could see becoming their own bosses through the utilization of the food and dietary preferences and other cultural factors of the sub-Saharan Africans.

For one typical respondent representing Factor C (self-employment), the decision to open the African grocery store was not due to low wage jobs, as suggested by the structural model. It was the result of an opportunity she found in the city where she lived with her spouse. She believed that this opportunity could enable her to be self-employed. The opportunity was the existence of the demand by a concentration of sub-Saharan Africans loyal to African products that happened to be absent from American and other ethnic grocery retailers. It was a niche market and servicing it could enable her to achieve the desire to be independent. The action of this operator suggested that her self-employment did not come from wage discrimination but emerged through an opportunity that arose in the city in which she lived with her family and the desire to be independent.

The immigrants had aspirations to become successful in America. The presence and build-up of sub-Saharan Africans and the absence of American or ethnic grocery stores that were able to provide all the African food products for the clientele was a golden opportunity to serve this niche market. The decision to risk and establish these stores was to make practical the image they had about self-employment. Through this avenue they could better their lives financially and materially.

V. CONCLUSION

This exploratory study has considered the mental geography of sub-Saharan Africans about African grocery stores and applied Q methodology to discover their business creation tactics from the operators themselves. The study found that three different reasons prompted them to open the grocery stores. Documentation on ethnic stores indicates that certain reasons were already known about business creation by immigrants and this work corroborated some of them. Through individual interviews, some of the respondents gave insights into why they opened these grocery stores. In short, the issue of African grocery store creation is complex; it depends on an intimate knowledge of the target population, their consumption behavior, and their preferences (Jones and Simmons, 1990).

The analyzed data from the field suggests that three interrelated opinions, based on the respondents' experiences, encouraged them to open African grocery stores in their space. This cross fertilization of opinions is characteristic of the interactive model of business creation, which reflects the interplay of cultural and structural factors (Teixeira, 2001). Discussed individually, Factor A respondents are of the view that demand and opportunity conditions in their space created by the immigrants were key in their decision to start the stores. Their mental image of this retail format was not exclusive to themselves; rather, their experiences included some of the traits the respondents of Factor B identified for entering this retail area. Specifically, the respondents who defined Factor B saw cultural resources of the sub-Saharan African immigrants as critical in establishing the stores. In the case of Factor C respondents, their decision to open the stores was grounded in their wish to use the existence of cultural traits of the immigrants in their space as strategies to become independent and become their own bosses. This opinion is also related to Factors A and B because it is linked to the immigrant resources upon which the stores depend.

This study about African grocery stores in the construction of space is specific to sub-Saharan African immigrants. This organization of space by sub-Saharan Africans is not a mere abstraction, but a reality and action-based as manifested by the actual opening of grocery stores in the four cities in the state of Ohio. That is to say, the immigrants acted on their attitude, which is their thinking, by responding to conditions that were present and tangibly opened the grocery stores. These conditions were possible because the immigrants carried their cultural preferences in diets and foods with them and preferred to continue with them.

The findings of this exploratory study suggest that no one singular experience encouraged sub-Saharan Africans toward entrepreneurship in African grocery stores. Rather, multiple experiences, including culture, previous skills, market conditions, or lack of cultural food service areas propelled them to open the stores. Whatever the case may be, a basic building block for the occurrence of entrepreneurship is that demand must be available for supply to respond. This view clashes head-on with and challenges the blocked mobility or disadvantage viewpoint that ethnic businesses occur because of discrimination or low wages. If discrimination and low wages were the factors, then we would see many African grocery stores in all American cities as thousands of sub-Saharan Africans arrive yearly in the country and are thrown into the workforce. The fact that this has not brought about thousands of African grocery stores or businesses suggests a reframing of the debate that the disadvantages immigrants suffer in America push them to create ethnic businesses. The focus should rather be on the manifestation of opportunities that arise from the presence and concentration of the immigrants. It is these who create conditions for the businesses to arise.

While this study pertained to African grocery stores, one could think of relating and applying this technique to other economic activities and disciplines. In such cases, the Q statements could be tweaked and used by other immigrants considering self-employment in different businesses – not just grocery stores. The conclusion reached could enrich studies in ethnic businesses, and its application in other areas could help us understand the images people have about other economic activities and how these could be a pathway to self-employment.

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