ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY AT A NIGERIAN INTEGRATED FOOD PROCESSING COMPANY: THE CASE OF FEED ME VENTURES LIMITED

by

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ABSTRACT

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Research in organizational identity as pioneered by Albert and Whetten (1985) provides that organizational identity is central, enduring and distinctive. As Gioia et al. (2013) put it, “what we know about organizational identity, including its dynamic aspects, is based on the study of organizations located within a single and uniform geographic market (U.S./European) and/or stable institutional environment (developed markets)” (p. 180). This study thus carries research in organizational identity forward by locating it at an integrated food manufacturing company, Feed Me Ventures Limited, in the non-western, developing country, Nigeria. As businesses expand globally, it becomes pertinent for global organizations and managers in organizations outside the West to become aware of possibly divergent forms of organizational identity and formation processes that may exist. Nigeria is a community faced with unstable and corrupt leadership, a volatile economy directly impacted by its own created as well as global instabilities as well as a culture that is very different from those of the communities in which organizational identity has traditionally been studied. To accomplish the goals of this study, an inductive analysis is conducted using ethnographic observation, document analysis and grounded theory interviewing. This method is deemed most appropriate as this is an exploratory study to find what organizational identity may look like in Nigeria. Findings provide that while the conceptualization of organizational identity in the literature hold true, the environment greatly affects organizational identity. The founder of Feed Me Ventures Limited had developed organizational identity in direct

opposition to societal values thereby emphasizing the distinctiveness dimension of organizational identity more than would normally be expected. Also, there is an adaptational dimension to organizational identity at Feed Me Ventures Limited which allows it to adapt to different needs in the environment in order to survive and retain its core identity. This is similar to adaptive instability which is already established in the literature except that at Feed Me Ventures Limited, when new identity dimensions are adapted in reaction to the environment, these dimensions only serve to help the organization retain its core identity. Furthermore, the relationship between organizational identity claims and organizational identity understanding among organizational members revealed the existence of an organizational identity gap (OI gap). This refers to a situation where claims about "who we are" from senior management does not align with understanding of "who we are" by organizational members. Also interesting is that social constructionist views about organizational identity being developed through the interactions of organizational members is found to be true at Feed Me Ventures Limited where organizational members, in their social interactions, begin to form notions of "who we are" that are not derived from claims about "who we are" from management. This study concludes that it is important for organizational leaders to acknowledge environment variables, engage in organizational diagnosis to find OI gaps and consider further this concept of adaptation and how this might serve organizations in environments similar to Nigeria.

CHAPTER 1. IN THE BEGINNING

"who are we?"
Albert and Whetten (1985)

American professors of organizational studies

1.1 Introduction

Research in organizational identity was pioneered in the work of Albert and Whetten. Albert and Whetten (1985) first conceptualized the idea that organizations have identities that are constructed by organizational leaders (Lin, 2004) which in turn define the organization and answer the question, "who are we?" (Lin, 2004, p. 803; Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000, p. 13; Zachary, McKenny, Short, Davis, & Wu, 2011, p. 640; He & Brown, 2013, p. 5). This answer, Albert and Whetten argued, forms the organization's identity. This identity is central, distinctive, and enduring (Albert et al., 2000; Lin, 2004; Witting, 2006; Griepentrog, Harold, Holtz, Klimoski, & Marsh, 2012; He & Brown, 2013) in the eyes of organizational members (Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton & Corley, 2013, p. 125; Nag, Corley & Gioia, 2007, p. 824; Tripsas, 2009) and reinforced in the daily interactions and social practices of the organization (Nag, Corley & Gioia, 2007, p. 824). Centrality refers to idea that an organization's identity is at its core and reflects what is key or most important to the organization. These core elements are distinctive. They are those elements that make the organization unique and sets it apart from other similar organizations which may potentially have similar goals. This identity must be enduring. That is, organizational identity is long lasting and consistent regardless of changing environments or organizational goals.

An organization’s identity is internal and serves as a source of influence for an organization’s leaders (Lin, 2004) and a medium that facilitates identification for organizational members and stakeholders as well as “a (partial) definition of self…[and] a sense of meaningfulness and connection” (Albert, Ashforth & Dutton, 2000, p. 14). Members want to be part of an organization that they feel is distinct, enhances their self-image and is continuous or they believe they fit into (Griepentrog et al., 2012). Thus, organizational leaders must give great credence to defining its identity (“Who are we?” “What business are we in?” and “What do we want to be?” (Lin, 2004, 804; Tripsas, 2009) and communicate this clearly since organizational identity, projected through the organization’s image, will serve to build or ruin organizational identification with the organization's members and publics (Dutton et al. in Griepentrog et al., 2012).

While many studies have looked at organizations in the United States, Europe, and stable economies, almost no studies have taken steps outside of these communities to examine what organizational identity might look like elsewhere. This study therefore distinguishes itself by investigating organizational identity outside of the West by looking at organizational identity in a developing nation. This is perhaps the first study to look at organizational identity in Africa. The fruit of this study not only pioneers a new area thereby expanding the body of knowledge, but findings will serve local and international organizations in better understanding the organizational identity and the local market in Nigeria.

I pursued the goals of this study through a qualitative study of an integrated food processing company in Nigeria: Feed Me Ventures Limited (FEMVEL). The methodological approach employed in this study is an inductive case study using observation, interviews and document analysis to address the research problem.

1.1.1 The Research Problem:

"A vast body of research has been produced on organizational identity" (Rockwell, 2016, p. 14). This has, however, been contained within a very limited scope of study. As Gioia et al. (2013) put it, "what we know about organizational identity, including its dynamic aspects, is based on the study of organizations located within a single and uniform geographic market (U.S./European) and/or stable institutional environment (developed markets)" (p. 180). "Organizational fields were mostly conceptualized as stable and homogenous settings (DiMaggio, 1988); consequently, identity—as most other institutional aspects—was treated as given and essentially fully-formed" (Gioia, et al., 2013, p. 171). Similarly, Hatch, Schultz and Skov (2015, p.62) reported that most studies on organizational identity ignore culture. Thus, most studies have approached research in this area as though organizational identity is homogenous and unperturbed or affected by environmental variables. Consequently, not only has most research work been completed in the West, there is also no recourse or accounting for how that environment is impacting organizational identity – even within the institutionalist approach.

Similarly, Albert and Whetten (1985) conceptualized organizational identity as *necessarily* central, distinctive, and enduring (p. 292). But could there be other elements research up to this point has missed because studies have always been located in the West only? What if there are cultural and environmental spaces where all three elements are not needed to form organizational identity? What does organizational identity look like in economically depressed environments? Is it still negotiated? Dynamic? In what ways does societal culture impact organizational identity?

1.1.2 Purpose of the study

This study seeks to expand the communication and management body of knowledge by extending the scope of research in organizational identity. As businesses expand globally, it becomes pertinent for global organizations and managers in organizations outside the West to become aware of possibly divergent forms of organizational identity and its formation processes that may exist. Currently, there is little account for what happens when economic or societal variables are different. This study seeks to fulfill this need by locating this research outside of a stable economic and institutional environment. To the best of my knowledge, my research pioneers studies on organizational identity in Africa by studying an organization localized in the highly volatile, depressed economy of Nigeria. I look at an integrated food processing company, Feed Me Ventures Limited (FEMVEL), which has been in operation in Nigeria since 2007 and whose managers, due to economic pressures, are taking the organization through a re-engineering of strategy. To address the research problem, I ask the following research questions:

Research Questions:

(1) To what extent is the organizational identity of a Nigerian food organization consistent with the conceptions of organizational identity as central, distinctive and enduring?

    b. Given the Nigerian environmental context, what elements of the Nigerian food organization's organizational identity are consistent with Nigeria-specific values and practices?

(2) How do stakeholders in a Nigerian food organization talk about the identity of the organization?

    b. To what extent does the founder's vision of organizational identity correspond to the organizational identity constructed by members of a Nigerian food organization, given the Nigerian environmental context?

1.1.3 Significance of the study

Organizational identity links an organization to its environment and to other institutions, making the organization a "viable entity" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 154). "Threats to an agreed-on identity characteristic will strongly influence an organization's performance [and legitimacy] because its very performance depends on internal and external perceptions of its legitimacy (Suchman, 1995), which in turn affects its ability to access needed resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Rockwell, 2016). As a result of the salient role of organizational identity in an organization's success, organizations must have a vested interest in the enactment of a viable identity and its strategic implementation towards the organization's success.

Researching organizational identity in a non-Western environment thus makes this study relevant to organizational research in general and specifically to scholars and practitioners with vested interest in global practice, practice in Africa or in Nigeria specifically. Multinationals with branches in Nigeria and local firms will particularly benefit from the results. Findings will contribute to the body of knowledge a further developed understanding of how organizational identity works. It will provide managers and public relations practitioners with new insights into the internal workings of organizations outside of the more stable Western environment, thereby working towards a more global understanding of theory and practice which will eventuate more sustainable development and organizational effectiveness.

1.1.4 Situating this study within Communication

Organizational identity is primarily a challenge of internal communication researched in both public relations and organizational communication. This study is thus interdisciplinary and further relies on theories developed within management research. In each field, the question of identity is core to strategic management. How organizations understand and manage identities is crucial to organizational effectiveness and in thinking of the full scope of people, process and product.

In the field of communication, organizational identity is rooted in rhetorical studies, particularly in the works of Kenneth Burke (Wieland, 2017) and scholarship that followed as in Burkean identification and the rhetoric work of George Cheney. Cheney (1983) synthesized Burkean identification and argued that organizations can lead individuals along the line to forming identification. The analogy with which to understand this is perhaps the maxim that "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink." Emphasis for the organization thus will be in creating strategies that help lead the horse to the stream such that the horse *wants* to drink water thereby completing the "inducement process" (Cheney, 1983, p. 147). Cheney (1983) provided four strategies with which organizations can help encourage identification. These strategies are the common ground technique, identification through antithesis, the assumed or transcendent "we" (or "they"), and unifying symbols. While the first three are derived from Burkean Identification, unifying symbols is a construct introduced by Cheney.

In this sense, the earliest works in communication connected identification with social identity. According to Wieland (2017), "Scott (1997) suggested that to understand identification more fully, scholars must seek to better theorize identity" (p. 1785). Craig Scott has thus been a big name in pioneering organizational identity research within communication by connecting identification and social identity theory. The work of Scott, Corman and Cheney (1998) helped move the field forward in looking at organizational identity as a communication process building on the structuration theory by Anthony Giddens. In this view, identity is thus a structural resource drawn upon in the identification communicative process (Wieland, 2017).

Identity has thus been seen as a target of identification and treated as a more stable entity. "The structuration approach to organizational identity marked an important shift in seeking to understand not only the process of identification but also the process of constituting organizational identities" (Wieland, 2017, p. 1785) within the field of communication. This study is thus located within this development and further connects to research in public relations for establishing a global theory. It follows the works of Verčič, Grunig and Grunig (1996) and Sriramesh and Verčič (2009) in drawing on environmental variables to help locate the study within its environment.

1.2 Literature Review

To fully understand the arguments and direction of this study, it is important to review relevant literature on organizational identity and the cultural and environmental variables that help define and understand the research problem. A synthesis of the literature from Management and Public Relations will help provide directions on how to locate and study the research problem. I begin first with a discussion on organizational identity.

1.2.1 What is Organizational Identity?

Organizational identity (OI) was first defined in 1985 in the work of Stuart Albert and David Whetten. It refers to how an organization defines itself to its stakeholders or provides answers to the question, *who are we?* (Albert et al., 2000, p. 13; Lin, 2004, p. 803; Zachary et al., 2011, p. 640; He & Brown, 2013, p. 5). Albert and Whetten posit that the identity of an organization, as perceived by its members, is central, distinctive and enduring (contained in Lin, 2004; Griepentrog et al., 2012; Zachary et al., 2011; Witting, 2006). Gioia et al. (2013) refer to these as the "three putative 'pillars' of identity" (p. 124). *Centrality* here refers to what organizational members consider as core or central characteristics of the organization. According to Gioia et al. (2013), “features that are central are manifested as key values, labels, products, services, or practices, etc. and are deemed to be essential aspects of organizational self-definition of ‘who we are’” (p. 125). This may be the most important of the three pillars of organizational identity as there might well be no conceivable identity without a core or central features (Gioia et al., 2013).

The second pillar, *distinctiveness*, refers to the degree to which organizational members perceive the organization as standing out from others or the value of being different and unique. The idea of identity presupposes difference. It is an identity that sets one entity apart from another. Brewer (1991) introduced the idea of “optimal distinctiveness” which refers to a sort of sweet spot for organizations wherein an organization desires its identity to be aligned and sufficiently similar to those of others in the same industry, yet so different from other players in the industry that they are seen as unique. It's that ideal spot where the organization is seen as similar enough such that it conforms and is recognized along with others, yet so different that it is seen as clearly not the same as all the rest. This is arguably the spot that Apple and its products enjoy. It is that sweet spot that allows organizational stakeholders to recognize an Apple MacBook as a laptop or personal computer but will often speak of preference for a MacBook over a PC as though a MacBook is not a personal computer (PC) just like its competitors in the industry.

In many ways, conformity to familiar industry standards helps organizations "secure legitimacy in the institutional environment" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 182; Glynn & Abzug, 2002; Hannan, 2005). And this legitimacy, Clegg, Rhodes and Kornberger (2007) argued, is a primary reason for asserting organizational identity. The irony is that while organizations search vehemently for optimal distinctiveness, the following of industry benchmarks means that the expressed distinctive characteristics of organizations in the same industry end up being similar or the same as the expressed distinctive characteristics of others in the same industry (Gioia et al., 2013). U.S. phone carriers in 2017 tried to pride themselves on providing unlimited network coverage with 4G LTE – the same "distinctive" characteristic that most other industry players advertised. Martin, Feldman, Hatch, and Sitkin (1983) referred to this idea as the "uniqueness paradox." The important lesson is that for distinctiveness as a pillar of organizational identity, what really matters is that organizational members *perceive* these values as setting them apart from others (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 183).

The third and perhaps most debated of the three pillars of organizational identity put forward by Albert and Whetten is that OI is *enduring*. An organization is seen as "enduring" by its stakeholders when it remains consistent in its identity regardless of changes in organizational objectives or the environment. Albert and Whetten refer to this consistency as those "features that exhibit some degree of sameness or continuity over time" (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 265). Scholars however, have debated whether indeed organizations remain the same or change over time – even if by a little bit. According to Whetten and Mackey (2002), "if it changes, it's not identity" (quoted in Gioia et al., 2013). On the other hand, "Gioia, Schultz, and Corley (2000) argued that even if OI claims remain the same over time, the meanings of their referential terms can and will change, therefore enduringness does not hold" (cited in Hatch, Schultz & Skov, 2015, p. 63).

Gagliardi (1986) maintained that organizations change to remain the same. Faced with threats or a changing environment, an organization "must change in order to preserve its identity" (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Gagliardi, 1986, p. 127). Gioia et al. (2013) argued that organizations may need to change in order to realign organizational image with the identity it has always been known for. To accomplish this, organizations often require public relations efforts (p. 138).

Arguably, the need to think of identity as stable helps make sense of who or what an organization is (Brown & Starkey, 2000) and maintain social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brown & Williams, 1984; Kramer, 1993). The key thing, Gioia et al. (2013) explained, is that organizational members often think of identity as remaining the same (enduring) because the same "labels" are used to describe identity. However, while labels may remain the same over time, what they reference often changes and sometimes, this happens "without conscious awareness." The idea, therefore, is that "*labels are stable, but their meanings are malleable—thus leading to the appearance of stability even as identity evolves*" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 126; emphasis theirs).

Several studies have shown that organizational identity does indeed change "in response to: desired future images (Gioia & Thomas, 1996), conformity to shifting institutional environments (Glynn & Abzug, 2002), identity threats (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006), and changes in ownership (Corley & Gioia, 2004)" (cited in Hatch, Schultz & Skov, 2015, p. 63). This debate has prompted some scholars to drop enduringness from the three pillars (Hatch, Schultz & Skov, 2015) in favor of seeing identity as possessing "continuity" instead. The discussion has in some sense moved forward from the question of whether identities do change to a discourse of the frequency of identity change: *episodic* (meaning long episodes of stability punctuated by periods of change) or *continuous* (meaning ongoing, continuous changes) (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 178; Weick & Quinn, 1999).

The enduring aspects of organizational identity become even more pertinent in this study given the precariousness of the Nigerian environment. As Gehman, Trevino, and Garud (2013) explained, “the more ambiguous and uncertain the environment, the more stable and enduring values are said to matter” (p. 106).

Putting this all together, it becomes clear that organizational identity serves the function of helping organizations achieve legitimacy (Clegg et al., 2007; Tripsas, 2009), as well as being a wheel or “internal guide for strategic action and day-to-day practices” (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 183) and a scope or insignia helping external publics and other organizations understand how to relate with it (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Tripsas (2009) referred to organizations as having internal and external identity. Once formed, organizational identity becomes a strong source of influence to the organization’s leaders and members (Lin, 2004) for internal coordination (Rockwell, 2016) as well as a tool guiding external interactions (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 161).

Rockwell (2016) provided that “a positive and distinctive organizational identity attracts the recognition, support, and loyalty of organizational members, key stakeholders, and constituents” (p. 15). A clear organizational identity can, for example, serve as a strong tool in issues management, which helps manage the both internal and external aspects of an issue. Dutton and Dukerich (1991) found that organizational identity served the New York and New Jersey Port Authority “as an important reference point that members used for assessing the importance of the issue” of homeless people using their property as resting shelter (p. 543). Organizational identity played a key role in members’ interpretation of the issue as well as the emotions and the efforts and actions taken by the organization.

It was easy for organizational members to evaluate issues and agree with the prioritization of issues (e.g., at first, homelessness is not important since Port Authority is not a social service) or be in consonance with actions taken when the issue became important as it posed a threat to central organizational identity such as being a “high-quality, first-class institution” (p. 543) “stained” by the presence of homeless people at its flagship facilities including the World Trade Center. Organizational identity also helped members be in tune with organizational leaders’ approach to dealing with the homeless issues in a humane way (e.g., when the organization sought partnerships to find alternative shelter options and encouraged the homeless people to take advantage of these facilities). Even when the organization did not want or get public recognition for its efforts, organizational members could match the approach and actions to tackling the issue with those values that were central, distinctive and enduring at the Port Authority – such as not being a social service institution but having a commitment to high quality, professional and technical expertise while staying committed to the welfare of the region – which would include the homeless problem.

There is a distinction drawn in the literature between organizational identity and organizational identity *claims*. In the next section, I provide a brief discussion of this as it helps better explain organizational identity and the goals of this study.

1.3 The difference between organizational identity and organizational identity claims

One important distinction to make based on the literature is between “organizational identity” and “organizational identity claims.” A common conception of “organizational identity” is identity as it is perceived and understood in the minds of organizational publics and stakeholders, while “organizational identity claims” refer to organizational identity which the organization communicates to same stakeholders and publics. Whetten (2006) referred to an organization’s organizational identity claims as “referents, signifying an organization’s self-determined (and ‘self’-defining) unique social space and reflected in its unique pattern of binding commitments” (p. 220).

Essentially, organizations make claims about who they are. If organizational identity is understood as a socially constructed phenomenon (more on this later in the paper), created and reinforced in the minds of organizational members through daily interactions, then it is possible to understand that there is sometimes a difference between who the organizational leaders may say the organization is and how identity is understood and interpreted by members and publics. Organizations thus want (and need) to make efforts to align OI claims with OI understanding(s).

In Tripsas (2009), the digital photography company Linco made a business and organizational identity claim change from being a digital photography company to a memory company. The organization focused on this change and identified this as a new organizational identity. Stakeholders, however, did not immediately understand or accept this claim and continued to acknowledge its identity as a digital photography organization even up to five years into the new organizational identity claim. Similarly, Elsbach and Kramer (1996) reported that universities began making new organizational identity claims when *Business Week*’s rankings were not favorable. They emphasized mostly those features where they excelled while downplaying those where they did not rank as high. Some schools’ new organizational identity claims even highlighted variables not covered by the rankings such as being the best in their region.

Organizational identity claims also come from organizational founders whose vision the organization is built on. In the current study, the organization (FEMVEL) is led by the founder as CEO (Pichot, 2016) whose conceptualization of organizational identity claims may or may not align with organization identity understanding. As this study also explores this phenomenon, it is important to review literature on organizational founders.

1.3.1.1 The Founder's vision and organizational identity

Pichot (2016) accounted for the varied uses of the terms "founder" and "entrepreneur" in the literature. For Pichot, the entrepreneur necessarily thinks of herself or himself as inventive as opposed to a business owner which may have founded a new business due to economic or circumstantial conditioning. To this effect, it is common to find terms such as "small business owner," "owner-managed," "entrepreneur," "founder CEO," "founder-owner," "founder & entrepreneur" and "founder" (Pichot, 2016, p. 32). For the purpose of this study, the use of the term "founder" refers to the later four in which the founder is an entrepreneur as well as the head of the managing team of the organization.

Empirical studies have provided that the vision of the organizational founder affects the structure, growth and strategic decision making of the organization. "A business founder's vision may significantly impact whether an enterprise will grow and flourish or remain small and decline" (Langowitz & Allen, 2010). Hoang and Gimeno (2010) proposed that the reason for this could be because the "founder's identity characteristics imprint decision processes [(Fauchart & Gruber, 2011)] that have implications for its subsequent performance…given that a founder is likely to dominate the decision-making process during the firm's early years" (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010, p. 50).

True to this, Powell and Baker (2014) found differences in how organizational founders and the organization reacted to threatening environmental conditions. In their longitudinal study of 13 resource-constrained, founder-run textile and apparel companies, they found that these founders defined the adversity differently and this affected the firm's strategic approach. Where the founder saw the adversity in positive light as an opportunity, the firm embraced the negative environmental situation. For the organizations whose founder saw it as a challenge, the firm tried countering the adversity; while others who defined is as a threat worked to accommodate it. In all these, Powell and Baker (2014) found significantly that founders used “their firms as vehicles to defend who they are or to become who they want to be” (p. 1406).

The key idea from the literature is that the organizational founder’s self-concept (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010) and social identity (Brändle, Berger, Golla & Kuckertz, 2018) will play a key role in defining “who we are” as an organization and what decisions are most significant to us. This is most observable in a founder-run organization where issues are “bracketed” such that strategic decisions come more from a place of identity centrality.

Fauchart & Gruber (2011) found three “pure” types of founders and a few hybrid groups which combined features of the pure groups. These groups are the Darwinians, communitarians and missionaries. Darwinians are what the literature usually describes when talking about entrepreneurs. These founders are there for the business and profit. Strategy is built around what will lower cost, beat the competition and make the most money. Communitarians also want profit but are more in it for the communal good. In the sports equipment industry where the study was conducted, communitarians wanted to ensure the high quality of their products. They themselves use these products and understand the true needs of the niche community of users. Quality and customers’ satisfaction were the most important for these founders. The last type of founders and the rarest are the missionaries. They are not in it for profit at all but see their role as a mission to the entire society and not just the small community of target market. They want to ensure their entire production process as well as who they buy from serve a bigger mission to save the earth and help people. These founders’ social identities influenced the organization’s business operations, strategic decisions, opportunity identification, market segment(s) served, competitiveness, customer needs addressed and organizational life.

In a similar vein, Brändle et al. (2018) provided that founders' self-efficacy in their entrepreneurial endeavors hold implications for the firm such as overconfident entrepreneurs setting unattainable goals or "overchallenged entrepreneurs being deterred by complex opportunities" (p. 17). Ultimately, "firm creation is an inherently social activity and organizations are themselves social constructions" (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011, p. 938; see also Leitch and Harrison, 2016); thus, the process of organizational identity integration is also a social process.

According to Atienza (2017), "the work of identity formation starts from the articulation of the envisioned organizational identity by the founder" (Atienza, 2017, p. 590). The founder must articulate an attractive vision of organizational identity and communicate it lucidly to influence organizational members to embrace their dreams (Atienza, 2017; Baum & Locke, 2004; Pichot, 2016). Atienza provided three stages or cycles for integrating organizational identity claims with organizational identity understandings. Cycle 1 is understanding organizational identity where the founder shares organizational identity claims and asks members for their understanding of the labels. The second cycle is fine-tuning the practice of organizational identity while the third cycle involved designing the integration of an identity-based culture.

Pichot (2016) provided that for sustainable growth, founders must inspire members to embrace their vision. This vision is distinct from strategic planning but rather a big picture set to motivate action towards organizational identity formation. "Once founders can inspire a collective vision among their employees and managers, they are better-positioned to affect the environment, create opportunities, and, therefore, demand for their products" (Pichot, 2016, p. 45). This study sets as one of its goals an investigation into the founder's perspective on organizational identity. At FEMVEL, how does the founder's perspective of identity, his vision for the organization and what he thinks the organization is compare to organizational identity held in the minds of the multiple stakeholders such as managers and other employees? What disconnects might exist between the founder's vision of identity and the rank and file perspective on identity? If there are none, how has the founder of this organization been able to accomplish the three cycles of integrating organizational identity which Atienza (2017) described?

In the next section of this literature review, I provide an overview of the different approaches or paradigms to studying organizational identity.

1.3.1.2 The Paradigmatic Approaches to Studying Organizational Identity

Rockwell (2016) discussed three "paradigms that explain how identity emerges" (Rockwell, 2016, p.15). These are perspectives through which scholars have studied organizational identity. These stem from fundamental truths about a scholar's paradigmatic worldview. Rockwell (2016) listed the linguistic-discursive paradigm, social actor paradigm and the social-constructionist paradigm. Gioia et al. (2013) list four perspectives: population ecologist, institutionalist, social actor and social constructionist paradigms. It is not clear where the discrepancy in the views stem from but in this paper, I will start by providing brief summaries of the three views not accounted for in both studies (linguistic-discursive, political ecologist and institutionalist paradigms) and then provide an extensive discussion on the social actor and social constructionist views. These later two are the most common paradigms and the most relevant to the current study.

First to be discussed is the linguistic-discursive paradigm. Here, organizational identity is seen as being formed through linguistic processes. It "is the result of a continuously narrated argument… [and develops on] how language constructs what the reality of the organization is for members (Chreim, 2005; Cornelissen, 2006)" (in Rockwell, 2016, p. 15). This may perhaps be thought of as a rhetorical view of organizational identity. Cheney (1983) wrote about the dimensions of rhetoric in organizational identification. In this view, metaphors, storytelling, categorizations, labels, names, political plays and other linguistic-cum-rhetorical tools are used in constructing identity (Rockwell, 2016). This use of the linguistic-discursive paradigm involves "ongoing narration, involving creating, adjusting, affirming, and rejecting various interpretations" (Rockwell, 2016, pp. 15 – 16; see also Czarniawska, 1997).

Next is the political ecologist paradigm. This paradigm sees organizational identity as externally defined and held by publics outside the organization. In this view, an organization's identity is what these external publics say or understand it to be. This identity is often developed through group or category membership such as the industry the organization is in. This view also takes identity as stable and unchanging owing to structural inertia ("a correspondence between the behavioral capabilities of a class of organizations and their environments" (Hannan & Freeman, 1984, p. 151)) and institutional pressures.

Scholars who hold this view argue that external publics hold institutional "identity codes" which spell out the expected behaviors of organizations within a certain category or industry. Adhering to these codes leads to legitimacy while deviation causes devaluation and may also pose threats to the organization's survival (Hannan, 2005). While this view makes sense, Gioia et al. (2013) argued that the population ecologists do not study organizational identity. Rather, what Hannan and Freeman (1977), Polos, Hannan and Caroll (2002) and other studies that have adopted this paradigm have fallen for is a “mislabeling of the concept of image” (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 127). “Gioia and Thomas (1996) clarified that identity refers to internal stakeholders’ perceptions, whereas reputation and image refer to outsiders’ perceptions” (Rockwell, 2016, p. 15). This excerpt from Dutton and Dukerich (1991) helps understand the distinction between identity, image and reputation:

> “An organization’s identity describes what its members believe to be its character; an organization’s image describes attributes members believe people outside the organization use to <u>distinguish</u> it [while] reputation describes the actual attributes outsiders ascribe to an organization” (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991, p. 547).

This is not to dismiss the importance of organizational image. According to Dutton and Dukerich (1991), organizational image connects more directly to the "collective self-esteem derivable from organizational membership" (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991, p. 548). This image, represented by how external publics perceive organizational members then goes further to influence "organizational identity [and members’ self-concepts] as members mirror themselves in the comments (and complaints) about the organization” (Hatch & Schultz, 1997, p. 362). As this identification occurs, and organizational identity becomes a part of member’s self-concept, “damage to the organization’s image hurt[s] individuals personally” (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991, p. 548). Thus, organizational members “are personally motivated” to make efforts to preserve, repair and protect a positive image for their organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991, p. 548). These actions in response to image may then lead to conformity with industry standards or “identity codes,” as political ecologists call them.

Furthermore, there is the institutionalist paradigm in studying organizational identity. Unlike the population ecologist paradigm, identity here is seen as internally defined. Similar to the population ecologist paradigm however, it sees organizations as isomorphic due to being highly socialized and conditioned by strong institutional influences. There is an emphasis on institutional processes as a way of "institutionalizing identity" (Glynn & Abzug, 2002) and less on the distinctiveness of organizational identity (Gioia et al., 2013). In addition, much of the institutionalist paradigm has seen identity as stable and homogenous just as they saw the rest of the organization and institutional aspects. Organizational identity – "as [with] most other institutional aspects—was treated as given and essentially fully-formed" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 171). Studies thus only served to show the strong influence of institutions on making homogenous organizational processes and even identity. Thus, emphasis in this view is on legitimacy and mimetism among organizations. There has, however, been a surge in recent years on recognizing the dynamism of organizational identity and an alignment of the institutional view with the more traditional organizational identity research views.

The traditional views or paradigms for studying organizational identity are the social actor and social constructionist paradigms. These views see identity as dynamic and are more similar to each other than the others. They are the dominant perspectives through which organizational identity is studied. They see organizational identity as self-referential and defined within the organization rather than by outsiders or by institutional isomorphism. The social actor paradigm sees the organizational entity as a social actor whose character is put on display through organizational identity. Identity is thus "an objective property of the organizational entity" (cited in Rockwell, 2016, p.15).

In this view, organizational identity claims are held by organizational leaders and communicated to members to explain "who we are" (Rockwell, 2016). That is, organizational leaders determine the organizational identity. "This paradigm assumes that leaders' statements about the identity are accurate and that they indeed describe fixed features of the organization (Chreim, 2005)" (cited in Rockwell, 2016, p.15). Thus, a study adopting this paradigm "focuses on the overt claims made in articulating the features of organizational identity" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 127).

Criticisms levelled against the social actor view address its emphasis on organizational identity claims. One way to look at it is that OI claims do not necessarily represent organizational identity as experienced by and held in the minds of organizational members. Gioia et al. (2013) reported that this view leads to reliance on "projected images the organization hopes others will accept as legitimate" (p. 170). Rockwell (2016) also highlighted the role given to organizational leaders in this view. While it is true that "founders and leaders' beliefs and values" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 164) are key to organizational identity formation (Gioia et al., 2010; Hannan, Baron, Hsu, & Koçak, 2006; Kroezen & Heugens, 2012), there is perhaps too much of a reliance on the organizational leader within the social actor paradigm.

While organizational leaders often serve as rudders for identity, synthesize OI claims, resolve identity ambiguity (Corley & Gioia, 2004), and provide basis for organizational members and external publics to understand "who we are" as an organization, organizational leaders alone do not determine what becomes the identity of the organization (Corley, 2004; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia et al., 2010). This follows the social constructionist view of organizational identity pushed forward in the works of Dennis Gioia. "Organizational identity and organizational practices are constantly contested and debated" (Madsen, 2016, p. 218). A founder's blueprints are vital to the life of an organization (Hannan et al., 2006) but without understanding from members, there really is no organizational identity: just OI claims. There has to be space for negotiating the organization's identity as members need to connect OI claims to their own prior experiences and "make sense of the new identity on their own… if they are to 'buy in' " (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 164). This co-construction forms a "community identity," which is a step in the process towards organizational identity. This community or collective identity (Wertsch, 2012) is formed and reinforced in the organizational narrative or storytelling (Gioia et al., 2013).

Organizational members' participation in negotiating identity, however, results in increased loyalty and connectedness to the organization. "It is valuable for organizations when coworkers not only feel that they were asked … but that they were actually the drivers" (Madsen, 2016, p. 218) in formal or informal deliberations about organizational identity. They see the Identity "as more authentic" and are simultaneously equipped to represent the organization and speak strongly on its behalf among external publics.

This later view is what separates the last paradigm, the social constructionist paradigm, from all others; that is, the belief that organizational identity is co-constructed through the deliberations and daily interactions of organizational members "over time" (Ran & Duimering, 2007). Coupland and Brown (2004) metaphorically described this as a "discursive achievement" wherein stakeholders (organizational members) are rhetors in debate over identity (p. 1325). This view recognizes identity as dynamic (changing) as opposed to static (enduring). Identity is seen as "more malleable, less the product of senior executives' decisions and more open to political influence at different levels, and less clearly defined and more ambiguous" (He & Brown, 2013, p. 9).

For social constructionists, "identity is created and sustained through the sensemaking interactions and interpretations of organization members and stakeholders" (Rockwell, 2016, p.15). Identity is "continually under construction" (Madsen, 2016, p. 202) through the "co-evolution of claims and understandings… and their interplay" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 160). Understanding reflects members' sensemaking of OI claims and publics' reactions to these claims. "Understandings become self-reinforcing because they continue to shape successive perceptions [(see Tripsas, 2009)], behaviors [(see Dutton & Dukerich, 1991)], and experiences [(see Gioia et al., 2010)]" (Rockwell, 2016, p.15).

I align with the social constructionist approach to organizational identity. It is my view that organizational leaders are very instrumental in designing and determining organizational identity claims. However, through the establishment of the organization, identity is negotiated, contested, debated and often unequivocally agreed on by organizational leaders and members through daily interactions and formal conversations regarding organizational development. Where I do not align with the social constructionist literature is in the view that identity is constantly in flux. I agree in some ways with Gagliardi (1986), that organizations change in order to stay the same. I acknowledge that truly, what organizational identity references may change over time as industry, business interests and organizational members change. I also accept that it is possible to speak of an organization that branches off as an entity taking on a new life. However, I argue that although identity is continuously contested, fundamentally, the core identity remains the same, lest it becomes a completely different organization carrying the name of an organization that has since ceased to exist. After all, we only speak of being the same because there is "some sense of lasting or stable element" to the essence in us. If that changes, are we really still speaking of the same person – or organization (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 168)?

In the next section of this paper, I provide an environmental setting for contextualizing this study in Nigeria. I borrow from research in Public Relations for local applications of generic (or normative) principles.

CHAPTER 2. THE CASE OF NON-WESTERN NIGERIA

"Next to God, there is nothing that fills the heart of the Nigerian with greater awe than a Chairman. God is divine, but the chairman rules the temporal"
Peter Enahoro (1966)

Nigerian journalist and author of *How to become a Nigerian*

2.1 Locating The Study In Nigeria: The Environmental Variables

Organizational identity scholarship assumes a democratic political system (Gioia et al., 2013) and a stable economic system that allows for a smooth functioning of business, which of course is reflected in how organizations are conceptualized. This, however, is not always the case. While there are regular elections, Nigeria's political history has been plagued with unstable leadership and incessant coups d'état. Heavy reliance on petroleum and petroleum products as the primary source of export and revenue has exposed the economy to shocks due to global market trends such as the fluctuating price of crude oil. Nigeria is directly impacted by its own created as well as global instabilities. As a result, business operations, as with those of FEMVEL in this study, are afflicted, constantly wrestling to create stability while ensuring profitability to remain in business. The question thus is how these might affect organizational identity. To what extent is the organizational identity at FEMVEL still consistent with the conceptions of organizational identity as central, distinctive and enduring – given the environment?

Similarly, the corrupt political climate affects business operations in grave ways. Sriramesh and Verčič (2003, 2009, 2012) discussed how for emerging economies, "alternative [democratic] views may be encouraged in theory but not in practice, resulting in various forms of covert and overt forms of self-, social, and government censorship" (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009, p. 8). For example, notwithstanding strict laws, there are still cases of rape, domestic violence, child labor, child marriage, and female genital mutilation with few arrests or trials in Nigeria (Freedom House, 2017). The war against the proliferation of fake and substandard food and drugs by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control in Nigeria is still ongoing leading to challenges and constraints for businesses like FEMVEL in the food industry. Thus, if the system is corrupted and unstable, running business often will require some level of savviness which is currently not accounted for in the literature.

Other studies in organizational identity literature have also raised discussions on what other unaccounted-for external variables may impact the study of organizational identity. For example, Glynn and Watkiss (2012) looked at societal culture, Jack and Lorbiecki (2007) reviewed the role of national identity, and Kjærgaard, Morsing and Ravasi (2011) examined the influence of the media, while Gioia at el. (2013), Hatch and Schultz (1997), and Hatch, Schultz and Skov (2015) reiterated the importance of culture to organizational identity. Pant and Ojha (2017) edited a special issue on organizational identity in the developing world. In this issue, researchers explored managerial values and organizational identity examining variables such as workplace spirituality, dual identity, corruption and Indian psychology in organizational identity for an understanding of the organizational self.

In this chapter, I move this research study forward by discussing environmental variables in Nigeria that affect organizations. To do this, I borrow from research in public relations (see Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009), which has provided five environmental variables that practitioners must be aware of in order to localize research or practice in different environments. I discuss Nigeria's unstable political system, volatile economy, national culture, level of activism, and media and press freedom. These serve on the one hand to demonstrate what organizational environments look like in Nigeria thereby showcasing deep-rooted values of organizational leaders and members. On the other hand, they also aid in the interpretation of organizational identity within the organization that this study researches. An understanding of these variables will play a significant role in making sense of organizational identity as found in FEMVEL during the research project. I now turn to a discussion of the political system in Nigeria followed by a discussion of the level of economic development.

2.1.1 Political system

Nigeria is a non-Western, developing, country with a population of 184 million people according to the Nigerian National Population Commission website (www.population.gov.ng). Nigeria is the most populous African nation and the nation with the highest number of black people in the world. It is commonly said that one in every five Africans you meet is a Nigerian. Nigeria is located in sub-Saharan West Africa, covering 356,669 sq. miles or 923,768 sq. km ("Nigeria country profile," 2017). Having gained independence from British colonial rule in 1960, the nation became a Federal republic in 1963 and joined the Commonwealth of Nations led by President Nnamdi Azikiwe and Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa. Nigeria is a leading member of the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) and also a member of other international organizations such as the United Nations, African Union, the World Trade Organization, among others.

The majority of the Nigerian population is under 30 ("Nigeria's population now," 2017), with average life expectancy of 54.5 years ("Countries: Nigeria," n.d.; "Nigeria: Life expectancy," n.d.). Alarmingly, more than half of its young population is unemployed or underemployed according to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics. As may be expected, this will affect managers' view of their human resources as dispensable, as well as how organizational members feel about their role and relationship to the organization and its identity. This will become obvious in how the various stakeholders at FEMVEL talk about the identity of the organization.

English is Nigeria's official language and thus the language of education, commerce and government, though Lagos state in February 2018 adopted Yoruba language as a requisite language as well ("LASG: Yoruba Now Mandatory," 2018). The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is also written in English. Indigenous languages are also in full use in the different regions occupied by indigenous groups (Koper, Babaleye & Jahansoozi, 2009, p. 312). It is a general rule of thumb, however, that although English is the official language and indigenous languages are very common, speaking Nigerian pidgin English, known locally as "broken English" or simply "pidgin," is more effective in getting around the country. It also serves as a way for in-group membership and language for socialization.

Nigeria is divided into six geo-political zones – North West, North East, Middle Belt, SouthWest, South East and the South South. The current study on FEMVEL is being carried out in South West Nigeria. Nigeria also has divisions among ethnic groups, with the major three being Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. The Yoruba people occupy most of SouthWest Nigeria while the Hausa people occupy the North and the Igbo, the Eastern part of Nigeria. There are approximately "250 ethnic groups, with [the] three major tribes constituting over 40 percent of the population" (Koper, Babaleye, Jahansoozi, 2009, p. 312). Other than these three, major ethnic/linguistic groups include the Edo people, Ijaw, Efik, Fulani, Kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv, Nupe, Gwari, Igala, Jukun, Igbira, Idoma, Itsekiri, Urhobo and the Anang, with approximately 374 dialects (Koper, Babaleye, Jahansoozi, 2009, p. 312; Findlay, 2017).

Nigerians are very religious, with 91 percent reporting that they attend religious services (Prinz, 2012, p. 46), and the country boasts of "the largest Muslim population in sub-Saharan

Africa" (Gov.uk., n.d. B) with Sharia law adopted by 12 states in Northern Nigeria (Freedom House, 2017). The major religions are Islam, Christianity and local indigenous faiths (Koper, Babaleye, & Jahansoozi, 2009, p. 312). Khari and Sinha (2017) showed that workplace spirituality in developing countries can add value to organizational identity and knowledge sharing intention among organizational members.

Nigeria is a federal republic: a "democrac[y] wherein multiple parties and individuals compete in open elections to earn the right to rule for a predetermined period" (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009, p. 6). Elections are conducted every four years for the office of the president and other major offices of government. Because of ethnic dividing lines, however, Nigeria practices what is known as "federal character" (see http://www.federalcharacter.gov.ng). Essentially, this is an effort by the government to ensure representation of members of the different ethnic and cultural groups in government and civil service. Currently, the president is Mohammed Buhari, a Hausa man, while his vice president is Yemi Osinbanjo, a Yoruba man.

Nigeria operates a multi-party-political system. Political parties, however, gather around the interest to take over political power rather than shared ideologies. As a result, cross carpeting is very common with little identification with party and ideology. It is common to find power-hungry politicians switch parties and suddenly support those they previously vehemently criticized. Often times, even those that were outspoken against government corruption are later indicted of being guilty of the same offenses. It is the norm for former leaders to be probed and tried on allegations of corruption. In 2016, the Buhari government arrested many top military and government officials on allegations of corruption. Between 2015 and mid 2017, the government had recovered US$9 billion in stolen assets. (Freedom House, 2017, p. 10).

Transparency International ranks Nigeria as the 16th most corrupt nation in the world with a score of 27 where 0 is the height of corruption out of 100 (Transparency International, 2018). The corruption perception index also highlights the connection between corruption and inequality which is very pervasive in Nigeria (Transparency International, 2017). The key to keep in mind is how these affect the approach to business and may create a difference in the founder's vision of organizational identity and those of organizational members. Corruption has enjoyed social acceptance in Nigeria, thus there may be strategic frictions in their visions. Sahu (2017) contributed to this discourse a perception on corruption that shows that collectivism as a cultural factor may contribute to this where organizational members may not easily distinguish between what is collectively owned and what is corruption.

Although on paper, Nigeria operates a pluralistic democracy with the involvement of its citizens, it is widely believed that it is run as a country for the elite and privileged. Those with wealth or power continually oppress those without. Even government agencies set up to serve and protect Nigerian citizens use their positions to exploit the people. For example, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), rather than protect and regulate the nation's oil wealth so as to serve its citizens, has served as a channel for further looting the nation's oil wealth. The police randomly stop and search citizens hoping to obtain a bribe, and government agents often demand bribes as fees for them to do their jobs. This is common in almost every agency. Peter Enahoro, who wrote the humorous satire *How to be a Nigerian*, separates this abuse into two different levels. There is "dash" and there is "bribe." What government officials often take is regarded by them as dash--a fee or tip for appreciating them for doing their job. Only, this fee comes before the job; without it, your request will not get fulfilled (Enahoro, 1966, pp. 35-37). The dash can be seen as a form of pay-to-play scheme (Shapiro, 2014). The courts aren't much better and ideals like justice or fighting for fair treatment through the court are myths to the ordinary Nigerian (Freedom House, 2017, para. 32).

Sadly, corruption in Nigeria neither starts nor ends with the government and its agents. It is very common to find counterfeit versions of anything. Copyright and intellectual property is not well respected and entertainment products are often dubbed and sold openly. Other forms of corruption rampant in Nigeria include advance-fee (419) fraud (Oriola, 2005; Smith, Holmes & Kaufmann, 1999), widespread sexual harassment (Johnson, 2010; Ladebo, 2003) and discrimination against women (Freedom House, 2017, para 2).

Unfortunately, Nigeria's corruption also leads to the production and selling of counterfeit and substandard food and medications which kill in large numbers. When former head of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Dr. Dora Nkem Akunyili, took office in 2001, one of her motivations in combating fake drugs was that she witnessed fellow citizens including her sister die because they fought "killer diseases like malaria and tuberculosis with little more than sugar syrup and chalk tablets, cynically packaged to look like the real thing" (Frenkiel, 2005, para. 4). Half of all drugs in circulation at the time were counterfeit or substandard – even in hospitals. Surgeons unknowingly administered fake adrenalin (which was just water), sub-strength muscle relaxant and other sub-par drugs in attempts to save lives. To Akunyili, this was "the highest form of terrorism against public health" (Frenkiel, 2005, para. 8).

In her fight, she closed down locations with high amounts of fake drug trade, confiscated thousands of dollars' worth of fake drugs, prosecuted counterfeiters and assembled female agents (who she believed are less susceptible to bribery). Corruption, however, fought back and tried to take her life. NAFDAC offices were set ablaze and there was an assassination attempt on her life on December 26, 2003 (Johnson, n.d.). Fortunately, she survived and NAFDAC has been largely successful in halting the sale and distribution of fake and substandard medication. NAFDAC also regulates food production and sales of packaged foods and refreshments in Nigeria. This is relevant in this study as FEMVEL, the organization this paper studies, produces food and snacks that are then sold in local communities. FEMVEL has also had to struggle with copycat companies imitating their products for cheaper, substandard versions and cutting into their market share. This has led to steep changes in strategy some of which may have challenged the organization's identity.

In the next section, I discuss the economy in Nigeria. This exists on the backdrop of the ongoing political sphere which certainly affects or impedes economic growth and development. One obvious example of the interaction between the political and economic spheres is the billions of dollars purloined by former head of State, General Sani Abacha, who Transparency International in 2004 ranked as the 4^{th}-most corrupt leader (Hodess, 2004, p. 13). Removing so much money from the system definitely destabilizes the economy. Similarly, the 2016 federal budget was not signed until May that year because of bizarre political hindrances such as budget padding and the mystical disappearance of the budget (Aziken, 2016; Freedom House, 2017). These political mishaps continue to gravely perturb the economy, making it more and more difficult to operate a stable business within it.

I now turn to an overview of the Nigerian economy.

2.1.2 Level of Economic development

Nigeria's economy is considered a managed, emerging market economy or frontier market (Shapiro, 2014). "The essence of a market economy is to create opportunities, facilitate competition and guarantee consumers' choice" (Clement, 2017). Goldman Sachs' 2005 BRICS report of fast growing economies predicted that Nigeria will be among the 20 largest economies by 2050 (O'Neill, Wilson, Purushothaman, and Stupnytska, 2005, p. 8; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009). Economic growth at the time of the Goldman Sachs' report was 5.1% although that has slowed since 2014 culminating in a 2016 recession.

Following a 2014 rebasing of the Nigerian economy to account for growing industries such as telecommunication, manufacturing, film and entertainment among other things, Nigeria became Africa's largest economy at US$510 billion ("Nigeria's GDP: Step change," 2014). It also ranked 24th largest in the world, ahead of Belgian and Taiwanese economies ("Nigeria's GDP: Step change," 2014). In 2006 under president Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria became the first African nation to pay off its debt to the Paris Club of lenders aided by high oil prices and a pardon of US$18 billion (Koper et al., 2009) of the US$30 billion the country was owing the club ("Five things you should know about Paris Club," 2017; "Nigeria profile – Timeline," 2017).

The local currency is the Naira (₦) and is regulated by the Central Bank of Nigeria in Abuja and the Nigerian Stock Exchange in Lagos. The Central Bank of Nigeria values the naira at ₦305.96 to $1 (USD) at the inter-bank rate and N360.47/US$ at the "investor and exporter window" while the parallel market exchanges at ₦362/US$ ("Lagos parallel market rates," n.d.), although this fluctuates very frequently. The Central Bank of Nigeria puts inflation at 15.37 percent year-on-year ("Economic report fourth quarter 2017," n.d., pp. 2 & 21).

"Nigeria is a dream market" for its demographics and consumption, – gigantic, exposed (Jadesimi, 2015, para. 3) and highly indulgent with almost half of its population urban and under 30. (Gov.UK., n.d.). It is a vibrant group of consumers full of potential and hungry for market consumption. However, poor economic management and high inequality in the distribution of wealth has led to high unemployment and low purchasing power. For example, 2016 per capita income was reportedly $1,976 (USD) ("Nigeria economic outlook," 2018). In the third quarter of 2017, the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics reported youth unemployment at 18.8% and underemployment at 21.2%. Essentially, 52.65% (or 10.96 million unemployed, 11.68 million underemployed) of this young vibrant group have either no work or work below their skills and credentials (National bureau of statistics, n.d.; National bureau of statistics, 2017, p. 2).

With the discovery of oil in 1956, there was an abandoning of agriculture and the economy became oil-dependent. Nigeria shifted from being a major exporter of agricultural products to becoming an importer nation in just 50 years owing to oil dependence. Furthermore, oil mining and spills have also damaged the oil rich, riverine areas of the South South damaging farming in that region. The oil boom in the '70s owing to increase in oil prices meant that other means of gross domestic production were ignored to embrace the sudden windfall of oil wealth. This boom, however, had its consequences. Sriramesh and Verčič (2009) warned of these. The state must carefully direct economic and fiscal policies, and provide needed infrastructure to even out the effects of windfall wealth and neoliberal policies which, while great, can have negative effects if adopted too quickly or without careful and intentional management – as has been the case in Nigeria.

These outcomes have trickled down negative effect to the functioning of business as inflation, dependence on oil, economic volatility and lack of needed infrastructure have all contributed to challenges facing business firms in Nigeria. Thus, beyond competing for profit, businesses are often in a struggle against the economy to stay alive in business. As such, like Nigerians in the general society, organizations may tend to be aggressive in their outlook to business and competition. This holds the possibility of preventing deep connections with organizational stakeholders. It may however, also hold the inadvertent effect of actually strengthening ties with organizational members. After all, as Scott and Lane (2000) noted, “people's perceived overlap with an organization will enhance their self-esteem (i.e., the attractiveness of the overlap) … to the extent that they view prototypical characteristics of the organization as consistent with the norms, values, and definitions of the embedding culture” (p. 49). Thus, an organization reflecting tendencies that are consistent with Nigeria-specific values and practices (in this case, in terms of daily competitiveness and the drive to survive) will hold a stronger sense of identity among organizational members.

In Africa, Nigeria is the largest producer of crude oil (Carpenter, 2015; Dibie, 2017), the 12th largest producer in the world at 1.87 million barrels of crude oil produced daily (“Country Comparison: Crude oil – production,” n.d.) and the sixth largest exporter of crude oil in the world (“Country Comparison: Crude oil – exports,” n.d.). Before the 2016 recession and vandalism of oil pipelines, Nigeria readily produced up to 2.6 million barrels per day (Carpenter, 2015). Petroleum reserves remain the 10th largest in the world (“Country Comparison: Crude oil – proved reserves,” n.d., Koper et al., 2009. p. 321) with 37.06 billion barrels proved reserve as of January 2017 (“Field listing: Crude oil - proved reserves,” n.d.).

The economy has experienced erratic growth and failures affected directly by “fluctuations of the global oil market” (“Nigeria economy,” n.d., para. 2) prices and demand; and exacerbated by Nigeria’s own internal problems. Over almost 60 years of independence, Nigerians have experienced increased population growth and continuous decline in standard of living (“Nigeria economy,” n.d.).

Nigeria suffers from a “resource curse” or the “Dutch disease” (Saibu & Loto, 2017). Empirical studies (e.g., Ahmadov, 2012; Haouas & Heshmati, 2014) have shown that oil production income often leaves "negative development impact and the drivers of economic growth … are vulnerable to external shocks outside of its control" (Saibu & Loto, 2017, p. 207). Nigeria is a classic case of this. The bigger challenge however, is the effect of macroeconomic management (or mismanagement) by the government, as Sriramesh and Verčič (2009) argued, and how these trickle down to affect organizations like FEMVEL. Nigeria has not been successful in diversifying the economy although there have been efforts by successive governments in that direction with the Structural Adjustment Programme (Mbachu, 1991), the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) (International Monetary Fund, 2005) and the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) ("ATA-Nigeria," n.d.).

Ironically, Nigeria's oil reliance is not only for external revenue but also internal daily operations due to lacking power supply infrastructure. There is ineffective electricity supply, so for subsistence, citizens and businesses rely on power generators which use refined petroleum. Oil has thus been a double-edged sword, central to Nigeria's economy at the macro and micro levels. Increases in global oil prices have not meant increased standard of living as Nigeria also lacks sufficient infrastructure to refine its own crude oil consumption. It imports refined oil, which increases cost of living as well as the cost of running a business. As a result, oil has been a key rallying point for political and economic tensions in the country including the 1967 civil war, nationwide strikes such as the one against the 2012 oil subsidy removal (Abutu, 2014; Igwebuike, Abioye, & Chimuanya, 2016), and civil unrest such as militancy, oil pipeline vandalism and kidnappings in the Niger Delta region. All these continue to contribute to very high costs of running business and continued instability culminating in a 2016 recession.

To escape recession, the government designed the Economic Recovery Growth Plan (2017–20) and the Seven Big Wins to reform the petroleum industry and sharply move the country off its dependence on oil. Efforts are to be driven by six identified key economic sectors: agriculture (cocoa, cassava, yams, cowpeas, beef, cashew, maize, palm oil, rice, groundnuts, plantain, ginger, cotton, horticulture); manufacturing; solid minerals (including iron, gold, and coal); services (including information and communication technology, financial services, tourism, and creative industries); real estate (and construction); and oil and gas ("African development bank," 2018). These efforts, an upturn in global oil prices and a deescalation of the Niger Delta pipeline vandalism crisis helped bring Nigeria out of recession by the second quarter of 2017 (National bureau of statistics, 2017). GDP growth in 2017 grew out of the recession in the negatives (-1.5% in 2016) to 0.8%. The African Development Bank predicts positive growth up to 2.1% in 2018 and 2.5% in 2019. ("African development bank," 2018).

See Figure 1 below for the 2017 third quarter GDP contribution by sector.

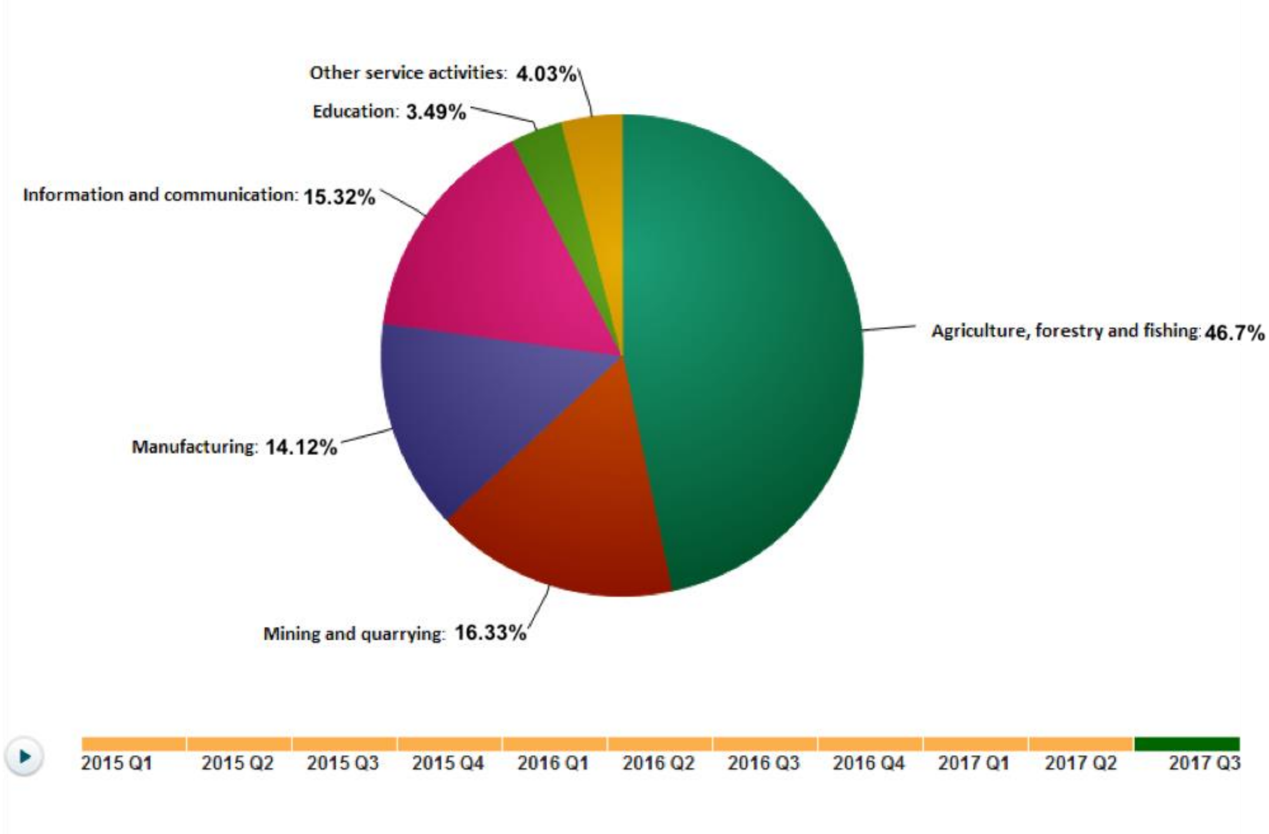

Figure 2.1 GDP contribution for Third Quarter 2017

Notes: GDP contribution based on third quarter of 2017
Source: National Bureau of Statistics. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/#gdp

Lack of infrastructure also extends to preservation of farm produce. In West Africa, almost half of harvested, perishable, farm produces are lost, caused by "ineffective or inappropriate food processing technologies, careless harvesting and inefficient post-harvest handling practices, bad roads, moribund rail systems, bad market practices and inadequate or complete lack of storage facilities, packing houses and market infrastructures" (Olunike, 2014, p. 29). This drives the cost of food up and makes most things seasonal. For a company like

FEMVEL, which relies heavily on farm products, this adds to the insecurity of business as cost of materials are as volatile as the economy itself.

Infrastructure spending has improved and the formation of the Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG) holds promise for improved infrastructures. As a whole, Nigeria and its economy is steadily in a state of perpetual “objective risk and subjective uncertainty” (Shapiro, 2014, p. 4). All these insecurities continue to hinder foreign investment (“Nigeria country proile,” 2017, para. 4). Foreign earnings dropped from US$3.2 billion in 2013 to US$500 million in just three years by 2016 (Okorafor, 2017). There is widespread poverty and Nigeria is considered among the 60 poorest nations of the world based on GDP purchasing-power-parity (PPP) per capita (“Nigeria economy,” n.d., para 2; Gregson, 2017). This is despite oil wealth and an early post-independence economy that promised to be among the 20 strongest in the world (O’Neill, Wilson, Purushothaman, and Stupnytska, 2005).

All these help drive home the arguments made in Sriramesh and Verčič (2009) and also in this paper that environmental variables make a difference in how organizations function. On the one hand, “the dynamics between political and economic systems often determine a nation’s stability and further economic development” (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009, p. 5). On the other hand, the absence of stability “directly affects variables such as poverty and illiteracy” (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009, p. 8) and organizations and organizational members’ orientation to work. What will matter most to the organization? Symbiotic relationships with organizational members? Or competitiveness in a dwindling environment? What about organizational members? Is it the success of the organization? Do they feel connected in the way identification literature describes it? Or is it personal security in terms of food, housing and family that matter most to them? Do they feel secure at their place of work knowing that commitment and hard work will bring long term benefits to them and the organization? Or is organizational identity more "what our boss says we should do" and it's really not my business? How might this affect how they value their relationship to the organization?

In the next section of this paper, I take a look at national culture and tease out culture as another environmental variable that affects organizational identity in Nigeria. Given the aforementioned political-economic setting, it may already be clear and indicative how Nigerians may be affected by the environment and the societal culture formed. Hofstede and other scholars provide a framework with which to discuss culture.

2.2 Culture

> *"Organizational identity… is perceived as legitimate [if it] is… 'desirable, proper, and appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions' (Such- man, 1995: 574)".* (Scott & Lane, 2000).

Culture is "an idea whose time has come" (Smircich, 1983, p. 339). These words from 1983 sound the clarion call for all global practitioners worldwide to heed to culture. However, despite being the most researched environmental variable (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009), there is still so much to do in finding a complete explanation for how culture affects organizational practice.

Borrowing from existing studies in culture, it is possible to provide here a discussion of culture in general and focus particularly on a description of culture in Nigeria. Specifically, this section of the paper will also explore the Yoruba culture in particular. This is in an effort to move away from simply describing national culture but also recognizing idiosyncratic differences of the Yoruba sub-culture which Matsumoto (1996) argued for. As evidenced in Motion, Haar, and Leitch (2012), while the rest of New Zealand falls very high on Hofstede's individualistic dimension, the indigenous Maori people have a very collectivist culture thus providing evidence for the need to also provide nuanced emic understandings. I will therefore also provide nuances of the Yoruba culture as FEMVEL is physically located in Ogun state where the culture is primarily Yoruba and majority of organizational members are Yoruba as well.

The Nigerian culture is shaped by historical context, traditions of its many people(s) and current socio-political circumstances. Nigeria was not a single territory or country until 1914 after the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates under Lord Lugard ("Nigeria: past," n.d., para. 7) following the 1884-85 Berlin Conference to divide Africa among European superpowers (Wesseling, 1996). Before this unification, what is today Nigeria was just different territories with their own very distinct cultural groups and practices. Amalgamation, and later independence, forced this distinct bodies of people to begin to see themselves as one and work together to build a nation that will serve their distinct identities and goals.

According to the Ethnologue on languages of the world (Nigeria, n.d.), there are 526 known living languages in Nigeria and seven extinct ones. There is also as many dialects and ethnic and sub-ethnic groups. For instance, while Yoruba is a major Nigerian language, the Ijebu subethnic people of Southwestern Nigeria speak both the general Yoruba but also have their own dialect called Ijebu, thus making a distinction in a subethnic sense. Probably owing to migrations and development, a good number of these languages are sadly “developing,” “vigorous” “in trouble” or facing the threat of “dying” (Nigeria, n.d.). (You may see the full list of Nigerian languages here: https://www.ethnologue.com/country/NG/languages).

Many Nigerians hold on tightly to their cultural origins. There is a lot of respect for their own traditions and cultural beliefs. As an example, Koper et al. (2009) provides that “election campaigning cannot succeed in local communities without the blessing of the traditional rulers and the cultural custodians" (Koper et al., 2009, p. 319). An easy example is the 2015 elections that saw the incumbent president, Dr Ebele Jonathan, paying homage and individualized visits to the palaces of major traditional rulers to get their blessings to rerun and win their support – which of course translates to the support of those governed by them ("Channels Television," 2015; Daniel, 2014).

Although these rulers do not hold much political power under current democratic dispensation, their influence is far reaching since especially "rural population to a very large extent relies heavily on the opinion of the traditional rulers" (Koper et al., 2009, p. 319). This is owing to the strong sense of identification and beliefs Nigerians hold in regards their own cultural traditions, above loyalty to state or identity as Nigerians or any other.

Coleman (1958) referred to this idea as an omnibus concept (pp. 425-426). In his view, Nigerians display "five different sorts of nationalism at once – 'African,' 'Nigerian,' 'Regional,' 'Group,' and 'Cultural'" (Geertz, 1973, p. 257). Of all these, their strongest loyalty is often to the cultural nationalism or what Emerson refers to as "terminal community" which is that community that "when the chips are down, effectively commands men's loyalty, overriding the claims both of the lesser communities within it and those that cut across it or potentially enfold it within a still greater society" (Geertz, 1973). This is most evidently demonstrated in the 1967 civil war which divided Nigeria across cultural or ethnic lines. Even when abroad, Nigerians form identification with their own ethnic group and may hold community meetings with them but are less interested in similar community meetings designed for all Nigerians.

Thus, "investing and operating a commercial business [like FEMVEL] in the Federal Republic of Nigeria requires understanding the culture and predispositions of its residents," as highlighted by risk management expert David Shapiro (2014, p. 3). It is not for those unwilling to learn its history, political economy and conflicts. This is pertinent to this study particularly in light of Jack and Lorbiecki's (2007) findings that "national identity can have a profound influence on organizational identity" (Gioia et al., 2013) just as societal culture affects and shapes organizational identity (Glynn & Watkiss, 2012) as may be found in this study of FEMVEL.

The Yoruba people of Nigeria are primarily located in Southwest Nigeria. They were traditionally agriculturalists. This major Nigerian ethnic group is made up of distinct subethnic groups major among which are "Oyo in the north, the Ifè, Ijesa, Ekiti and Ondo in the east, the Ijebu and Egba in the south, and the Ketu in the west" (Law, 1973, p. 208).

While it is common today to refer collectively to this large ethnic group as Yoruba, Law (1973) reported that "the use of the name 'Yoruba' to refer to the whole group is a recent development, which does not pre-date the nineteenth century" (p. 208). Although the Yoruba kingdoms shared the same language and culture, they did not see themselves as a single political unit until recent history. There was also no unified self-referential term for all kingdoms. The name "Yoruba" was at the time used to refer to the Oyo kingdom (Barnes, 2009; Law, 1973). Nonetheless, all kingdoms agreed on having a common origin from Oduduwa, the progenitor, and Ilé Ifè, where he settled (Law, 1973, p. 208).

According to origin myth, the progenitor of the Yoruba people, Oduduwa descended directly from heaven into Ilé Ifè where he settled, ruled and had children whose offspring the Yoruba people are. There are conflicts within the larger Yoruba community over which modern day ruler is superior: the Ooni of Ifé or the Alaafin of Oyo (Adepegba, 1986; Law, 1973). Both have been powerful Yoruba rulers across history and make claims to being bestowed primacy directly from Oduduwa (see Law, 1973 for a comprehensive summary). Every Yoruba community, however, has its own king or oba who serves as traditional ruler. The *oba* is seen as an oracle and the extension of the gods which is why the *oba* is often referred to as *ikeji orisha* meaning the second hand to the gods.

Figure 2.2 His imperial majesty, Oba Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi III, the Allafin of Oyo
Source: Kings & queens mag. (2017, October 20). Alaafin: Why I chose Gani Adams as Aare Ona Kakanfo [Blog]. Retrieved from http://kingsandqueensmag.com/2017/10/20/934/

Beyond the surface aspects of society, it is important to look into the deep structure of the community in order to get at an understanding of the culture. Although culture cannot be seen, it "affects behaviour and interpretations of behaviour" (Spencer-Oatey, 2012, p. 4). According to

Lustig and Koester (2013), Edward Hall (1976) was the first to provide the analogy of culture as an iceberg. There is the visible portion of an iceberg which can be easily seen. This is likened to the more observable elements of culture such as the way things are being done, the food, music among other things. This part of a society's culture is important. However, beneath this is the deeper structure which informs the observable elements. Like the iceberg, 90% of the deep structure is not seen. Lustig and Koester (2013) go on to argue that this deeper portion of the culture is perhaps the most important. It contains or represents deeply held beliefs and is largely unspoken and often, out of awareness "but they constitute the unchallenged assumptions that can determine—often to a very great extent—how and why members of a given culture behave and communicate as they do" (p. 20).

Hofstede (1991) argued that meanings of observable actions and behavior cannot be correctly ascertained without recourse to this hidden, deeper structure of culture. Thus, an action should be interpreted by way of how cultural group members, "insiders", interpret them (p. 8) since they have access to the deep structure that gives the action meaning. The point is that culture affects behavior and to successfully understand the culture and behaviors of organizational members at FEMVEL, it is important to look at the deep structure or "their collective programming of the mind" (Hofstede, 1994) as Nigerians.

According to Hall and Hall's (1990) classification of cultures along communication and context, Nigeria is a high-context, polychronic society. There is an expectation of implied meaning by the physical environment or shared values and beliefs. "*Most* of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message" (Hall, 1976; Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 6). The Yorùbá people have a saying that *one does not speak with the whole mouth*. Similarly, *we only say half of what we mean to the child born of great* *character. When it sinks in her/his mind, it will become whole*. These essentially iterate the idea of the society as high context. Only a little needs to be explicitly said. A lot is left unsaid and little background information is provided in conversations. Communication is often indirect, time is more open and flexible, and the community favors relationships over everything else.

As with high-context cultures, Nigerians have very large family networks. "Family" includes extended relatives who keep in touch very regularly. Nigerians keep "extensive information networks among family, friends, colleagues, and clients…who are in close personal relationships" (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 6). It is expected that you are aware of what is going on in the lives of anyone who occupies this close personal relationship status. It is actually taken as an offense when you do not make it your business to know what is going on in the life of a relative or a close acquaintance. Thus, relatives will ask deep questions which may otherwise be considered prying. To reject providing them with this information is to begin a quarrel. This information is also permissible to be shared among other close relatives. On the other hand too, as a member of that community, you cannot hear of another person's burden or challenges and not act on it. It is your duty as an in-group member to be concerned with their affairs and provide support when needed.

Similarly, businesses are run with this idea of shared information and knowledge. In low-context cultures, appointment is key and what enters the office (guests or information) is controlled (Hall & Hall, 1990). Low-context cultures also emphasize olfactory and auditory filtering keeping noise, strong smells and interruptions away when set to work. In Nigeria, as with high-context cultures, this is less regulated. Nigerians "reject auditory screening and thrive on being open to interruptions and in tune with what goes on around them" (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 9). There is free movement of information and visitors in and out of a manager's office.

According to cross-cultural training expert and author of *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa*, Dean Foster, appointments are rarely private and it is normal that a “meeting is interrupted by phone calls and/or visits from your client's friends and family” (Palk, 2010). It is also expected that organizational members are informed of what is happening across the organization and who has what information (Palk, 2010). It is almost like how the family network is supposed to be abreast of what is going on in everyone’s life.

Furthermore, space and territoriality are less defined in Nigeria. Nigeria has a very large population but not the land mass to accommodate its size. Worse still is that industrialization and employment are concentrated in a few cities thus making the country densely populated in certain areas. Lagos and Ogun state are amongst those that are densely populated. Of course, by this logic, housing is very costly in urban areas and since there is no strict regulation on the number of occupants per square foot of any residence, there tend to be lots of homes housing many more people than can conveniently fit (Mogo, 2016; Rosenthal, 2012). This is the same with office spaces, recreation spaces among other things that should otherwise provide quality of life. As a result, there is a reduced sense of personal space among Nigerians and the “invisible bubble” which Hall and Hall (1990) described is often penetrated even by strangers (InterNations, n.d.; Palk, 2010). Some Nigerians would also touch and poke very repeatedly during conversation showing the use of expressive haptics in conversation. Touching, cutting a person during conversation or being physically close show signs of interest and intimacy.

On the other end of this too is that idea that neighbors often tend to be very close in their relationship with one another. It is in a sense, everyone’s responsibility to look out for the other. This extends to keeping an eye on your neighbors’ children, reporting when you notice something out of place with the neighbor or their house or receiving the neighbors’ mail, taking down a message for your neighbor or even entertaining their guests while they're away. Neighbors also borrow things very often from one another. Neighbors will also get involved in the errands, work, cooking and other plans or needs when you have a party or other engagement. Essentially, neighbors become an extended part of your family that lives next to you. The rule is that to be a good neighbor, you must be willing to share what you have and be involved in the lives of your neighbors. After all, Nigeria is a collectivist community ("Hofstede insights," n.d.; Hofstede, 2011).

Communities like Nigeria where there is little multisensory spatial screening and in which information and guest flow is not as regulated also tend to be polychronic in their orientation to time. "Polychronic time means being involved with many things at once" (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 13). This explains why private meetings are easily interrupted and time is very fluid. Schedules are not paramount; rather, relationships are paramount (InterNations, n.d.). "There is more emphasis on completing human transactions than on holding to schedules" (Hall & Hall, 1990) and "personal relationships are often more important than regulations and laws" (Palk, 2010).

A Nigerian will not honor commitments but relationships when making a promise. Palk (2010) described the business culture as one in which "negotiations are fluid and what's agreed on Monday might not necessary mean the same thing on Tuesday" (Palk, 2010, para. 2) as polychronians "change plans often and easily" (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 15). Politicians and others with power will make promises, declare intentions to people and never fulfill them – they never planned to. People as a result are very suspicious of promises made by leaders and people in power.

Since time is so unbounded in Nigeria, it is okay to arrive a little tardy to a meeting or an appointment – although organizations work very hard to prevent this. Excuses are often made for arriving late such as "unusual" traffic in Lagos (InterNations, n.d.) – whereas it is a known fact that Lagos experiences extreme traffic conditions every day. Thus, rather than working to efficiently plan around time and social circumstances, it is generally accepted that time is beyond one's control and being late or going over time at a meeting may be inevitable.

Nigerians spend the earliest portion of a meeting waiting for others to join the meeting. This time is also used to make merry, greet one another, ask about work in other departments, ask after colleagues' relatives, make jokes and get comfortable with one another (InterNations, n.d.). Nigerians don't always get straight to the point and end up talking about things that may be irrelevant to the purpose of the gathering; but then, Nigerians are polychromic; relationship building matters and they prefer to spend some time getting comfortable around one another before discussing serious business. Hall and Hall (1990) described polychronic cultures as "considering time commitments an objective to be achieved, if possible" (p. 15).

While Edward T. Hall looked at culture as communication through context and orientation to time, Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede provides six dimensions of national culture which can also help in understanding the cultural environment in which Femvel operates. These are the degree of power distance, individualism, time orientation, indulgence, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Hofstede, 2011). For Hofstede, these are programmed in the mind from a very young age and these determine how a society functions as well as what is the acceptable norm of behavior. These differences will likely affect the nature of organizational identity particularly as being co-constructed and negotiated by organizational members at Femvel.

The first of Hofstede's cultural dimensions is power distance. This refers to how a society deals with inequality (Hofstede, 2011). It is "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" ("Hofstede insights," n.d.; emphasis theirs). In Nigeria, power is distributed very unequally and both those in power and those subordinated feel this power distribution is sometimes an entitlement (as in traditional rulers) or the will of the almighty God(s) (as in spiritual leaders or those in higher hierarchical positions such as political or organizational leaders). Because God cannot be questioned, neither should the authority of those in power. For the longest time, this has been the prevailing cultural perspective in Nigeria. Yoruba kings are called *kabiyesi* meaning the unquestionable one. Spiritual leaders are believed to speak directly from the almighty God(s) and so they should also not be challenged. Nigeria's colonial past and ensuing military dictatorships where political power and military might served to bully and subjugate the people have further reinforced this idea of power distance.

Those in power believe they should be unquestionable and often go unquestioned which has led to the widespread corruption described earlier in this paper. Osemeke and Osemeke's (2017) research on culture and organizational governance found this to be prevalent even in private industries. Organizational leaders will engage in nepotism, steal, sign off funds for personal use, hire and fire at will, and will not be questioned. Organizational members recognized that it was unfair, they knew this, but there was nothing they could do about it but accept (Osemeke & Osemeke, 2017, p. 330).

In Nigeria, power distance is translated as "respect" (Palk, 2010). It is not so much about reverence but power and this power is achieved through *age, position and money*. People will defer the most amount of "respect" to those with the greatest amount of these. Osemeke and Osemeke (2017) described respect as a "way of life of the people" (p. 329) and is perhaps one of the few things all cultural groups in Nigeria agree on (Osemeke & Osemeke, 2017; Wallace, 1992). As a result, the different ethnic groups in Nigeria strive to get an in-group member into positions of authority and power at both organizational and political levels for the upper hand; “whether he/she does not know the job is irrelevant” (Osemeke & Osemeke, 2017, p. 329). This often leads to cronyism and slows down developmental growth processes.

Furthermore, as already demonstrated, in-group membership is very important in Nigeria as Nigerians are very collectivist. Collectivism, the next of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, is “related to the integration of individuals into primary groups” (Hofstede, 2011, p. 8). This is the cultural nationalism referred to earlier in this section of the paper. “People from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often [of same ethnic origin,] extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents) that continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty, and [will often] oppose other in- groups” (Hofstede, 2011, p. 11).

Every ethnic cultural group in Nigeria is suspicious of others, think their group and its culture is better and the others are to blame for Nigeria’s challenges. Within these in-groups, there is a sense of interdependence as “we-cultures” and loyalty to in-groups is paramount and comes before rules and other societal obligations (Palk, 2010). This is the root of relationship being key for polychronic Nigerians. In-group networks are often very large but cohesive and maintained through the roles of elders who serve as moderators.

A Nigerian is considered a strong member of his or her in-group regardless of where in the world s/he is. Being a high-context community, this member, though abroad, is still expected to be abreast of what is going on in the family and in-group network, contribute whenever needed and continue to fulfill traditional roles as expected. It is very common to find Nigerians travel back to Nigeria for their weddings, rites of passage and even funerals as maybe dictated by tradition. It is believed that no matter how long you spend traveling abroad, you will eventually return home. Thus, home is where your in-group is rather than where you live.

Additionally, Hofstede presented cultures as having a time dimension: short term versus long term orientation “related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present and past.” Hofstede (2011, p. 8). Nigeria is very short term oriented, meaning that the society is very steeped in the past and there is high respect for traditions. This is perhaps responsible for the great use of honorifics and titles, respect for elders and values for that which has passed, is ancient or of the ancestors. In Nigeria, age is everything and elders are seen as the “custodians of the tradition and culture” (Koper et al., 2009, p. 319). Age determines social roles and who must defer honor to whom. In a social gathering, the eldest person has roles s/he must fulfill. The younger person cannot be sitting while the elderly stands. The older ones should eat first and choose the best of all things. Younger people take what is left. The person who has spent the longest time around would be the wisest. This person is also usually the eldest in the room. The Yoruba people say that “*it is what the elderly have seen that has caused the eyes to sink inward*”; and that “*no matter how many clothes a child has, s/he can never have as many rags [i.e., experiences]as the elderly*”.

There is the tendency to maintain the norm and change is frowned upon. What is different is suspicious or bad. Nigerians often prefer to keep things the same even if those things are clearly not working. Sameness is safe, and a good person remains the same (Hofstede, 2011, p. 15). There is little tendency for adventure, being thrift or enduring for the future. There is always a lament or longing for the past as the “most important events in life occurred in the past” (Hofstede, 2011, p. 15).

Furthermore, closely related to short term-orientation is the high indulgence orientation. Of all scores on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, this is the dimension in which Nigeria scores the highest. According to Hofstede (2011), countries high on indulgence often have a “higher percentage of people declaring themselves very happy" (p. 16). Nigeria is an optimal example of this. Despite economic and societal challenges, Nigerians are generally very happy people and indulge in a lot of merry making; and in 2003 and 2010 were ranked the happiest people in the world by a World Values Survey (Bond, 2003; "Nigeria tops happiness survey," 2003) and a Gallup global poll (Adegoke, 2017; Channels Television, 2012) respectively; and in 2011, ranked the most optimistic people in the world (Adewunmi, 2011; Channels Television, 2012).

"*Indulgence* versus *Restraint* [is] related to the gratification versus control of basic human desires related to enjoying life" (Hofstede, 2011, p. 8). Though the economy may recess, Nigerians' consumerism appetite remains unperturbed "as evidenced by it being … one of the largest markets for Guinness in the world" (Jadesimi, 2015, para. 3). Every weekend in Lagos ushers in a stream of merriment from funerals on Friday, weddings on Saturday and church service or birthday celebrations on Thursday and Sunday. The Lagos state government reported in 2013 that Lagosians alone spent ₦1 billion ($6.2 million USD) monthly on merriment (Akoni & Olowoopejo, 2013). Church service, although a holy encounter, is still steeped in the indulgent culture. There are sections of the worship dedicated to jolly praise music which people dance to. This may take an hour or even longer and is a very important part of a complete worship service.

Furthermore on Hofstede's cultural dimensions is uncertainty avoidance. This has to do with "the level of stress in a society in the face of an unknown future" (Hofstede, (2011, p. 8). It is not about avoiding risk but dealing with ambiguous or unknown situations. "It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations" (Hofstede, 2011, p. 10) such as when encountering that which is new or unusual. Nigeria has a mid-level uncertainty avoiding culture. There is some tolerance for ambiguity but not too much and there is the common belief that "'there can only be one Truth and we have it'"

(Hofstede, 2011, p. 10). As such, Nigerians despise and have little tolerance for those holding different views or opinions and often feel the need to "correct" the person.

At the same time, Nigerians easily accept the unknown. That is, accepting that the future cannot be determined, a higher power controls the lives of mankind, so why bother and be anxious about the future. Rather, enjoy the present moment, take each day as it comes and the future will take care of itself. There is little planning for ambiguous situations and people may become complacent even when it is clear that a little anxiety and planning can help reach a more solid outcome. Sriramesh & Verčič (2009) provided that this is related to being high-context as these cultures are "known to tolerate greater levels of ambiguity" (p. 12). At the same time however, Nigerians worry about what happens after death; and the different religions prescribe "the guidelines" for living in order to reach that preferred end. Nigerians thus, while relaxed, also get anxious about making it to paradise.

Nigerians are not very adventurous. They do not like to try new things and will not enter situations that are completely unfamiliar such as traveling to a new environment where there is no known in-group member; or leaving a job for an uncertain goal. Nigerians often build careers jobs they do not even like although this can be attributed to economic uncertainties. The common rhetoric is that it is better to stay on the job you are sure of and which provides a salary than veering off adventurously and then not finding work. The Yoruba proverb for this is about a foolish person who, seeing lightning, throws out old water in buckets in the hope of fetching new rain water. What if it then doesn't rain? Only throw out the one you have when you see that certainly, new rain has come.

Last in this discussion is masculinity versus femininity. This is not so much about the individual but the community. What values are more upheld – feelings or work? "Admiration for the strong” or “sympathy for the weak”? (Hofstede, 2011, p. 12). How are values and roles split between the genders in the community? Is it important to be “very assertive and competitive and maximally different”? (Hofstede, 2011, p. 12).

Nigerian culture is very patriarchal. Girls have roles they are expected to fulfill and so do the boys who are not expected to show emotion. Children are raised following gender guidelines and gender is sufficient reason to be allowed or prevented from doing certain things. For example, because a child is male, from birth, he is raised to recognize that he must provide for his family financially, be concerned about stability of the future on behalf of others and would become responsible for his parents and younger relatives’ livelihood (if need be) when he grows older. These roles are ascribed from birth (Parsons & Shils, 1951). The girl child must also sit in a certain way which is more “girly,” and she must be more conscientious and neat. She must recognize that her goals for life must be devised with caution as they must align with those of her husband. She is raised learning how to raise a family but not to be financially independent. The male should be strong, assertive, ambitious and always fight back. It is tabooed for the roles to be switched. Tradition and religious thoughts are used to justify many of these convictions.

As a masculine-dominated culture, the Nigerian society is “driven by competition, achievement and success” (“Hofstede insights,” n.d.). To be successful is to work very hard and achieve or acquire what others cannot or do not have. In modern Nigeria, this translates as being wealthy. Work is very important and sometimes takes precedence over personal or family matters. Outside of work, Nigerians remain very competitive. Everything is seen as a competition – against neighbors, family friends, co-workers, random people on the road and even in environments where in fact, there is no real competition. Competitiveness sometimes involves physical tactics like pushing and, in extreme cases, punching. The Nigerian senate and house of representatives have been sites for showing this part of the Nigerian society to the world. Deliberations will sometimes lead to tough blows – literally (Jones, n.d.).

Culture is very important and as Glynn and Watkiss (2012) observed, the organization itself "is a social actor that reflects cultural themes and interprets cultural resources in the construction of 'who we are' and 'what we do.'" As a result, cultural sentiments and beliefs play a significant role in organizational construction and operations. As with other environmental variables, recognizing the role of culture helps better understand and interpret organizational identity. In the following sections of the paper, I move to a discussion of activism and media in Nigeria and provide a general conclusion before discussing the research methods to be used in this study.

2.2.1 Activism

Activism is about consciousness and conscientiousness which bring about social change. According to Duhé and Sriramesh (2009), "activism is often rooted in a passionate resistance against the longstanding tenets of political economies as social values and thoughts about the proper role of institutions change" (p. 29). Activism in Nigeria has been mostly politically driven by strong individuals or unions who have clamored for the interest of the masses. Some of the most significant activists in Nigerian history since the colonial struggle include Malam Aminu Kano, Chief Gani Fawehinmi, Dele Giwa, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Josephine Obiajulu Odumakin, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Wole Soyinka among others (Essien, 2016). Each activist used the tools available to them as journalist, religious scholar, lawyer, artist, literary creator, critic among other things to speak against injustices in the polity. Many of them and other critics of the military regimes have faced very dreadful consequences and "human rights abuses including [incessant] illegal arrests, detention [often without trial or charge], torture and… outright killing" (Koper, Babaleye, Jahansoozi, 2009, p. 323). An example is Ken Saro-Wiwa whose fight for the

Ogoni people of Niger Delta led him to death by hanging by General Abacha's military government (Brittain, 2015). Similarly, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti died from a coma after she was thrown out of the third floor of a building by military personnel in 1978.

In Nigeria, "the rights to peaceful assembly and association are constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected. However, federal and state governments frequently ban public events perceived as threatening national security, including those that could incite political, ethnic, or religious tension" (Freedom House, 2017, para. 34). Some of the most significant nationwide protests in Nigeria have included the protest against General Ibrahim Babaginda's annulment of the June 12, 1993 election which would have brought in MKO Abiola as president; the 2012 fuel subsidy removal protest against the democratic government of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan; and the 2014 #BringBackOurGirls protest that attracted international audiences who also joined in the protests.

Local human rights activist organizations also served to pressure the military regimes against its excesses. Some of these organizations included the Campaign for Democracy (CD), Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) (Koper, Babaleye, Jahansoozi, 2009). Trade unions have also been very successful in leading protests. Examples include the Nigerian Labor Congress, National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), and the Association of Senior Staffs of Universities (ASSU) who serve as professional pressure groups (Koper, Babaleye, Jahansoozi, 2009). The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria backs unionism. "Workers have the right to form and join trade unions, engage in collective bargaining, and conduct strikes" (Freedom House, 2017). George, Owoyemi and Onokala (2012) have provided a summary of unionism in Nigeria:

> Organized trade unions officially started on Monday 19 August 1912 in Nigeria when workers in the then civil service organised themselves…to promote the welfare and interests of the indigenous workers of the Nigerian Civil Service… In 1931, the Railway Workers Union and the Nigeria Union of Teachers were formed; before this time railway workers were under the Nigerian Civil Service Union (Egboh, 1968). The 1930 economic crisis aided the coming out of the then Mechanic Union out of the Nigerian Civil Service Union… With the passing of the Nigerian Trade Union Ordinance in 1938, the numbers of registered trade unions as well as memberships increased… By 1975, under the military regime of General Murtala Muhamed one thousand trade unions were registered (Fashoyin, 1980) … Administrators were appointed to manage the unions as the unions were polarised and ideologically divided therefore creating labour problems for the country (Ibid, 1980). The unions were restructured into 42 along industrial lines and a Labour centre was created (Nigerian Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity, 1976 vol.21). The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) was created in 1978 and the 42 industrial unions became affiliates (Northrup, 1978). This was given a legal backing through the Trade Union Decree. (George, Owoyemi, & Onokala, 2012, pp. 68-69)

This legal backing continues in the current democratic dispensation. However, there are government bodies such as security agencies that are forbidden from taking strike actions. Activist organizations have also clamored against the government for trying to prevent protests as well as putting in place measures to frustrate their efforts. Examples include the 2016 ban on public protests which repressed a September 2016 #BringBackOurGirls campaign (Okakwu, 2016) and a “Free Zakzaky” campaign (Channels Television, 2016), both of which had peaceful protest strategies. Other pro-Biafran independence protests have also been thwarted by state sponsored violent means (Freedom House, 2017). Within private organizations, however, Nigerians are not as active at speaking out against authority. This might be owing to cultural values like high power distance and economic concerns like the uncertainty of getting a different job if fired. Osemeke and Osemeke's (2017) study shows these dynamics at play. Workers thus feel un-empowered even in the face of wage inequality, poor working conditions, harassment and threats.

2.2.2 Media

The media can play a role in the formation of organizational identity. According to Kjærgaard, Morsing, and Ravasi (2011), the media serves as an external influencer and may adorn an organization with values that can be influencial in the formation or negotiation of identity. For example, in their study of media influence on organizational identity construction in a celebrity firm, Kjærgaard, Morsing, and Ravasi found that "extremely positively toned media coverage brought celebrity status to the firm, which affected identity construction" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 163 - 164). This status which hearing aid company, Oticon achieved, affected organizational members' sense of the organization and their role in it. They were so captivated, they tried to live up to the expectations of this "celebrity image" although it was different from their experiential reality (Kjærgaard, Morsing & Ravasi, 2011). This tale is also commonly found in Nigeria with bankers for example who feel pressured to live up an expected standard of life which in reality differs from their earnings or true experience.

In Nigeria, the media is equally influential and has played large roles socially and politically. Nigeria gained its independence in 1960 without a gunfight. This may be attributed to the fearlessness of the Nigerian press in speaking against oppression and standing up for the Nigerian people (Koper, Babaleye, Jahansoozi, 2009). Some of the most recognized names in history have included Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Dele Giwa, Ernest Ikoli, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Chief Lateef Jakande, and John Momoh, among others. Nigeria has one of the largest media markets in all of Africa. The first television station in Africa, Western Nigerian Government Broadcasting Corporation (WNTV), was established in Ibadan, Nigeria on October 31, 1959 by the Premier of the Western Region, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who had also in 1949 established the Nigerian Tribune. It later morphed along with 12 other stations under the 1977 military regime to form the Nigerian Television (later named National Broadcasting Authority in 1978) run by the federal government. This new mammoth station was then monopolized as the only one with TV broadcasting authority in Nigeria (NTA, 2013) until 1992 when the General "Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida administration shocked the media world… against people's pessimism [and] enact[ed] Decree No. 32 of 1992 deregulating the broadcast media in Nigeria" (Okoli, 2005, para. 1; The Role of Africa Independent Television, n.d.). Press and radio were equally active, and the press played a more significant role in combating the military governments. Many times, media outlets that criticized the government had to publish underground. *TELL Magazine* began publishing underground after its assistant editor, George Mbah, and editor-in-chief, Nosa Igiebor, were arrested in 1995 and its offices were shut down by the military government. The *Nigerian Tribune* and *Newswatch* are examples of other newspaper magazine companies whose members were either detained, killed for editorial content or pressured to stop publishing.

Today, there is more freedom for the press and Freedom House scores Nigeria 51 out 100 for press freedom making the Nigerian media landscape partly free (Freedom House, 2017b). Freedom of expression and press is constitutionally guaranteed. There are hundreds of newspapers, magazines, radio stations and television stations. The government owns a good number of them but the most acclaimed are usually privately owned (Freedom House, 2017b). Channels Television is renowned for its news coverage and has won several laurels for its successes. With satellite dishes and international media, the quality of production and competitiveness for content have been on the rise. Radio, however, “remains the main source of information for Nigerians” (Freedom House, 2017b).

Media coverage is also available online, in blogs and through social media outlets. Internet penetration is at 47.4% according to Freedom House, and millions of Nigerians use Facebook and Twitter as their preferred for social media platform. These have also been used as tools to raise awareness to concerns such as the recent petition to #EndSARS – the Special Anti-Robbery Squad which has been accused of human rights abuses against innocent civilians (Vanguard, 2017).

Most users access the internet from their mobile devices. There are 147,296,344 telecommunication subscribers in Nigeria according to the Nigerian Communications Commission (2017), “accounting for nearly a third of internet usage in Africa” (Jadesimi, 2015, para. 1). The number of people with access to telecommunications and the internet began to rise in 2001 after the civilian government under president Olusegun Obasanjo deregulated the telecommunications industry ending the monopoly held by state-owned Nigeria Telecomunication Limited (NITEL) and allowing ECONET (now Airtel) and South African telecommunications company, MTN, to enter the market (Global technology archive, 2012). With increased competition, cost of internet use reduced and millions more gained access to “Global System for Mobile (GSM or 2G) services provided by the nation’s four largest carriers: MTN Nigeria, Globalcom, Airtel and Etisalat” (Jadesimi, 2015). This allows access to online media contents which also includes streaming from traditional media outlets.

In 1992, the federal military government established the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) which serves to regulate media broadcasts in Nigeria (NBC, n.d.). Broadcast stations are mandated to have at least 60 percent of their content produced locally (Koper, Babaleye, Jahansoozi, 2009, p. 325) while radio operators must have 80 percent of their content produced in Nigeria (Freedom House, 2017b). NBC in 2004 also placed a ban on live broadcasts of foreign media contents enabling the growth of local media channels. These have led to the development of local content and creation of a third space media culture (see Bhabha, 1994). The NBC along with other "public agencies responsible for media licensing and regulation" have however come under scrutiny for political bias since they are government owned and heed to pressures from the incumbent government. For example, in the election year 2015, state-owned NTA and African Independent Television (AIT) released what have been referred to as "hate documentaries" against the opposition presidential candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari. After the Buhari camp petitioned NBC vowing legal action, the NBC issued a warning asking broadcasters to follow the broadcasting code (Elebeke & Nnochiri, 2015). However, no real action was taken by the NBC until March 30 when it was clear that Buhari had won the presidential elections and was being declared president-elect (Adaramola, 2015; Akuki, 2015; Sotubo, 2015).

Similarly, although the 2011 freedom of information bill providing access to government information like public records has been passed into law, it is still difficult to obtain government data. "Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) [and activist groups] have criticized government agencies for routinely refusing to release information sought through the law" (Freedom House, 2017, para. 24). The Carter Center and Freedom House attribute this to the "culture of secrecy in government business." Other reasons include the "misuse of the Official Secrets Act, low usage by the public, and a lack of institutional preparedness by government agencies" (Freedom House, 2017b). Often, researchers who try to conduct research on Nigeria face so many challenges that they may give-up on the study. A personal example is the difficulty in obtaining official government records for this paper and having to rely on third party documentation and speculations which sometimes are different from official data. For example, Gov.UK puts the population of Nigeria at 188 million people, Freedom House (Freedom House, 2017) puts it at 186 million, the World Bank puts it at 191 million (The World Bank, n.d.) whereas the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics reports the population of Nigeria as 184 million.

In 2015, the Cybercrimes Act was enacted to restrict sharing of "online transmission of falsehoods, or of material sent "for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience, danger, obstruction, insult, injury, criminal intimidation, enmity, hatred, ill will, or needless anxiety to another" (Freedom House, 2017b). This has been used as a tool prosecute media criticizing the government online. In 2016, two bloggers were arrested for criticizing Bauchi state governor and the EFCC on social media. Three other journalists in Owerri were also arrested by police for observing and recording bribery in action by the police with their cellphones. In Lagos same year, police officers assaulted the Nation newspaper reporter, Samson Unamaka, for filming them while they were assaulting two people. He was beaten, taken to their station and forced to delete the video (Freedom House, 2017b). There are many more incidents like this where the media is being prevented from reporting on the true state of affairs. It is perhaps as Koper, Babaleye and Jahansoozi (2009) said: "The freedom to 'publish and be damned' is apparently firmly entrenched within the Nigerian press" (p. 324).

2.2.3 Conclusion

As can be seen in the above discussion of the environmental variables, "business in Nigeria is not for those unwilling to become informed about its history and current conflicts affecting its political economy" (Shapiro, 2014, p. 3). The Nigerian environment is significantly different from what is obtainable in many Western nations. As Kaplan and Manners (1972) argue, the social structure is one of the determinants of culture. (Other determinants include technoeconomics, ideology and personality.) Social structures including the political and economic state of societies will affect the way people behave as well as their deep-rooted values. They strongly affect how the culture of the social group is formed and how organizations are run in that social environment. Thus, in aligning "identity with prevalent cultural sentiments and through the use of cultural mechanisms, an organization [may] gain audience acceptance, thereby conferring legitimacy and value on the organization (Glynn & Watkiss, 2012)" (Gioia et al., 2013, pp. 163-164).

For the sake of studying organizational identity, as the concept may be realized in non-western Nigeria, it is important to recognize that "in Nigeria the way of life of the people is often used as a standard to determine how a company should be run" (Osemeke & Osemeke, 2017, p. 329). It should thus be expected that even concepts of organizational identity such as the negotiation of identity through the interactions of organizational leaders and members will be challenged because of cultural values such as power distance. Similarly, economic and political concerns may also come in effect in both how organizational members see their organization as well as the extent to which identity plays a central role in the conduct of business. Thus, even the concept of endurance or continuity may be challenged in this environment and perhaps replaced with dynamic cultural framing in showing "cultural fit" with current environmental sentiments (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 163). It may be expected that in resilience to environmental factors, newer or other conceptions of organizational identity may be realized. These conceptions may then play the key role in successfully running an organization in Nigeria.

CHAPTER 3. CRAFT AND CONVENTION

"scientific generalizations may not fit in solving all problems"
Denzin and Lincoln (2011)

American research professor, and methodologist

3.1 Methodology

This chapter focuses on delineating the methodical and methodological choices I make in the research design and tie these to my paradigmatic worldview and its assumptions. I begin by identifying the problem, the purpose, and the rationale for conducting this study qualitatively. Next, I present my research questions. This leads to a discussion of the constructivist paradigm (which I hold) followed by historical and philosophical roots of the case study methodology grounding it within a constructivist paradigm. Finally, I tease out my methodological decisions drawn from the literature on qualitative research, case study, grounded theory, ethnographic observation and document analysis. I adopt inductive analysis and pull in literature to inform the analytical strategies that are adopted in this thesis.

3.1.1 Problem, Purpose and Rationale for the study as Qualitative Research

This study seeks to expand the body of knowledge by extending the scope of research in organizational identity. As businesses expand globally, it becomes pertinent for global organizations and managers in organizations outside the West to become aware of possibly divergent forms of organizational identity and its formation processes that may exist. Currently, there is little account for what happens when the economic or societal variables are different. This study seeks to fill this need by locating this research outside of the stable economic, institutional environment. To the best of my knowledge, my research pioneers studies on organizational identity in Africa by studying an organization localized in the highly volatile, depressed economy of Nigeria. I look at an integrated food processing company, Feed Me Ventures Limited (FEMVEL), which has been in operation in Nigeria since 2007 and whose managers, due to economic pressures, are taking the organization through a re-engineering of strategy.

I decided that the most valid approach to investigating this phenomenon is through a qualitative case study of the experiences of organizational members at FEMVEL. Case studies provide multiple approaches to investigating phenomena and may provide the best in-depth understanding of lived experiences. This case study will be conducted inductively from an interpretive perspective. Participants will be organizational members at FEMVEL who are experiencing organizational identity and identification. The qualitative method is best suited for the exploratory nature of the research questions. As Nelson, Treichler and Grossberg (1992) argued, these questions determine the research method. “The open-ended nature of the qualitative research project leads to a perpetual resistance against attempts to impose a single, umbrella-like paradigm over the entire project” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. x) thereby providing an opportunity for co-construction and bricolage.

The interpretive camp will be best suited for this study as one cannot count in order to understand “how” or interpret correctly the role of culture and other environmental variables in organizational identity. Rather, it requires an understanding and interpretation which only a qualitative study provides. It is qualitative research that will “capture [the] expressive information not conveyed in quantitative data about beliefs, values, feelings, and motivations that underlie behaviors” (Berkwits & Inui, 1998, p. 195). For the researcher answering these questions, qualitative study is that “method that would allow them to record accurately their own observations while also uncovering the meanings their subjects brought to their life experiences" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017, p. 11).

Besides, most seminal studies on organizational identity (see Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton & Corley, 2013) have adopted qualitative methods, using mostly case studies (e.g., Czarniawska & Wolff, 1998; Humphreys & Brown, 2002; Nag, Corley & Gioia, 2007), ethnographic observations (e.g., Ybema, 2010) and to a lesser degree, interviews (e.g., Jarne & Maritz, 2014; Suo, 2012). These examples signal the utility of the qualitative case methodology in studying organizational identity.

Below, I provide an overview of the history and philosophy of the case study methodology linking that to why this approach is best suited for this study. The goal is to understand what organizational identity looks like given the environment dynamics at play and what meanings organizational identity holds in this space. The answers to these will thus provide a deeper understanding that will inform and further develop global practice. To rehash, my research questions for this study are:

(1) To what extent is the organizational identity of a Nigerian food organization consistent with the conceptions of organizational identity as central, distinctive and enduring?

    b. Given the Nigerian environmental context, what elements of the Nigerian food organization's organizational identity are consistent with Nigeria-specific values and practices?

(2) How do stakeholders in a Nigerian food organization talk about the identity of the organization?

b. To what extent does the founder's vision of organizational identity correspond to the organizational identity constructed by members of a Nigerian food organization, given the Nigerian environmental context?

3.1.2 Paradigm, epistemology and ontology

I situate the problem statement and purpose of this study within a constructivist paradigm of inquiry. As with other constructivists, my goal is to get at a relative, co-constructed understanding of the realities of the organization and its members. Going into this study, I understand that my experience is but one and not representative of all experiences. This means that the truth that will be explored will be co-constructed by my understanding (derived from my experiences) and what interviewees share with me. The goal, as Denzin and Lincoln (2011) have suggested, is to "gain understanding by interpreting subject perceptions" (p. 102). This interpretive approach is therefore best suited as "scientific generalizations may not fit in solving all problems (Guba, 1996)" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 106). As a researcher, I already in some ways participate in this process with subjects. I share some bits of experience that may prove useful when entering the research field and allow for interpretations that amount from co-construction of knowledge. In addition to all other reasons, it appears that the constructivist paradigm is best suited for cultural studies to both illuminate what is in place and also help educate participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 113). This serves my ultimate goals with this study – to illuminate and educate. Before turning to a discussion of the methodological and analytical steps I took in this study, I first provide an overview of the historical and philosophical roots of the case study and highlight which elements are most commensurate with my paradigmatic worldview.

3.1.3 Historical and Philosophical Roots of the Case Study Approach

Following a rocky history and several criticisms, the case study methodology has grown to a state where it is viewed as rigorous research emphasizing multiple approaches to evaluating a case or phenomenon. What this "case" is depends on the researcher and can be any of a broad range of complex issues including human social interactions. For example, Booner and Adams (2012) wrote about culturally responsive teaching in the context of mathematics, and Cornelissen (2006) conducted a case study of the organizational identity metaphor, while Butter, Pérez and Quintana (2014) and Rissanen, Kuusisto and Kuusisto (2016) wrote on developing the intercultural competence and sensitivities of teachers.

How case study is defined often depends on the perspective of the researcher and that person's paradigmatic approach. According to Johansson (2003), "the case may be a relatively bounded object or a process; it may be theoretical, empirical, or both (Ragin & Becker 1992). At a minimum, a case is a phenomenon specific to time and space" (p. 5).

Some of the key definitions of case study come from the works of Yin (2014), Stake (1995), and Merriam (2009) who represent the realist post-positivist, relativist constructivist/interpretivist and pragmatic constructivist worldviews respectively. For Yin (2014), case study is defined from a process, scope and methodological perspective. I agree with Harrison, Birks, Franklin and Mills' (2017) take that for Yin, emphasis is on "the nature of inquiry as being empirical, and the importance of context to the case" (para. 12). While context is key for all case study researchers, Robert Yin's training in Brain and Cognitive Sciences at M.I.T. led him to favor a more post-positivist, procedural, empiricist approach. Stake (1995) took a different look at case study by laying emphasis on the case itself. From Stake's perspective, what is studied is almost more central and important than the process of studying it, even though the rigor of the process matters. Finally, Merriam (2009) considered both the research subject (or case) as well as the outcome of the research. Merriam (2009) defined case study as "an in depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 40).

The differing views and contrasting paradigmatic ontological and epistemological beliefs have led to much contradiction and confusion as to what case studies should be. Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills (2017) discussed Flyvbjerbg's (2011) contention for the need for a single unifying definition for case study that will capture the essence of the research method. It may be fair to think of the diversity in definitions of case study and how it is approached in research as being symbolic of the methodology itself.

Unlike most other methodologies, case study is not rooted in particular philosophical roots nor does it have a clear history. Johansson (2003) located the earliest generation of case studies in anthropology in the 1900s while Flyvbjerbg (2011) argued that case study has been in use "as long as recorded history" (p. 302). Harrison et al. (2017) grounded the roots of case study in qualitative research in the fields of anthropology, history, psychology, and sociology. While evidence of case studies can be found in the biography of Charles Darwin, the purposeful use of the method in research design in general is often attributed to early twentieth century ethnographic works in the social sciences including research done in the Chicago School of Sociology using anthropological methods on university cultures and the 1958 work of Thomas and Znaniecki studying Polish peasants (Creswell, 2007). The goals of these early studies were to understand lived experiences in their natural settings and these were descriptively recorded, usually as narratives. "The most notable case studies include Thomas and Znaniecki's (1958 [1918-1920]) study of Polish peasants in Europe and America and, the ethnographic work by Malinowski (1913) in the Trobriand Islands in Melanesia that spanned over several years" (Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills, 2017, para. 3).

As positivism rose in dominance in the philosophy of science following the Second World War, there was more interest in quantitative methods and the positivist paradigm. Thus, research methods such as surveys, statistics, and experiments were seen as scientific and empirical research while criticism for case study research methods along with other qualitative approaches increased. The case study methodology has been criticized particularly for not being generalizable, not usable to test hypotheses, and containing researcher bias (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Flyvbjerg (2011) contended with criticisms of case study by framing them as misunderstandings and proposes explanations for the values of the case study method. For example, he expounds on the demonstrated value of case study in law, scientific experiments and in the works of acclaimed physicists "Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein, Neil Bohr, just as case study occupied a central place in the works of Charles Darwin" (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 304). Berg and Lune (2012) supported this view arguing its role in business, education, information systems, medicine, criminology and psychology (p. 327).

Despite criticism, "case studies continued to be used during this time, however usually as a method within quantitative studies or referred to as descriptive research to study a specific phenomenon" (Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills, 2017, para. 4).

A resurgence of the case study method as a valid research approach however came in the late '60s with the work of Glaser and Strauss as the grounded theory approach gained ground. This led to the second generation of case studies research using an inductive approach to combine "qualitative field study methods from the Chicago school of sociology with quantitative methods of data analysis" (Johansson, 2003, p. 8). Robert Yin (1994) furthered this development by bridging the gap between the qualitative and quantitative approaches by applying experimental logic to naturalistic inquiry (Johansson, 2003; see Yin, 1994; 2009; 2014). Much has since been done to develop the field. Below is a diagram showing the historical development of the field from 1600. It shows the most salient contextual influences, dominance of logical positivism between the1940s and 1970s and the rise of Grounded theory and the leading scholars since then. Leading scholars include Anthony and Jack (2009); Flyvbjerg (2011); George and Bennett (2005); Gillham (2001); Luck, Jackson and Usher (2006); Miles and Huberman (1994); Merriam (2009); Stake (2006); and Yin (2014).

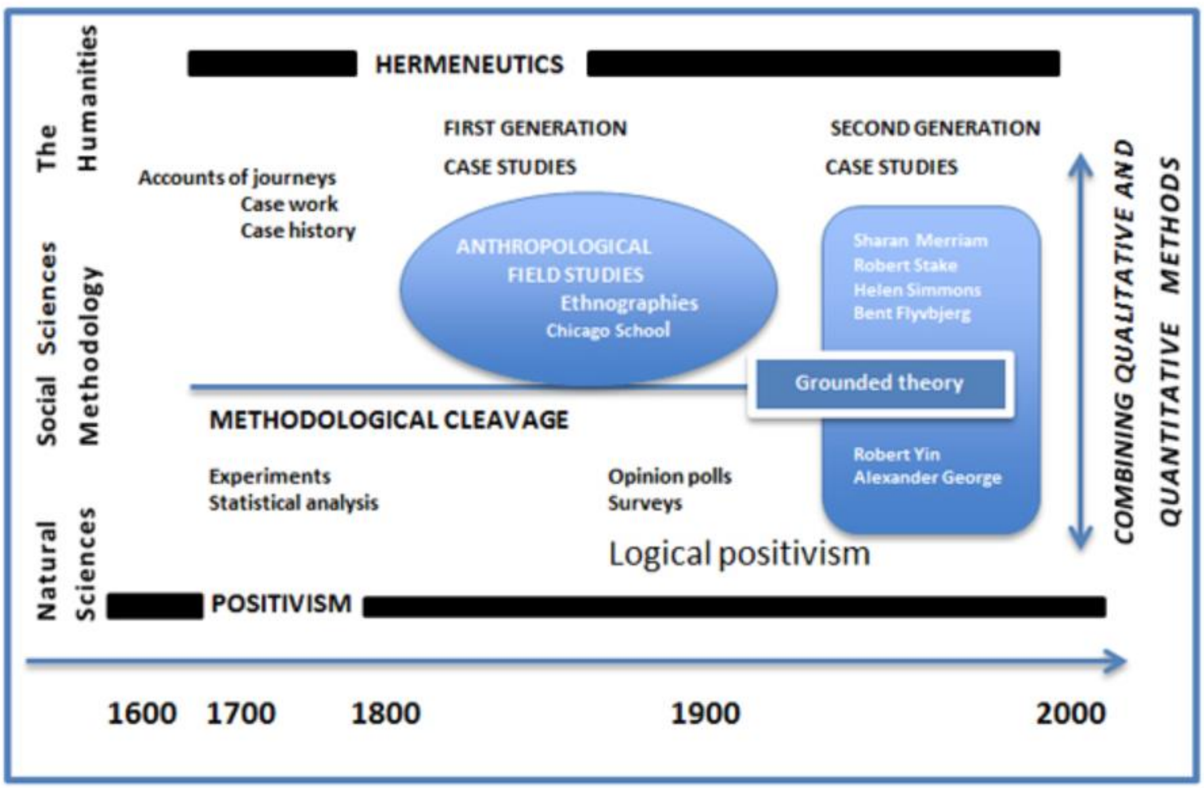

Figure 3.1 Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills (2017). “The history and evolution of case study research” adapted from Johansson, (2003, p. 7)

As the history of case studies is complex, so is the philosophical root. Paradigmatically, case study methodology is malleable and is commensurable with any paradigm. "It is not assigned to a fixed ontological, epistemological or methodological position" (Rosenberg & Yates, 2007, p.447). The paradigm the researcher chooses dictates the methods to be used. As described previously, Yin, Stake and Merriam, all leading scholars in case study methods, have operated within differing paradigms, their methodological decisions are significantly influenced by these and will differ in the processes of their case study research works. Case study has been described in the work of Luck, Jackson and Usher (2006) as “a bridge across the traditional research paradigms” (p. 103). It is therefore not uncommon to find case studies that mix quantitative and qualitative methods dictated by a need to answer the particular research problem. I now turn to specific discussions of the case study methodology, methods I have selected and how these converge to help answer my research questions.

3.1.4 Methods and Methodological Decisions

As I locate myself within the constructivist, interpretive paradigm (after Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), I thus approach the case study methodology from a social constructivist worldview. The constructivist worldview is relativist in ontology and holds that there are multiple truths relative to each individual. Knowledge is co-constructed in the interaction between the researcher and the researched sample. This worldview is interpretivist and arrives at knowledge through an inductive process “from the ground up, rather than handed down entirely from a theory or from the perspectives of the inquirer” (Creswell, 2007, p. 19). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), “users of this paradigm are oriented to the production of reconstructed understandings of the social world” (p. 92). In this section of the paper, I connect my paradigmatic worldview to case study and through this, have selected methods (observation, interview and document analysis) that best helped answer my research questions.

In line with my research focus in this project, my view of the case study methodology most nearly follows the work of Merriam (1998, 2009) and Stake (1995, 2006), both of whom take constructivist perspectives. Merriam studies case studies within education. To Merriam, “a qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (Merriam, 2009, p. X). My divergence from Merriam’s approach to case study comes where, in trying to be a pragmatic constructivist, Merriam’s approach may tend towards prescriptivism, which in my mind takes away some of the flexibility of the case study methodology.

I also borrow direction from Stake (1995, 2006) whose constructivist, interpretive view of the case study research inquiry helps better shape my methods. For Stake (2006), to understand the case "requires experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its context and in its particular situation" (p. 2). The researcher co-constructs meaning with participants as “partner[s] in the discovery and generation of knowledge” (Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills, 2017, para. 26) in the actual setting. This idea of contextualizing a case and setting clear boundaries of the case to be studied is central to case study and is perhaps what sets case study apart from phenomenology and other methodologies which may sometimes use similar methods.

Aligning this research ontology with my organizational identity paradigmatic perspective is a perfect match. The social constructionist view sees identity as initiated through an organizational leader’s OI claims but formed and reinforced in the interactions between organizational members. In this study, for the sake of focusing the study, the boundary of the case is set around one business organization in Nigeria. Feed Me Ventures Limited is an integrated food processing company located in Ogun state, Nigeria. The organization specializes in the production, packaging and sales of snacks which they brand in the organization’s artifacts and sell to a local market. The organization also has a lab that runs food science tests and a farm that primarily rears pigs, some other livestock and some agricultural inputs.

FEMVEL is a small-medium sized enterprise comprising 39 regular full-time staff, 8 national youth corps members (government provided recent graduates paid both by the government and the organization), and 3 students on industrial training (college mandatory internships). Responsibilities of these workers vary widely from production, farming, lab testing to administration. Members of this organization were purposefully selected as sample because of their positions as stakeholders in the organizational identity formation. They are confronted by the reality of the phenomenon RQs 1 and 2 seek to understand. These organizational members provide great insights into their experiences contesting and debating organizational identity (Madsen, 2016, p. 218) within that peculiar social space. Interview participants were all at the time of this study paid organizational members.

Following several rounds of review, I received institutional review board (IRB) approval and entered the field in June 2018. I interviewed 14 participants (N= 14, males = 10, females = 4) with some participants interviewed more than once. While with qualitative research, there is no finite number of interviews required for a comprehensive study, McCracken (1993) suggested eight as a sufficient number of interviews. Interviews ranged from 10-minute go-along or follow-up interviews to hour-long interviews. None of the interviews went longer than an hour. However, some observations lasted as long as two hours which sometimes were followed by an interview. Interview participants included 1 founder, 1 senior manager, 3 mid-level managers, 2 supervisors, 1 consultant and 6 regular staff members from sales, production, quality assurance, lab and transportation departments. There were more male participants in this study than females, reflecting the structure of the workforce at FEMVEL.

I use the term “organizational members” to refer to all FEMVEL staff, which includes every interview participant except for the founder and the consultant. For these two, I use the terms “founder” and “consultant” respectively. In line with IRB requirements, I received signed informed consent from every participant in this study except for the independent consultant at the lab and one production staff. Interviews with these two were very short go-along interviews and at the time, there was no chance to get the documents for written consent. They did however, give oral consent. Their thoughts have also contributed to influencing my thinking and findings in this study, but I have not quoted either of them in the study. Participants were between the ages of 18 and 62, were primarily paid by the organization, Black, and had at least a high school diploma. I was granted access to conduct this study by the founder through a signed letter e-mailed to IRB at Purdue. The first thing I did, as I told IRB I would, was to hold general meetings with organizational members to introduce the study, the methods, assure them of confidentiality and ask for volunteers. There were three of these meetings because of conflicting work schedules. The first meeting was with the management team. Following this, I met with all non-lab staff and then with the lab staff at their regular Monday morning meeting.

As case study methodology is malleable, I had to determine which methods most appropriately serve the purpose of my study as well as my positionality as the primary investigator interacting with samples to co-construct meaning in relation to the study. As LeCompte and Preissle (1993) recommended, I had to consider “what information most appropriately will answer [my] specific research questions, and which strategies are most effective for obtaining it” (p. 30). Combined with my paradigmatic worldview, I selected research methods that are most commensurate with my transactional, epistemological view of knowledge. Case study as methodology seemed to best serve the goal of this research study.

Located within qualitative research, it therefore must borrow from methods that are qualitatively compatible. Qualitative research takes as its methods any of observations, interviews, artifacts, archival records, audiovisual material, and documents and reports (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2014).

For this case study, I began data gathering with document analysis following Rubin and Rubin (2012) so as to provide context for the current state of the case. While I could not get access to organizational documents such as e-mail, documents on organizational processes, or memos early on, I did get to work with signs and posted documents, which quickly helped direct my data collection as these signaled what matters to the organization. According to Coffey (2013), documents are part of the larger system. They "circulate through social networks and organizations, and in doing so help actively to construct those networks and organizations" (p. 374). Bounded within the walls of the organization, document analysis thus provided me with initial insights into suggestive OI claims as well as what is currently being done to communicate and develop organizational identity. Documents that I reviewed during this study included official What's App group chats for the leadership team, the lab staff and the farm staff. The founder was a member of each of these group chats. I also examined signs such as warning signs and signs that reminded organizational members of "who we are" (e.g., "Quality is our way of life"). I also collected data on posted instructions in the lab and signs that communicated instructions and records storekeeping and production. I also got a chance to look at the organization's e-mail and e-mail exchange with external publics. Unfortunately, the organization was not very open to providing me some documents that may have proven even more insightful. There is no website to further data gathering. Neither were there any texts such as newsletters, publications, memos, or blogs.

I followed Stake's (1995, 2006) view of interviews and observations as being key to case studies. Stake (2006) wrote that the researcher must experience the phenomenon within its context to fully have a grasp of the case (Stake, 2006, p. 2). Combined with document analysis, I was able to triangulate my methodical approach.

I adopted ethnographic observation and grounded theory interviews to provide direction into understanding the lived experiences of organizational members. I selected the ethnographic observation method because ethnography provides insights into organizational "cultural practices and artifacts" (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006, p. 437) and how members have adapted skills to cope with the cultural practices as well as draw on societal culture for sensemaking in the organization. Ethnography placed me right in "the midst" of the case and allowed for "cultural descriptions" that got at an emic understanding of the meanings behind their actions (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 197-198). It also helped in contextualizing findings by serving as a vignette or rhetorical description of "the ambiance of the setting" where data is being collected (Marvasti, 2013, p. 359). This contextualization helped see and understand phenomenon in the sense of the physical setting and emotions at play as meaning is being co-constructed. For example, experiencing the work of the sales team by going out with them to work or entering the farm to collect food for the pigs would have had a completely different meaning and understanding to me if I did not experience where the pigs stay and the emotion of the head of farming about how purchasing substandard cement blocks was hurting them.

In my role as ethnographic observer, I was constantly in flux between acting as a non-participant observer and participant observer. Whenever I joined organizational members on a job, I worked actively with them talking all along about their experiences and their view of organizational identity. When I was observing a meeting at the lab, I acted as a non-participant observer simply paying attention and taking notes. I did not contribute ideas but whenever they needed an extra hand to help with a computer or projector challenge, I was quick to change my role into a participant. I was on the organization's premises for two months. I joined organizational members for lunch at the canteen and became a participant observer. However, I only watched organizational members in engineering work on several projects–including fixing the car I was using in Nigeria when it developed a fault.

Furthermore, I chose to conduct an inductive analysis, grounded theory interview (Charmaz, 2006) as these provide tools for exploratory understanding through intensive interviews (Charmaz, 2006, p. 28). Charmaz (2006) distinguished grounded theory interviews from the more popular qualitative in-depth interviews in that with grounded theory interviews, "we [continually] narrow the range of interview topics to gather specific data [building around the axial code toward] … developing our theoretical frameworks as we proceed with conducting the interviews" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 29). The constant comparison method of this approach to the study allowed me to compare findings at every stage of the study. For example, from my observations and early conversations with the founder, I developed quality into an axial code and pursued it. I interviewed the head of quality assurance to understand this phenomenon and continued my interviews along this line.

With theoretical sampling within the bounded case, grounded theory allowed me to select participants in such a way that was intentionally directed towards increasing understanding of phenomenon. Also, as Creswell (2007) put it, the process of qualitative research is "characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher's experience in collecting and analyzing the data… Sometimes the research questions change in the middle of the study to reflect better the types of questions needed to understand the research problem" (p. 19). True to that, this flexibility became helpful as I began to have questions about my initial thoughts on quality compared to what organizational members shared as well as seeing other new phenomenon come up such as the idea that FEMVEL is a family. Because grounded theory inductive analysis allows for the needed flexibility, I was able to move easily between semi-structured and sometimes unstructured interviews. Sometimes, I just asked questions specifically on one phenomenon. (See Appendix B for the major interview protocol from which I took ideas to ask questions.)

Also, theoretical sampling allowed me to select participants in the study purposefully. So just as I selected the head of quality assurance because of the axial code, I was also able to select an organizational member whose name had come up in several interviews as perhaps being the best prototypical organizational member. He embodied most of the values of the organization. So, while I was in the field, the specific participants I spoke to as well as the directed questions of the grounded theory interviews that I asked developed with analysis and findings (Charmaz, 2006) while I was there. Interviews were spread over three months (between June and August) and were interspersed with observations and documents analysis.

Following theoretical sampling to select participants, participants were again assured of confidentiality, provided their informed consents, and then scheduled to meet at their preferred place for the interview. Most participants preferred to meet on organizational premises in a secluded room called the champions room. It was very dusty the first time I went there. It was next to what was the old lab. It looked like the room was supposed to be a conference room, but that part of the factory is no longer in use since the lab was moved to its own building at the beginning of this year. I interviewed a few other organizational members outside of FEMVEL while they went about their own work. It was not clear to me why most organizational members did not want to meet outside of work even though I suggested it. During the study, organizational identity was operationalized as core values. Questions addressed what they considered important to them as an organization, how they felt the organization was different from other Nigerian organizations and followed up on the axial code.

Furthermore, as this was a qualitative study, to allow for proper understanding and rigor in the case, saturation was a goal of the study with ongoing interviewing and observation. Attaining saturation increases validity and verification (Morse, 2017, p. 812) but can be very challenging and “the required time until reaching theoretical saturation is usually not less than twelve months” (Roman, Osinski, & Erdmann, 2017; see also, Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 17). This can be very time consuming whereas “most projects are time constrained” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 17) and expensive. In order to quickly reach saturation, given the limited time I had in the field, I used Creswell’s (2007) strategy of “discriminant sampling, in which the researchers gathered additional information from individuals similar to those people initially interviewed to determine if the theory holds true for these additional participants” (Creswell, 2007, p. 68).

In other words, discriminant sampling combined with Denzin and Lincoln’s (2011) theoretical sampling, I engaged in continuous member checking to quicken the process to saturation which I believe I reached. Because both my questions and samples were purposefully driven, many participants towards the end of the study were repeating ideas I had already heard before or were providing nuances, confirmation or new explanations of already established ideas. I also checked for most of these ideas during my last interview with the founder at the end of data collection.

In the next section, I talk about the qualitative analytical tactics and strategies that I used in draw conclusions from the data. These strategies are drawn from the literature on conducting inductive analysis.

3.1.5 Analysis and Drawing Conclusions

"Analyzing data is the heart of building theory from case studies" (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 539). Analysis is the "transforming [of] data into research results" (LeCompte, 2000, p. 146). It is in this stage of research that I took the large amounts of data collected and tried to make sense of them to solve the research questions, and derive meanings and understanding from the organizational identity and environmental and cultural phenomena studied. "Analysis is a bit like taking apart puzzles and reassembling them… if pieces of data are incomplete or biased, research results cannot provide a complete picture of a program or a good solution to problems" (LeCompte, 2000, p. 146).

To verify that data pieces were complete, it was important for my data gathering technique to be rigorous. I wanted to be certain I studied exactly what I was there to find answers to (Kerlinger, 1973, p. 457; Pervin, 1984, p. 48 in Kvale, 1995, p. 21–22). It helped that my "research findings seem[ed] accurate or reasonable to the people who were studied" (LeCompte, 2000, p. 152). I was able to check this during discriminant sampling.

Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) emphasized ensuring "the goodness – the quality – of the conclusions" (p. 276) which leads to a talk of trustworthiness that readers, research participants and the research community place in the research and the researcher. For this case study, I tried to run a pretest as a way of getting at craftsmanship validity of my chosen methods and the interview protocol (Kvale, 1995). Before IRB approved of my methods and protocol, I ran a pretest with the founder where I got background knowledge to the organization and the earliest insight into OI claims. None of the data from this pretest was recorded nor is it included in the data for this study. However, it did help arrive at craftsmanship validity and a finetuning of the interview protocol.

On the other hand, bias cannot be completely taken out of research. “Any researcher, no matter how unstructured or inductive, comes to fieldwork with some orienting ideas” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 17). One of the most basic ways to understand this is by paying attention to the researcher’s field of study and paradigmatic worldview. After all, “the act of observing is done from a certain analytic position toward the object” (Marvasti, 2013, p. 355). Thus, these two will affect what a researcher sees and what the researcher pays attention to (Adler & Adler, 1987; Marvasti, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Atkinson (1992) alleged that “what may be generated as 'data' is affected by what the ethnographer can treat as 'writable' and 'readable” (p. 6). LeCompte (2000) recognized that it is impossible to remain completely unbiased in analysis. Thus, as a way of attaining rigor, LeCompte (2000) suggested that researchers should be aware of their biases and how they affect data collection and the “usefulness and credibility of research results” (p. 146). Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) warned researchers of bias “stemming from the effects of the site on the researcher” (p. 298).

I recognize that my affiliation with FEMVEL and familiarity with the environmental variables and societal culture in Nigeria served as sources introducing bias. Another source of bias is that I entered the field through the founder, which could skew the data collected. Thus, as I designed the study and entered the field, I remained aware of how my biases affects what I notice as well as how I analyze data. For observation and interpretation of signs, I asked organizational members to help interpret the signs. I used techniques from motivational interviewing to help keep me out of the interviews some of the time to allow only the voice of the interviewee come out. I also used role play to achieve a similar outcome. Rather than simply going off my assumptions about the environment and how it affects what I observed, I asked organizational members about observations and how they feel the environment may have affected that phenomena. There were times where my assumptions were wrong. For example, I had anticipated seeing a lot of power distance in the organization. I also expected a more formal separation of roles and functions. These assumptions were corrected as I collected data.

In the rest of this chapter, I focus on specific analytical strategies I used in constructing meaning in this study. I begin with more general steps in qualitative analysis and from there, tease out my specific inductive analytical strategy which were selected for commensurability with my methodology and paradigm. I then discuss specific tactics used of coding and how rigor was ensured in this study.

3.1.6 Inductive Analytical Strategy

Interviews and all other data were first transformed into written texts to prepare them for analysis (Marvasti, 2013). In line with inductive analysis, these were preliminarily analyzed as they were collected to raise further questions to be investigated. This constant comparison and triangulation of data gathered through document analysis, observation and interviews not only ensured rigor through verification, reliability and validity (Morse, 2017); it also meant that analysis were inductively studied during the process. Analysis was an iterative process. I collected data, came up with initial ideas, questioned my thoughts and went back to collect more data on the developing ideas.

For transcriptions, I transcribed some of the data and hired transcription services in Nigeria to help transcribe the remaining audio recordings. I verified the accuracy of transcripts against the audio recording and made corrections where necessary. I gave each participant a pseudonym. I used pseudonym groups to help put participants into groups matching their work roles which would in turn help me remember them and the role they play at the organization – Bible names for regular staff, names of elementary school friends for lab analysts and names with “ayo” in it for anyone in management. Some participants self-selected their own pseudonyms. These pseudonyms also reflected gender.

In their book, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook,* Miles and Huberman provide three major steps or “concurrent flows of activity” (1994, p. 10) that constitute qualitative research analysis. These are “data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification” (p. 10). Data reduction is the first step in the analysis process and involves “selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes [, documents] or transcriptions” (p. 10). It helps the researcher sort and focus attention on what aspects of findings really matter. Decisions in this step were taken before data was collected as part of my research design as well as throughout the research study in forms as summaries, coding or creating patterns and themes.

True to this, after written-up texts of data were gathered, I used NVivo qualitative research software to help organize and analyze data. In NVivo, I classified data according to data gathering method: Documents for analysis, Interview transcripts, Observations – notes and pictures. After this, I began coding “to dissect them meaningfully, while keeping the relations between the parts intact” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). These themes were coded at nodes within the software to collect together ideas from the different data sources on the emerging themes. Coding in this study followed Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) inductive coding (meaning they emerged entirely from the data) (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Some codes were even in Vivo. I followed Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) guidelines on how to conduct inductive coding as their work is perhaps the best description of this technique (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The first step I took was to engage in an open coding reading of the data. I listened to the audio recordings with the written-up texts in order to pay attention to the intended meanings of the interviewees while open coding the data for themes. Early on, I had discovered an axial code which was quality. As Strass and Corbin (1990) suggested, the next step I took was to follow-up on this code and see what quality meant at FEMVEL. I also discovered other related axial codes and did the same thing. These became the focus of the study while paying attention to challenges to these codes as being actually axial codes. For example, I abandoned some early axial codes since there was no follow-up ideas on whether these were actually part of organizational identity or not.

This step of abandoning non-significant axial codes or subsuming them under other larger parent codes was the final step in coding. This is the selective coding step. This was for me an early step in conclusion drawing and verification. I tried to decide what things meant and I began combining some codes, giving some more prominence based on what seemed to make sense. This stage involved synthesizing the categories and relationships between codes to bring about low-level theory.

The next step in the analysis process is data display, which literally means how data is visually put together to help make sense of findings and reach a conclusion. Data has traditionally been displayed in large bodies of text which has been found to be ineffective (Faust, 1982) as humans can only make sense of small chunks of text at a time. We are thus unable to see what is happening or notice emerging themes and patterns from such displays. Instead of this, I used the NVivo codebook to visualize the themes. With all the themes explained through short descriptive texts, I created memos for each code and wrote out descriptions of the ideas that were developing under each code. Next, I sought similarities and then grouped codes that seemed to be different aspects of a parent code and then read them together to test for commensurability. I also extracted the code book into tables which allowed me to see the codes side-by-side the descriptions and numerical values for references and files coded under that node.

In drawing conclusions or verification, the final element of the tripartite process, the researcher decides on what things mean and tries to verify these ideas and meaning by testing them for "plausibility…sturdiness, [and] their ‘confirmability’ – that is, their validity” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). They go on to suggest that conclusions, although not finalized until the end of the study, are prefigured from the beginning of the study and evolve as more data is gathered and more analysis takes place.

While it may appear simple, it is important to keep in mind the approach of analysis I embarked on throughout the study. As described earlier in this paper, the case study methodology is adaptable to different methods. For my study, I chose to conduct an inductive analysis as it allows room for exploratory studies. Inductive analysis is closely related to grounded theory. As such, much of my analysis was in the grounded theory method. Marvasti (2013) provides that grounded theory is perhaps the best known inductive approach to analyzing observations. Here, as was the case in this study, analysis goes from specific observed incidence to more general findings that are concrete. During this process of drawing conclusions, I found myself changing my ideas and thought on a subject. I would write down my thoughts just to change those ideas after debating it with other data findings. For example, I struggled with the idea of quality. Was it simply an OI claim that organizational members did not accept and so contested? But then, they claim that they are about quality too. But they don’t live by quality. It was after this rigorous process of iteration, checking for confirmability, verification and validity that I came about with the realization that there exists an OI gap – partial understanding or acceptance of OI claims – which is a phenomenon I had not encountered yet in the literature.

In a similar vein, there exits in the literature a grounded theory approach to analyzing documents. For Coffey (2013), "documents are signs or symbols through which social actors infer underlying patterns or states of affairs, and to which social actors add and embellish with their common-sense knowledge" (p. 373). Documents are thus useful cultural artifacts best used in contextualizing the study and learning about social and cultural setting. In a way, documents are "'physical traces' of social settings (Webb et al., 2000); … data or evidence of the ways in which individuals, groups, social settings, institutions and organizations represent and account for themselves" (Coffey, 2013, p. 367). Given this value, my use of documents, as with many social science researchers, was to help "provide background information or context" (Coffey, 2013, p. 370). Although I did not gather as many documents as I had hoped for in this study, those I did obtain were actually very helpful. I interpreted them for content and contextualizing meaning as well as for verification during interviews. They also proved useful during analysis as I used them inductively through a thematic analysis of content following the Straussian coding and grounded theorizing method (see Coffey, 2013; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2013). I did not do much rhetorical analysis with the documents, but they often helped with clarification of ideas, understanding strategic moves by the organization, and referencing ideas I had written down during observation.

3.1.7 Conclusion

Ensuring rigor and quality started as early as the formulation of the research design and continued throughout the research process. "Appropriate design and method? Bracketing?

[Triangulation?] Sampling? Data collection methods? Analytic approaches? Member checks? Methodological adherence? Saturation? These all became tools for self-examination during the period within the project that any shortcomings could be corrected" (Morse, 2017, p. 803). In this case study, measures for ensuring rigor are built-in as part of the research process. For example, as a case study, there is triangulation in methods by using ethnographic observation, document analysis and grounded theory interview methods. Also, conducting grounded theory interviews meant continuous member checking and constant comparison of findings, as Goulding (2002) suggested:

> Grounded theory … has a built-in mandate to strive towards verification through the process of category saturation. This involves staying in the field until no further evidence emerges. Verification is done throughout the course of the research project, rather than assuming that verification is only possible through follow-up … [activities.] It may be strongly argued that grounded theory is also validational owing to the symbiosis of induction and abduction during constant comparison of data (p. 44).

In other words, quality assurance strategies discussed by Morse (2017), Billups (2014), Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), Cohen and Crabtree (2008), Angen, (2000), Lincoln and Guba (1985), as well as many other researchers who write on quality and trustworthiness, are already met by default in this study.

Additional strategies not engrained in the fabric of the case study which I also used include audio taping, pictures and audit trails. Following Morse's (2017) suggestions, pictures and audio tapes of observations made them become concrete, hard data. These were very helpful in reviewing observation and triangulating data sources in coding and drawing conclusions. This allowed better support for my thoughts, provided much needed detail during axial and selective coding, and allowed me return to pseudo-primary observational data while doing constant comparison.

The other approach is an audit trail. Although I did not diligently follow this through to the end of data collection and analysis, I began my study with an audio trail through a memo where each day, I wrote down my feelings, steps taken and plans for the future on the study. The metaphor comes from the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and suggest that qualitative researchers "have to begin, then, by logging and then describing our procedures clearly enough so that others can understand them, reconstruct them, and subject them to scrutiny" (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, p. 317). Nonetheless, auditing is still accomplished through peer review or in my case, through my committee of experienced professors who meticulously scrutinize my work before approving the conferral of a degree. The ultimate goal of this paper has thus been to set up a detailed delineation of my trail in this research study and through that, keep me accountable and in check for rigor and quality.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

"The concept of organizational identity is specified as the central and enduring attributes of an organization that distinguish it from other organizations."

David Whetten (2006)

American theorist and professor of organizational studies

4.1 Findings

Feed Me Ventures Limited (FEMVEL) is driven by the passion of its founder and the commitment of its members. The business, which was started in 2007, has as a goal the provision of premium quality snacks at affordable pricing to the Nigerian market. One of the most obvious aspects of Feed Me Ventures Limited's identity is that it is a food production company. This is inscribed in its name and in its processes. It is clear from the moment you drive past the hedges of grass that guide the black iron gate that open to welcome you to the organization. It is a compound with five major buildings. After driving through acres of underdevelopment, you have finally encountered an ounce of development. On my first day visiting FEMVEL for this study, a security man, Taju, opened the gate. He dressed in his orange coat and like every worker at FEMVEL, he wore a blue hairnet. He approached the car and asked me what my business was before ushering me to the parking lot and then directing me to the reception where I waited to meet the founder. At that time, the founder was busy working in the lab but came down to welcome me and give me a tour of the factory.

The reception is decorated with packs of snacks that have been produced by the company – TEEGO chin chin, TEEGO burger coated peanut, TEEGO cookies, TEEGO plantain crisp, samosa, spring rolls, undiluted soya beans oil and pops. I met the founder after some minutes. I explained to him that I had been directed to the wrong place by the locals. It had a similar sounding name—Feed Mill—but it was a much smaller organization that produces animal feed. We began the tour after talking a little bit about the factory and the plans for the study. Everyone on the property had a coat on: white for the lab and quality control staff, orange for production and security staff, green for the farm staff and blue for engineering. The founder wore a blue coat all the time. As we walked through the production area, a first sense of organizational identity jumped out at me through the signs on the wall: "Quality is our way of life," "Our Goal is Zero defect," "Safety begins with you," and "Do not lubricate machines while in operation," among other signs.

To discuss my findings on organizational identity from this study at FEMVEL, I have developed two chapters to help fulfill this goal. Each chapter addresses one of the two research questions posed in this study. Following these is a chapter on discussion and conclusion to provide a summary of findings, nuanced thoughts, recommendations for future studies and closure. I turn now to the first research question addressed in this chapter.

RQ 1: To what extent is the organizational identity of a Nigerian food organization consistent with the conceptions of organizational identity as central, distinctive and enduring?

My observation of operations, analysis of documents and interviews provided me with a list of core values which have come together to form the organizational identity of FEMVEL. Most of these correspond well with Albert and Whetten's (1985) conception of organizational identity as central, distinctive and enduring. The most important aspects of the identity of FEMVEL which organizational members described can be summarized in this synthesis of my findings:

As a food production company, FEMVEL is about quality. It operates as a family and operates its business caring for one another while staying honest and placing its integrity on a high pedestal. I discuss these three demonstrative core values below:

Top level values	Aggregated values	Illustrative texts		
		Senior management	Mid-level managers	Regular staff
Quality	• Quality in food production	We will not use or produce when we don't have [all the] raw materials. Now, I have not seen anyone challenge it. I have seen people say ah oga, that is a lot of waste... We have produced chin-chin that we couldn't sell and they say "oga, we will mix it" *[OC: i.e., mix good quality products with those made with reduced quality]*. I say "no, give it to the animals"… it is not [who we are]. It doesn't show that we are people of integrity. We will not do that *[OC: sell what can't be sold]* because it is not our culture and it is not [who we are]. It doesn't show that we are people of integrity.	"for us here, quality is actually our watchword and for us here the meaning of quality is like giving out the best of the best product"	We must put the quality in our brain... Yes that's how we are working here. We are not just working like to just work -- let's do it just however. Let's just produce whatever and get something out there as people just buy and eat. We make products that make people tell stories and think -- true, this other product may be a lot more but this TEEGO, it's really different from these others. For the future *sha*, we work for the future.

Figure 4.1 The Organizational Identity of FEMVEL – Quality: Quality in food production

Top level values	Aggregated values	Illustrative texts		
		Senior management	Mid-level managers	Regular staff
Quality	• Quality in non-food areas	One of the things you would have seen with us also is [that] you will not see cleaners and you will not see extra hands for things that you will see that people have extra hands for in other places… we don't have anybody I assigned specifically for cleaning. You know you have to do it. You own your workstation…maintain your workstation…that is the role of quality and they know that if I pass through and I'm not satisfied I'm going to challenge the boss.	I know, our quality here is all about having workers that are capable and are workers that we know that yes we can rely on them. So if we have workers that are capable of doing the job then we can achieve that word quality but if we don't have workers, people that like are not capable of doing the job then the quality will not be there.	

Figure 4.2 The Organizational Identity of F

Top level values	Aggregated values	Illustrative texts		
		Senior management	**Mid-level managers**	**Regular staff**
Integrity	• Honesty	Government officials, when they come to us they make demands and everybody knows that we don't give bribe. So we stand our ground, share documents and that's it. At the end of the day most times, we win. And secondly all our vehicles, it is mandatory that all their documents are up-to-date, that all the requirements of government are -- because if you go out and you get caught, you pay from your pocket, the company won't pay. So, before you leave the company, make sure that all the documents and all the requirements are all in the right order. So, everybody understands that. So, if you get caught by Road Safety or the police or whatever for negligence on your part... we discourage any kind of cash outflow or whatever for work not done. It's tough. We are not popular for it. For example I know that the companies of our size and bigger, the police station in Owode, usually every Monday will be going there to they give them goods. But me I said no. For what? No service. If we err on anything, let them challenge us. It is not about pride, it is about what is right. Why should we keep giving them things for not doing anything or working for us. You are already proving yourself guilty even before you [err] -- so I said we won't do it and we don't do it.	We don't lie, for example other companies like that producing chin-chin like our product they use like some other… what should I call it, "artificial flavors" but here we don't, because we know that adding artificial flavors and other things into our product can have an adverse effect on the health of the consumers, so we don't do that. So that's one of our, this thing, our quality here and okay we ensure that the asepsis like I said … Asepsis that's GMP	"we don't change anything we report it as it is even if we are out of spec, we have to report it as it is. And even if we fail, just keep on trying again" "With our work he keeps saying it: whatever we see, there's no need to patch or to like maybe...like whatever you see, whatever result you get, be honest. Like integrity, integrity in the sense that okay what we do like do it like all the task do everything right. In a situation when we say this thing is like this people outside know that oh these people are like this like they actually do it right. There's no issue or anything. So that's where there's integrity there"

Figure 4.3 The Organizational Identity of FEMVEL – Integrity: Honesty

Top level values	Aggregated values	Illustrative texts		
		Senior management	Mid-level managers	Regular staff
Integrity	• The three "thou shall nots	We make it known to our people that when you're outside and you fight, it means you are out of this company because when you're coming into a company there are 3 most important things that we tell our staffs 1. We don't fight, 2. We don't steal 3. And we don't destroy company's property. So if anything happens you need to report it, company will not kill you just report it that's if you destroy anything mistakenly, if you now fight that means you're leaving because that does not represent us and then if you steal that means you're leaving the company because that does not represent us so outside there that name… so even there was a time when a football team there was a time we have the kind of game outside and then our staffs put themselves together and say they wanna have their own team. So when we go outside there a lot of people are like TEEGO TEEGO TEEGO…	There are 3 core rules in the company as in don't destroy the company's properties, don't steal and we don't fight so those are the core something.	"No fighting, no stealing. Don't steal. Be honest" Before let me say I'm [the] kind of person that I don't allow, I don't even accept rubbish because I'm always angry before. If you do just a little thing I'll just be angry illegally [for no reason]. It's not a matter that Daddy just call me that "lagbaja oh, why you not be like this..." [no]. Because daddy can just be going like this. If I should see his face, I know what he means like Sammy, calm down. From there I achieve it and I think about it. Now if someone maybe the lowest people, let me say the lowest person that's working in this company, if he slaps me I don't even care because unlike before if he makes attempts if he says he wants to carry his hand up to slap me that means he was playing with rubbish. But now I don't even care because I always focus on future

Figure 4.4 The Organizational Identity of FEMVEL – Integrity: The three "thou shall nots"

Top level values	Aggregated values	Illustrative texts		
		Senior management	Mid-level managers	Regular staff
Integrity	• Trust as a currency	Ayo runs sales and keeps all the money. I have never had any reason for one day or half a day to say, what if he is stealing [OC: Core value alert]. In this environment, what I am doing is crazy. That you will trust one strange boy to collect all the money, disburse money -- even if I need money, I go to him unless the money is in the account. And I have never had any cause to doubt him and feel that he is doing something shady… Dayo [head of procurement] buys virtually all the small items that we need. He asks for money, signs for money, buys it and I don't have any reason to worry and think that he is doing something shady.	For example, if I'm not capable of being the quality assurer of this company there's nothing like quality. So, I have to do my work.	After then, [they said] this panel come and do it — I've been able to do it. Sometimes, they will bring some machines that even oga will not expect that this guy can do this thing. When somebody now does it, [oga sees that] this guy can do this thing. Oh, okay! I know what I will do. Maybe next tomorrow [OC: a few days later, the founder sees me and says] Joseph! "What are you doing there?" [And I respond,] I am learning. [Then he says,] "Okay. Go up go and work there. That's the place that you'll be working. So like [for] example, that's [why] I'm here [working in the lab as the only engineer designated here.]

Figure 4.5 The Organizational Identity of FEMVEL – Integrity: Trust as a currency

Top level values	Aggregated values	Illustrative texts		
		Senior management	Mid-level managers	Regular staff
Family Business	• Teamwork	"this is a family business. I don't mean my family but that everyone at FEMVEL sees one another as family."	Team work is very essential and important. Team work like if we work as one and in unity then we'll be able to achieve a good quality product. Like if everybody is just working and it's [not] all about fighting, fighting. You don't want to listen to each other. There's mistake and this one corrects you and you say no, no it's not supposed to be like that, then something will go wrong. But here we work as one, one family.	I'm talking about the teamwork. We do things together. We sit on the table to discuss. I don't know [if] you saw the flip chart. It wasn't in that position before. We actually made use of it this morning. And I'm sure you've met us like come together early in the morning to pick up like okay this is your own task, this is what I'm doing...So it's based on experience Talking together with the people, we get special relationship in this place more than the place I'm working in before. We are working together here as a team… If this guy do this one if I follow it I will just increase the experience I have here. So I will increase it to make my own different

Figure 4.6 The Organizational Identity of FEMVEL – Family Business: Teamwork

Top level values	Aggregated values	Illustrative texts		
		Senior management	Mid-level managers	Regular staff
Family Business	• Egalitarianism	It's different from a situation in which unless they see me, nothing happens. And it is also different from a situation in which I show up here, a member of staff is coming; he sees me, and he detours. There is no pressure. There is no reason or need for anyone to see me and begin to shiver or feeling that something bad is going to happen — [i.e.,] the pressure of seeing your overall boss which happens in organizations [in this environment].	And there's no superiority like this one is my boss. You, you are a boss, you want to be acting one way...like anybody can correct anybody at any point in time and that has been helping a lot.	I see them, they behave like a responsible -- and the owner of the company behave normally and we people like it. We have some companies around us that they will just be shouting, shouting or the way that they behave, they can leave. But the owner of the company, if you are working, he will come there. If you're even peeling the cassava, Daddy will carry knife and peel with us. Sometimes, he can even use pass one hour with us. And from there, we can just be seeing [noticing] so so thing that he is doing and [that] we like. [We convene amongst ourselves,] let us grab it and let us gain in attitude.

Figure 4.7 The Organizational Identity of FEMVEL – Family Business: Egalitarianism

Top level values	Aggregated values	Illustrative texts		
		Senior management	Mid-level managers	Regular staff
Family Business	• Niceness/ humanitarianism	I mean, all our heads of units have cars, official cars. I don't know any company of our size that can do that. So we are humanitarian and also profit oriented… I must confess that [the] humanitarian element wasn't there at the beginning but it dawned on me that this is probably not just for money. That is why God allowed it. And that's why we are keeping them on even though there is no business and there is no money coming in. And I am taking my reserve to keep everybody afloat. So when we need to now align things so that we will not lay off the staff – we will not just send them away, so company now says "okay, let us sit back and see how we can compress things." So we now have Tayo...she came in fresh as quality control. So when we now noticed what was happening there, so we need to tell her that okay, instead of this place [production] to be left alone without anybody there, she will have to take this responsibility so far she in being putted there. That is the reason she is these sections.	In the course of doing all these things yourself, you will not be scolded that you bring out your initiative that let's do this let's do that, let's fold this paper and have it done this way. In the course of you doing it this paper tore, you will not be faulted as such in tearing the paper because it's in course of duty that the something happened, but the something is just for you to report that this thing broke in my hand in the course of doing this… There's always a second chance [but here second chances never run out]	they want everything to be easy for us… I was looking to raise some money to help advance the state of things at the time. But as I saw how everybody was living. Each person was comfortable — untroubled, I then looked and thought maybe I should have some patience and remain here. Within my being patient, I have gotten married, had a child. So I figured, well, since they are treating me well here — where they are treating me well, I should also act well there. Let me commit my whole heart to this work not that I will keep thinking and wondering why I am even here working. You know? Someone who treats you well and lets you get comfortable and is after how things will prosper you, we should acknowledge such a person. That's what I think.

Figure 4.8 The Organizational Identity of FEMVEL – Family Business: Niceness/Humanitarianism

4.1.1 Quality

Quality is central to the organization's sense of identity. Quality at FEMVEL means that the organization produces premium quality snacks. While they have launched different products into the market over the years, the local chin-chin (a crunchy, deep-fried snack made from kneaded flour) has been their most popular. This is the product named TEEGO which in the community has also served as a pseudonym for the organization. Every organizational member I spoke to spoke about quality as being an important core value. For them, quality was about the taste of the product, the way it looked, the ingredients that go into it and how long it stays good post-production. One organizational member, Esau, described what quality means for them in this way:

> We are not just working like to just work – let's do it just however. Let's just produce whatever and get something out there so that people just buy and eat. We make products that make people tell stories and think – true, that other product may be a lot more but this TEEGO, it's really different from these others.

This organizational member goes on to talk about how in their organization "they are not just doing the product, they are thinking about the health of the people and they are thinking about the good life of the people". This means that for them, quality signals not only what is delicious and tasty but also that their products will bring their consumers no harm. That means that there have been occasions where they have "produced chin-chin that we couldn't sell" because it did not meet the food quality standard the organization has set for itself. The head of quality assurance, Tayo, explained to me what quality means at FEMVEL:

> For us here, quality is actually our watchword and for us here, the meaning of quality is like giving out the best of the best product. We don't lie, for example other companies

like that producing chin-chin like our product they use … artificial flavors but here we don't because we know that adding artificial flavors and other things into our product can have an adverse effect on the health of the consumers, so we don't do that *[OC: Distinctiveness]...* We ensure that the asepsis like I said, that's GMP [Good Manufacturing Practices] of the environment is taking place, and also ...the raw material, before we use them, we examine them. For example, our flour, when it's being ordered for and being delivered, we check for the manufacturing date, the best before date so as to have a quality. If we don't check that there are times that if the best before date exceeds the — you start seeing insects growing from the flour. So we ensure that the best before date is — and we don't take [so] much that we cannot consume so as to achieve a good quality product...I fully follow the process flow...From the weighing to the mixing, from the mixing to kneading, from kneading to cutting, and from cutting to saving — most especially the weighing aspect. If the raw materials or ingredients are not properly weighed, that would adversely affect quality of the product.

And if I follow that one strictly, I take that sample as a standard for … all other batches that we will produce for the day. So I can take like one or two like that that are I have followed up. So with that, I take that and take other samples [with] which I conduct something we call sensory evaluation which we have taste panelists. And this taste panelists, I choose them from among the workers that are in the factory...The quality parameters are: the appearance, taste, color, texture and aroma of the product. So from the results I gather from the panelists, that will judge. There's something we call quality index. It's this quality index that will tell you if that product is meeting up to standard and the consumers' taste or not. So if there's anything or any defect, if it's not meeting up to

> the standard, I quickly go to the kneading and tell them what's going on: "Something is wrong here. It's like for this batch you produced, maybe the sugar is not enough or is too much." So they have to correct their process … I do it twice, thrice in a week …

In essence, the quality of their product sets them apart from all other food production companies because they are concerned about quality. Quality for FEMVEL thus means how their product tastes, looks, smells as well as how it affects the health of their consumers. This has been a distinctive and enduring part of the organization's identity since it was formed in 2007. For the founder, if they do not have enough raw materials to produce the chin-chin the way it has always been produced, then they don't produce at all. At first, organizational members contested this value saying that it led to waste. Some organizational members in production even held the view that if not for their insistence on quality, "this sales that drop now will not drop" referring to the higher cost of using high quality materials while trying to keep cost down. The founder however attributes quality as the only way they have been able to stay afloat in the contentious market they find themselves in. Quality has been an enduring value and has aided in distinguishing the organization from competitors in the food industry.

Ultimately, for FEMVEL as an organization, quality is the ultimate center of organizational identity. An organizational member in the cassava factory, Samuel, helped me understand how central quality is to their identity. FEMVEL will not lower its quality, even if it means the organization will die from no sales:

S: "People know that it is quality"

T: "But they don't want that. They want more."

S: "Yes, that's what they want."

T: "Like full nylon."

S: “Yes”

T: “But here you are not going to do full nylon?”

S: “No. We can't do what can affect us *[OC: The founder says they are already selling at a loss -- lower than cost of production and adding five extra chin chins in each bag – just to regain some of the market share.]”*

T: “Is that because you will be short or you don’t want to reduce [the quality]”

S: “If we say we should make attempt; maybe ...let me say it should plenty inside the pouch, we will short *[OC: Local lingo meaning “to make a loss”]*. Still *sef*, Daddy *[OC: The founder]* was even trying. I can't lie.”

T: “Why?”

S: “It’s not what we are selling that he’s using to pay us. Daddy pays us from inside his pocket because market is [not] moving. It’s not like before again, you understand? Because people get it and some don’t know it.”

T: “You mean here or outside”

S: “Let me say outside.”

T: “Outside okay. So quality for you means that you will use –"

S: “What is quality? What is quality?”

T: “Good ingredients and all that and you are not ready to use another one even if it does not sell.”

S: “Yes”

While I was at the factory observing, the organization only produced two or three times a week due to low demand. On one occasion, while the sales team was getting ready to deliver products, they received a product return call. A distributor had not been able to sell the products they had delivered and wanted them to come take it back. Other companies may be reluctant to respond to a product return call but FEMVEL had distinctively established its integrity in the market at a moment of national economic recession two years prior. As a result, consumers are able to buy from FEMVEL without fear. This leads to the next core value at FEMVEL – integrity.

4.1.2 Integrity

Integrity is another value at the center of Feed Me Ventures Limited's organizational identity. Integrity at FEMVEL comprises several smaller core-values that come together to build and provide a sense of integrity and personal pride at FEMVEL. These values make FEMVEL distinctive among other organizations. Aggregated values include honesty, the "three thou shall nots" and trust, which in FEMVEL serves as a currency. Integrity at FEMVEL has to do in some part with brand equity. This means that at FEMVEL, "the name of the company shouldn't be damaged. It should stand out." As one organizational member described it, "we are working for glory." That is, the glorification of the organization's name which only comes about via a good reputation. For this organizational member, as with many others, that reputation is built by integrity, honesty, not fighting or embarrassing the organization and holding enough integrity to earn trust. One new organizational member who joined only seven months before this study was carried out summarized integrity and its dimensions in this way:

> No fighting, no stealing. Don't steal. Be honest. And even with our work he [the founder] keeps saying it: whatever we see, there's no need to patch or to like maybe...Whatever you see, whatever result you get, be honest. Like integrity, integrity in the sense that okay what we do, all the task, do everything right. In a situation when we say this thing is like

> this people outside know that oh these people are like this like they actually do it right. There's no issue or anything. So that's where there's integrity there.

Organizational members recognize that it is important for them to be honest. This goes back to the quality of their product. What they say is in the food is exactly what is in it. They do not want a situation where they "say A and somebody goes in your back and go and check and finds out it's A+" meaning that it is not what was actually there that got reported. When FEMVEL says something, anyone should be able to check and find exactly that. Bonike, an organizational member at the lab, narrated an experience to me:

> There was a situation of – okay, let's say with the sample we did. There was a time that everything was wrong, things were out of spec and in that situation we could have just like try and correct the values to what they're supposed to be and everything and he kept telling us we don't change anything we report it as it is even if we are out of spec, we have to report it as it is. And even if we fail, just keep on trying again. So we don't mince words...just report things as they are.

Also, there are three cardinal rules, or "three thou shalt nots," guiding social conduct and behavior at FEMVEL. The founder described them in this way:

> Our simple rules are just three: do not fight, do not steal and do not damage company property. If you flout any of the rules, it has consequences. Now, damaging company property is not only physical – even reputational. For example, you don't fight within the company and you don't go outside the company and also fight. If that news comes back to us, you will actually put your job at risk.

The rules are strictly enforced, comprehended and carried out not only within the organization but also outside it. When I asked some organizational members what makes a

FEMVEL worker recognizable, they responded that it is in the behavior that you know a FEMVEL staff because they live by this value and in this sense, they remain distinctive in the environment. An engineering staff described how they are perceived in the local community because of this:

> There are some ways we behave here. Like when we go out to play football [as the TEEGO team], they say when we go, we shouldn’t fight. So, when we go out to play [we don’t fight]. If it were to be [an]other team and something happens, or they do not win; if they don't fight or cause commotion, people sneer at them saying “When you are not TEEGO people, why are you being dull and letting yourselves get played?”

True to this perspective, I observed as contract workers came in to help with construction, some welding or other little areas where they needed extra hands. It was usually clear from their conduct that they were not FEMVEL workers. The founder had to address one of them who walked around the company property with his shirt off. Similarly, the head of procurement told me about one contract staff who walked up to the side of one the buildings, unzipped his pants and started to pee. The head of cassava production told me that they have no smoking signs around the production buildings because one of the suppliers of raw materials had one day lit up a cigarette right next to the production area. Organizational members at FEMVEL will not engage in any of these. In each example, these people were publicly scolded by the founder, organizational members or, in the case of the man who peed on the wall, a host of organizational members. Incidents like these are not great for one’s integrity or personal pride.

Integrity internally also means that the founder and organizational members trust one another and enjoy trust from management. Thus, when the organization got robbed, management did not suspect any of the organizational members or question their central and enduring integrity. For one organizational member in engineering that I spoke to, this was very distinctive. He said that if it were to be at another organization, they would have been suspected, blamed and some of then maybe even fired. The difference however is that in most of those organizations, his perception is that integrity is not central to organizational values and does not play a role in how they define themselves.

Trust also serves at FEMVEL as a currency. For the most part, organizational members seek the trust of the founder. He has used monitoring as a tool to help shape and guide the organization, its values and culture. Trust also, however, means that when he assigns a task to an organizational member, he does not micro manage and may in some cases, not even check except to receive feedback on progress. Over and over, I observed that organizational members seemed to work to earn his trust. It was almost like an accolade for best practices. In my interview with Joseph, the engineer assigned to the lab, he values the founder's trust. He talked about how has earned it over time so that because the founder could trust the value of his work, he became the engineer assigned to the lab. For him, the extension of trust means "they know you've become a guru."

This core value of integrity enables the enactment of the third and last of the three demonstrative core values – FEMVEL as a family business.

4.1.3 Family Business

FEMVEL operates a central organizational identity that sees itself as a family. Organizational members are seen as, and treat one another as, members of one extended family. The organization is thus flat and operates a pseudo-egalitarian culture. The founder, who also heads the organization, is called *oga* (meaning boss) or Daddy by organizational members. While it is not uncommon in that environment for young people to refer to an elderly person as daddy, what stands out here is that this is not a very common practice in the corporate setting; but then, neither is running an organization as though it were a family. Family business thus means a lot of teamwork, filling in for one another, niceness and caring about one another (also called the humanitarian value), and low power distance. These are very unusual among organizations in the Nigerian corporate environment making FEMVEL even more distinctive among other organizations. According to Tayo, the head of quality assurance:

> Team work is very essential and important. If we work as one and in unity, then we'll be able to achieve a good quality product. Here, we work as one, one family. And there's no superiority like this one is my boss – [like] you, you are a boss [and] you want to be acting one way. Anybody can correct anybody at any point in time and that has been helping a lot (Tayo, head of quality assurance).

Lab organizational members are given direct access to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the projects they are working on, which, according to the independent consultant working at FEMVEL while I was carrying out this study, is not the usual practice. In her experience, organizational leaders make the SOP into a big deal reserved for managers and supervisors only. For the founder, "this is a family business. I don't mean my family but that everyone at FEMVEL sees one another as family." The founder said he "deliberately worked on that issue years ago." He wanted to build an environment where organizational members love one another and are not scared of his presence. He wants to be approachable "whenever, wherever on anything." So from the start, he took specific steps to establish this distinctive and enduring value at the core of FEMVEL's organizational identity.

True to this value, I observed that organizational members' relationship with one another was indeed like a family. Organizational members often arrive to work early – even before resumption sometimes – and stay late after work. Many of them continued their relationships outside work. For example, Joseph told me about how he helped the former head of engineering fix his TV at home. Organizational members have a football team that meets to practice regularly. And when they don't live near each other, they stay after work to play the game of *ayo* under the tree beside the gateman's station. This is very different. The founder says many visitors tell him how happy organizational members seem to be. In the local community there, people recognize FEMVEL workers and their vehicle. When I went out with the sales team for some delivery, I observed as little children gathered near the bus excitedly, smiling while some chanted "TEEGO people, happy people."

The relationship between organizational members is not simply contractual. It is not a simple organization for the purpose of achieving an aim – profit. Rather, it is a relationship as one might expect in a family where there are obligations for each member of the family and in return, there is love, caring and forgiveness. Thus, at FEMVEL, organizational members, such as Bonike at the lab, describe their leadership as "awesome". When there are new, promising leadership opportunities, the organization looks inward for staff who can be trained to fulfill the role. The organizational founder, for example, risked losing a Coke contract at a time when they badly needed money because Coke insisted FEMVEL must hire a Coke-affiliated staff to head the lab. He insisted on training the current organizational members instead.

Organizational members' relationship is comparable to that of a family also in the sense of going through thick and thin together. The relationship surpasses money. It is an emotional and very personal connection. More often than not, organizational members told me that the salary is not great at the moment compared to what they could be making at other organizations, but they are not here just for the money. Jacob on the sales team said he came here hoping to just work briefly but now has stayed for five years, similar to Esau who has been at FEMVEL for seven years. Many of them come for a quick job in production but end up loving the work and the people they work with. For Jacob, since he is being treated well here, he will stay. One of the drivers, Father Abraham, said the money is honest, legitimate money and that's good enough for him. He has been able to purchase motorcycles for his children and has almost completed building his own house. He sees workers at other companies take home a lot more money than he gets. Yet they have not been able to do much with it so he will remain connected to the family. For him, he believes there is a spiritual connection to the money and as such, no matter how much might be made somewhere else, there will not be as much to show for all the money compared to *honest* money made at FEMVEL. In exchange too, the founder has refused to downsize and continues to pay salaries even though the organization is not making any money from sales. They currently sell their products at less than cost price to regain market share but that has not drastically improved sales. The only money coming in are from the founder's savings and yields from the lab. They currently have a project with Coke which may possibly turn things around for them financially.

Also, like a family, everyone is expected to participate in housekeeping. The founder does not hire extra hands to take care of "things that you will see that people have extra hands for in other places." There are no paid cleaners or maintenance people. Cleanliness is important, and everyone is an active participant in ensuring the place is not dirty by cleaning around their work station. Tayo, who heads quality assurance and works in the lab, talked about this in her interview. She told me that she sometimes reminds production staff of the importance of cleaning their work station. During my observation, I watched as production workers mowed the lawn. The founder weeded the garden and hedges whenever he walked around. I saw as the head of quality assurance and procurement swept the administrative building. The lab "analysts sweep the [lab], they mop the floor and they clean their equipment and utensils" according to the founder. In one lab meeting I observed as the founder asked lab analysts not to end their housekeeping in the lab but to also look around the other parts of the company and help with housekeeping there as well.

The family value does help organizational members define themselves and their responsibilities, as well as their expectations from the organization and its founder. These three central identity values – quality, integrity and family business – help define the organization's sense of identity. These values have been present for most of the organization's life and have been driving forces in establishing not only who the organization is but what strategic decisions it can or cannot take. Because organizational members treat one another as part of the same family, most organizational members come to work and stay for many years. Some organizational members reported that although they found other work opportunities elsewhere, they were not sure of how they would be treated at a new place. They knew it is not very likely that they would be treated as nicely as they were treated at FEMVEL so they chose to stay. These values correspond to conceptualizations of organizational identity as central, distinctive and enduring as found in the literature. In the next section of this chapter, I discuss FEMVEL's organizational identity in relation to the Nigerian environmental context to see how organizational identity functions in relation to its environment.

RQ 1b: Given the Nigerian environmental context, what elements of the Nigerian food organization's organizational identity are consistent with Nigeria-specific values and practices?

In my interview with the founder, I asked him what makes FEMVEL a Nigerian organization. In his response, I learnt that for him, he only sees the founder being a Nigerian and the organization being physically located in Nigeria as the only things that make FEMVEL a Nigerian organization. “We have our unique ways of doing things and that’s helpful… I am a Nigerian. But the truth is I don’t think any Nigerian industrialist or business man will think the way I do.” For the most part, organizational values are set up in opposition to the societal values system. For the founder, FEMVEL’s organizational values are:

> Like resetting what is normal outside to say no, they are not normal, This is what is normal. [Like] stealing, politicians, presidents steal in Nigeria but you cannot do that here...in FEMVEL. Cleanliness is not required [outside]. You eat and throw paper everywhere. You cannot do that in FEMVEL. So that is resetting what is considered normal outside.

In many ways, organizational values and practices are set up in reaction to the environment. For example, FEMVEL is seen as a training ground by the founder as well as by organizational members. After frustrations with hiring university graduates who could not perform the roles for which they were certified, the focus of the organization shifted to training young people in professionalism. He describes the organization now as “humanitarian and also profit oriented.” The founder said he had set up the organization to make profit “but it dawned on me that this is probably not just for money.”

> I didn’t quit [my top position with Coca Cola] to start a charity organization. I didn’t have any reason to quit my job but I felt the urge to start something and be able to do something for myself and hopefully make money and feel good and help people but, the urge to help people over time became stronger (founder, FEMVEL).

As a result, the organization hires on attitude to learn rather than certificates. There is a largely unstructured training program at FEMVEL. Most people are hired and trained on the job. This training, however, involves the organizational member, usually hired into production, showing interest by moving close to any of the workers in the department or specialization area of interest and paying attention to what they are doing. In some cases, there is specific instruction, as in when Joseph was being trained on electrical works and other areas by Engineer Bayo. The founder instructed Engineer Bayo to teach Joseph. In most cases, however, organizational members acquire new skills by simply relying on the societal method of apprenticeship where a trainee simply watches the master performing the tasks. This trainee may be sent on errands, asked to help with little rote tasks and slowly given more and more complicated things to do until the apprentice knows enough and will get what is known as "freedom" which is more or less like a graduation that allows trainees to start their own business in the same trade. This process takes years probably because apprentices learn from experience and there is no direct or organized instruction.

The best way to see this at play at FEMVEL is through Esau who works in engineering and supervises the electrical section there. Esau is perhaps the prototypical organizational member and is often brought up during interviews when conversation led to this theme of FEMVEL as a training ground. Jacob narrates Esau's story here:

> Esau, when I came, I met him at frying. He trained me on frying chin-chin… I knew him in frying and that he repairs phones. However, one day, when the cutting machine broke down — and at that time demand was high. We had turned off all the fire — we used to use gas fires back then; we had not yet started using machines *[OC: meaning largescale industrial equipment]*. So he left me with the frying… The cutting machine for a good

> two weeks was really troubling them. It wasn't working properly. So as he went there — being that he had been watching them *[OC: the engineering team at the time]* work on the cutting machine all along, getting close to them and at this time, all our engineers were very busy with other tasks. So whenever they would come there to fix it, it would develop a fault again. They would fix it and it would develop a fault again … So on that day, he just went over there and asked, "What is going on? There is nothing to fry here." And they replied that "Oh. The cutting machine is not working right. That's how he looked at it that what is going on. He then proceeded to the engineering workshop, picked up some tools — not that he had performed that task [of fixing the machine] before, but being that they had been fixing the machine in his presence, he fixed it and the machine began to work. You know, that's an experience he gained there. So that experience he gained then got him a job with the engineering department…So all those things — machines, electricals, he knows about them all — he never learnt the trade [formally as a skill before]. It is at FEMVEL that he learnt all of these. Welding is not his job [or training] but he learnt it at FEMVEL. So you see that kind of thing and the kinds of experiences he has gained there…There are very many who have gained all sorts of experiences…

Furthermore, on the converse side too is the challenge Nigeria-specific values pose to organizational identity and operations. For example, the biggest challenge to organizational identity has come from government agencies making unwarranted demands. Police, Road Safety, and other regulatory bodies try to obtain bribes by pressing the organization hard. This is in direct opposition to core value of integrity. Organizational members know this and know that they are part of an organization that does not give out bribes. They are required to ensure that vehicle papers and other documents or permits are up-to-date. They are also expected to follow all government regulation, which may be unusual in the larger Nigerian society. According to the founder, FEMVEL is not popular among government agencies because they do not follow the status quo of giving out “dash” to government agents to buy future favors. The founder shared with me:

> For example, I know that the companies of our size and bigger usually…every Monday will be going [to the police station in Owode] to they give them goods. But me I said no. For what? No service. If we err on anything, let them challenge us. It is not about pride, it is about what is right. Why should we keep giving them things for not doing anything or working for us. You are already proving yourself guilty even before you [even err] -- so I said we won’t do it and we don’t do it.

Furthermore, there are other social challenges the organization has to overcome. Here the organization is plagued by the very values that it has been set up to oppose – dishonesty, lack of integrity, poor quality, cheating, and deceit, among others. One of the ways societal values have come in opposition with organizational values and perhaps driven the organization closer towards efficiency, integration and perhaps, self-sufficiency, is what I call the metaphor of the cement block factory.

The founder explained the metaphor of the cement block factory. It is the story of how the company got into producing cement blocks. Nobody was honest. He said the term *gbajue* is the local term for that practice which simply means "to dupe a person" -- a thing that people commonly do. “Let's just cheat.” He said they are all concerned about the profit in the now and making some money right now as opposed to what would be sustainable over time. This is similar to Hofstede's short-term orientation (Hofstede, 2011). Nigerians seem to think primarily about the present and the past, but rarely about planning towards the future. The founder said people just want to eat you up now; and so often times when they would go out to purchase building blocks, they would get a lot to buy at that moment and it would be a lot of quantity but not good quality. Worse, however, is that when they would go out to look at product options, the sellers would always show them really good quality cement blocks as models of what would be delivered. They would even give assurance that everything they use is of good quality, but by the time they delivered the products, they mixed good ones with lower quality cement blocks.

This was a problem for their livestock farming. Mayowa, the head of farming, showed me how this was a challenge at the pig sty. Often times, because these blocks were weak, the pigs would break through the walls and escape. Fortunately, they own a large enough expanse of land that they have so far gotten back every pig that got out. Sometimes, it was the concrete floor breaking and creating a sinkhole. As a result, the farmers would come to work and have to find all the pigs and fix the broken walls before moving on with their actual duties for the day. The constant repairs meant that the organization continued to spend money over and over to fix the same problem. The frustration eventually led them to purchasing their own cement mixing machine and starting their own cement block factory, which today produces very strong blocks for their construction needs.

In the same way, the soya beans oil extraction business which had been one of the earliest ventures in 2007 when the business started could not survive the strains from the environment. The cost of soya beans had gone up due to inflation, as is the common state of things in Nigeria.

However, the soya beans venture was halted because of contamination. The founder expressed his frustration to me in a go-along interview:

F: The biggest problem was the level of contamination. They were actually deliberately adding stones

T: To the Soya beans?

F: Yeah. And we didn't have the capability to remove the stones hundred percent. And it was destroying the machines. And then we decided to order new parts — because these are all one — we are just rebuilding our own and we sent to China but China sent us parts that don't match at all. And for them to replace it, they asked us to return these ones at our own cost.

T: Oh. So that kind of discouraged the effort.

F: It's been sitting there

T: Parts that don't match, increase in cost and also — you said they were intentionally putting stones in the soya beans. Is it like competitors or who would do that?

F: The sellers of the soya beans. I was in Makurdi. I saw it myself. Even these ones have been sorted *[OC: Pointing at some soya beans they just cleaned to test the machine they just rebuilt]*. You can see stones inside. This thing came from the farm. How did stones get into it? At worst, you'll have sand not stone.

T: But why would they add stones to it?

F: Weight gain. It is sold by weight.

T: And they don't realize that you will use it in machines and they will spoil the machines?

F: Of course, they do. They expect you to clean it up but it's okay if it is smaller or bigger but if it's the same size as the beans, you can't. We have a cleaner out there but there is only so much the cleaner can do.

This oil press business failed not because of a problem in the organization, its processes, or its strategy, but because Nigerian societal values are also included in the competition they must face in running the business. They face battles with copycat businesses that pop up and do exactly what they are doing. FEMVEL was amongst the earliest to introduce packaged chin chin into the Nigerian market. They created demand and a market share. Soon after, other companies started making exactly the same product designed the same way. When I went into some of what used to be their key market areas, I saw products that were designed and cut the exact same way. Worse still, some of these do not go through NAFDAC registration (which is supposed to regulate all food production in Nigeria) before being released to consumers. Many of these competitor products were larger packs holding more quantity than FEMVEL provided. Some were even produced possibly in individuals' kitchens with questionable materials, according to organizational members. The retailers, however, often favored these unregistered, larger products because they created a larger profit for them.

Samuel, who used to work in production but now supervises the cassava factory, said that most of these competitor products do not have the same nutritional value as TEEGO chin chin. FEMVEL cannot afford to sell at the same price to retailers because that will mean selling below cost of production. FEMVEL is also not willing to go back on its quality to match the prices. The reality, however, is that many of these copycat companies often do not stay in business for very long. So over its lifetime, FEMVEL has seen several companies come up, provide amazing prices to retailers, and then within six months of their existence, die out. The founder says that this is because they do not understand the business nor know how to cost their business. At the end, according to the founder, "our problems are not really our problems. Our problems are carry-over problems from people who don't know the business but who got into the business and became very zealous; sometimes overzealous.”

In the next chapter, I move to the next research question to examine how internal stakeholders talk about organizational identity. In that discussion, I discover that the founder and organizational members are sometimes aligned in their view of identity, but sometimes, there is a disagreement about who the organization is mostly because OI clams and OI understandings are misaligned. This leaves what I refer to as an OI gap. Interesting also is that OI understandings on their own also bring about instances organizational understanding in the minds of organizational members which do not come from organizational leadership’s claims about the identity of the organization. I turn now to the next chapter to answer the second research question: How do stakeholders in a Nigerian food organization talk about the identity of the organization?

CHAPTER 5. TAKING CLAIMS APART FROM UNDERSTANDING: THE OI GAP

"Things aren't as they seem"
Anonymous

Irish Proverb

RQ 2: How do stakeholders in a Nigerian food organization talk about the identity of the organization?

b. To what extent does the founder's vision of organizational identity correspond to the organizational identity constructed by members of a Nigerian food organization, given the Nigerian environmental context?

To fully comprehend the arguments in this chapter, I draw your attention back to the literature review for this study. Three concepts clarified in the introduction were: organizational identity (OI), organizational identity claims (OI claims) and organizational identity understandings (OI understanding). Organizational identity specifically refers to identity as it is perceived and understood in the minds of organizational stakeholders and publics. OI claims refers to organizational identity which the organization communicates to same stakeholders and publics. These claims are "referents, signifying an organization's self-determined (and 'self'-defining) unique social space and reflected in its unique pattern of binding commitments" Whetten (2006, p. 220). OI as a socially constructed phenomenon thus means that in order for OI claims to become OI, it must enjoy the third leg in this tripod, OI understanding. This is how stakeholders through daily interactions, negotiate, contest and make sense of OI. A founder's blueprints are vital to the life of an organization (Hannan et al., 2006) but without understanding from members, there really is no organizational identity: just OI claims.

Ideally, organizations want a match between organizational identity claims and organizational identity understanding. This is a state where the organization and its leadership's claims about "who we are" are exactly understood by organizational members and enacted exactly as intended by those claims. This study operates on the premise that organizational members are also able to formulate notions about "who we are" and begin to live this identity – thus the essence of this section of the results.

I am specifically using the phrase "OI claims" to refer to claims about identity made by senior management on behalf of the organization. The phrase "OI understanding," on the other hand, here refers to how organizational members make sense of organizational identity claims from senior management, enact their understanding of organizational identity, and also refers to claims that organizational members on their own make about "who we are." This suggests that organizational members may also hold OI understandings that may match or differ from OI claims. They may also hold claims about identity that are completely unfounded in OI claims coming from senior management. However, I still consider these to be OI understandings because even though these have emanated from organizational members' social interactions, they still emanated as a result of organizational members' interpretations and understandings of actions taken by organization leadership. These actions by senior management may not be intentional or strategic but they have been caught on by organizational members, interpreted, enacted and instituted as also constituting "who we are".

In answering this research question, I have separated the sense of organizational identity along patterns that I found while conducting this study. I realized these patterns during data reduction and visualization. Although I had created nodes for each fragment of the patterns, it was not until I tried to visualize relationships between nodes and marry nodes under parent nodes that I saw the relationships and interconnectedness from the memos on these codes. The same type of questions and assumptions I had established under the node “one-man business” appeared under “knowledge-driven business” and these were integrated. But then, these same arguments appeared while I was trying to make sense of the gap in the identity representations of quality – and these could not all be subsumed under one parent node, rather, they suggested a pattern (Holton, 2010).

There are four categories or patterns that help answer the research questions here. First are those values that answer the question “Who are we?” and which are neither contested nor misunderstood between organizational leadership and members. Second are organizational values that also answer the question, “who are we?” However, these were not pre-meditated by the founder nor present at the inception of the organization. Here, OI claim matches OI understanding. However, these values became important over time either from OI claims about what should matter (as in humanitarian niceness) or through the social interactions of organizational members. It is important to highlight this second category because of debates over the enduring aspect of organizational identity. In the discussion, I argue that organizational identity is adaptive and as such has an add-on effect which is reflected in how OI in this category was formed.

Following these are values that fall into what I am calling the organizational identity gap. These are those values that are important to the organization but where organizational members have a different or opposing understanding of the organizational identity claim. And finally are organizational identity understandings which do not come from organizational identity claims. These are understood by organizational members as “who we are” driven from their social interactions with one another but there is no claim by organizational leadership that this is "who we are". Through these, I am able to demonstrate how the internal stakeholders talk about and see organizational identity.

Also important is that during this study, I found that although there is a management team in title, there is no significant difference in their view or performance of organizational identity compared to other organizational member stakeholder groups. Also, the founder does not establish a significant difference in how he see the different stakeholder groups. When I first met with the founder to ask about managers, he suggested that the organization does not have managers. Yes, there are those holding those titles, but the organization is "structured but not formal." Thus, in this discussion, I only establish a distinction between the organizational founder and the rest of the organization under the name "organizational members." For this reason also, I have merged the two questions into a single discussion of the nuances that I found on stakeholder groups' sense of organizational identity.

5.1.1 Who are we: When OI claims match OI understanding

When organizational identity *claims* match organizational identity *understanding*, there is ideally less conflict and organizational members are motivated to engage in activities that draw on these aspects of organizational identity (see Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia et al., 2010, 2013; Harquail & King, 2010; He & Brown, 2013; Jarne & Martiz, 2014). "Identity influences action and action also influences identity" (van Rekom, 2002, p. 93). Some aspects of FEMVEL's organizational identity claims enjoy this full OI understanding so much so that they are enacted smoothly and may even go unnoticed. An example is the identity of FEMVEL as a family business or the organization's identity as an integrated food manufacturing organization. This latter identity, integration, is demonstrated in this statement by the founder:

"We are an integrated small-scale food manufacturing company." Closely associated with this is the OI claim communicated through posted signs: "Our goal is zero waste." Another sign on the wall of the chin chin production factory says "Our goal is zero defect." This is comparable to poka-yoke in the lean manufacturing system where mechanisms in the system are designed to avoid waste and reduce errors. At FEMVEL, the goal is to ensure that nothing is wasted through backward integration.

> Whatever waste we get from chin-chin, we feed to animals. Whatever waste from the animals, we use to fertilize the plants in the farm as much as possible. That is the whole original idea and also to be able to control cost. Zero-waste means that what we normally generate as waste and pay people to dump, we are actually taking value from it. We are finding other uses for it which in turn helps the business to be cost-effective (founder, FEMVEL).

During the study, there was never any contest to this value and organizational members participated in their role to ensure there is no waste and that the system remains integrated. I observed as organizational members at the *garri* fatory collected cassava peels for animal feed. When these were not enough, I joined farm staff as they went around local town to *garri* production firms nearby to help these traders get rid of their cassava peel wastes and turn them into feed for the piggery. The same system is used for feeding the other animals – goats, fish, turkey, chickens and even the guard dogs. It is a production cycle. Even the onsite canteen that feeds the staff gets most of its raw materials from what is produced in the farm and the *garri* factory. They also take from their own livestock for protein when making food.

Another OI claim that has enjoyed full OI understanding is the claim that FEMVEL is like a family. The word "family" or suggestions of it appeared in almost every interview that I conducted. It was clear in my observations that organizational members were friendly with one another. In the work What's App group chat, they would often talk about work-related topics but also share jokes and encouraging words with one another. They have a relationship that is not contractual. One manager put it this way:

> FEMVEL has been a place that I can say out of many places that I've been to, out of organizations I've heard about, something holds us together – togetherness like a family. I have not seen a place where the management, the M.D and the staff will sit together and eat together.

As already discussed in the earlier section, family also means that the organization and its members care about each other personally. There is less of a power distance and a lot of teamwork. The organization looks inward to train its members and extend opportunities to them. Through the founder's efforts, the lab analysts will have the opportunity to tour International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certified labs around the world to develop their own competency as analysts. He also is helping them acquire certifications that allow them to take on more challenging tasks in the lab and develop professionally. Organizational members remain loyal and committed to the work and support one another.

Integrity is another value that I observed to be in this category. "Integrity" as people talked about it, includes values such as honesty, the three "thou shall nots," and trust as a currency. Every organizational member I interacted with understands what this means and lives by it. An organizational member who works at the cassava factory told me with firm belief that they would rather not sell any products than compromise their integrity by providing subpar quality products; or lie about the quality of the chin chin they put out – even if this leads the organization to death. There is no question about what constitutes integrity or whether there are gray areas. For organizational members, honesty is very important as well as the three cardinal rules: “We don’t fight. We don’t steal. And we don’t destroy [the] company’s properties” (Ayo, head of administration). However, they also know that if they do err, because this is a family, they will be forgiven.

I once watched as one of the company’s drivers nervously approached the founder along with the head of administration to report himself for breaking a side mirror of a company car. This was an interesting situation that demonstrated the importance of integrity at the organization. This driver could easily have returned to the company, parked the vehicle and have asked one of the engineers to help repair the broken part since repairs are all done in-house. However, he would rather be honest and confess to the founder than try to sweep it under the carpet. For the founder, it is important that organizational members “feel that they are never going to be threatened on the job. It is not a situation in which for everything you do wrong, you’re punished. We’ve never fired anyone for damaging or destroying anything.” I saw the founder’s frustration when an organizational member out of timidity did not inform him that something was damaged. He would rather know what has gone bad so it can get fixed.

Next, I turn to the second category of organizational identities that were formed as the organization grew and evolved. Here, OI claims and OI understanding also match. This second category is however different from the first one when contextualized within arguments about whether organizational identity changes or not.

5.1.2 Who are we: Organizational Identity developed along the way

Over the life of the organization, there has been a development of new core values that came out of the need to survive or a commitment to its members. This category is very similar to the previous category in that OI claims match OI understanding. However, the significance of this category is in the argument over the enduring aspect of organizational identity. Does OI change or does it remain the same over an organization's lifetime? Through evidence including this section of the findings, I make an argument in the discussion section of this study that organizational identity is adaptive in a volatile environment like Nigeria. It has an "add-on" effect which allows the organization to add core values or identity dimensions to its organizational identity in order to stay the same (that is, true to its original identity) while adapting to environment required needs.

Chief in this category demonstrating how organizational identity is added-on along the way is the "humanitarian" (founder, FEMVEL) drive of the organization. Organizational members talked about this as more or less a "niceness" dimension or the do-good part of "who we are." Many interviewees talked about how the organization constantly seeks to make things easy for them. The organization is invested in its members and is quick to forgive and focus instead on developing the person. There are multiple second chances according to Dayo who manages procurement. Samuel's story perhaps best demonstrates this value. When he messed up an opportunity heading the farm by being a belligerent, combative and boorish leader, the organization, rather than firing him, chose to demote him and keep him in production. He had a chance to work on himself, his leadership and emotional intelligence skills. Even though he had caused losses to the organization in human resources and reputation, managers still took a chance and extended another leadership position to him in the cassava factory according to Ayo, the head of administration. They placed him on probation for some time to assess his growth and later made his new position more permanent.

According to the founder, like most core values, this developed out of experience running the business in that environment. They realized early on that it was hard to hire skilled workers.

Those who actually were already skilled, want to be paid outrageous sums or would try to run the business dry by slowing stealing from it and siphoning company funds and resources for personal use. This is a huge and pervasive problem in Nigeria (see Osemeke & Osemeke, 2017).

> Initially, we had a team that was -- youth corpers and people that we hired on top of -- ten youth corpers and eight graduates. Was it? Sixteen, sorry. And it got to a point, I was left with about three because the so-called graduates were not delivering and the people who delivered were the ones we focused on. So I stopped hiring through certificates. So when we are interviewing, we are interviewing for attitude. as opposed to certificate. And that attitude will tell us your nature and whether you are trainable or not…because we know that we are still going to end up doing all the training to get you to the level that I want (founder, FEMVEL).

So instead, the organization hires locally and provides opportunities to those who may otherwise not have same chances. Unskilled young people are turned into young, skilled professionals as in the example of Samuel. For FEMVEL, being “humanitarian” or “nice” means “building the young ones” and “the less privileged” as the head of administration put it. FEMVEL is almost like a school. It is a training ground that provides opportunities for otherwise unskilled workers (primarily in the local community) to attain heights professionally and in personal development that they may otherwise not have attained. New hires are trained on virtually every skill that they will need to survive at the organization. Similarly, to help organizational members become multi-skilled, they have the mandate to acquire skills other than what they are most familiar with or are trained in. Even lab analysts are expected to spend time in production and also work in engineering whenever they have less work in the lab. Within the lab, organizational members are expected to work in more than just their area of specialization.

The founder, who directly runs the lab himself, trains all lab analysts on every aspect of the lab work. He rotates the roles and the food technologist will perform microbiology tests. Everyone in the lab, as in the rest of the organization, is able to perform several roles and can easily substitute for one another. An organizational member in the lab explained the nature of work there this way:

> Technically, it's not even an assigned work like technically. But you know you do this but then again, you do this. Because even mainly, what he says is: "you can’t particulate." You can't be like "oh, this is my work." He wants us to be like all round… He even says it like a situation where like I’m a microbiologist, but I do things, or I can do things all of them are doing [in the lab] and they can do things I’m doing … we are all trained on this.

The founder goes even further and assigns non-work-related readings that will help employees grow as professionals. During my observation, a book that was being circulated is *Right first time* by Frank Price, a book on quality. The borders between departments are porous allowing for a very fluid structure. During their time at FEMVEL, the organization extends opportunities to grow and develop in skill, knowledge and personality. This is important to their conduct of business. The organization provides economic and developmental opportunities to those who may otherwise not have access due to their socioeconomic conditions and the underlying social stratification in the country. Ayo, the head of administration told me that many people in the neighborhood are looking for ways to work with the organization. Rather than requiring diplomas and skill levels that most locals do not have, FEMVEL accepts people as they are. The organization is, as the founder told me, “humanitarian and also profit oriented” (founder, FEMVEL)

Moving away from areas of matched OI claims and OI understanding, I discuss next cases where stakeholders think differently about organizational identity.

5.1.3 The OI Gap: When OI claims and OI understanding do not match

For the most part, at FEMVEL, stakeholder groups are well aligned in their beliefs about "who we are." There is very little friction in their operation or questions about who the organization is. Although organizational members could not articulate to me in specific terms what the mission or vision of the organization is, it was clear that somehow, they still understood the goals of the organization. This paradox signaled a challenge in communication at the organization but also indicated that for as much as it stands in opposition to societal values, the organization still relied on polychrony – a societal culture – in order to smoothen its operations.

High-context, polychronic cultures get by with "most of the information … already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message" (p.6). Essentially, in a high-context, polychronic culture like Nigeria, in-group members know about each other's lives or in this case, about the missions and goals of the organization, without necessarily talking about it. A lot is left unsaid and little background information is provided. However, much more is understood. So, while there is a clear communication problem, it is not necessarily a problem so long as FEMVEL remains a high-context and polychronic environment.

As I continued data reduction, I realized that there was a gap between the founder's OI claims in certain key areas and OI understanding. One major area of OI gap is in the difference between OI claims about quality and OI understanding of quality. Over and over, I saw the founder get frustrated about the quality of the work outputs by members of the organization. Most of the time, he had to be present to monitor any work being done in order for it to be done right. Sometimes, he felt that the problem was very obvious but, in my observations, organizational members did not understand what was wrong with what they had done. For the founder, quality means providing premium snacks but also having "dignity of labor" to do jobs well. For him, when he says we are about quality, it also means that there should be a sense of pride in what you do: "I did this, and I did this well" (founder, FEMVEL). Thus, while for the founder, "quality" refers to getting the best outcome from products as well as process, organizational members understand "quality" as getting the best outcome from products alone.

For organizational members, quality starts and ends with the product. This is obvious from the interviews. Almost every organizational member would talk about quality as being central to organizational identity but would only talk about the food production. Similarly, on organizational premises, signs depicting quality can only be found in production areas. For example, there are no signs talking about quality in the lab, the canteen area, equipment storage area, or the engineering department. Every indication of quality seemed to surround the food production only, thereby reinforcing this OI gap between "quality of process and product" and "quality of product only."

As sales dropped, organizational members got sloppy with following standard procedures such as good manufacturing practices (GMP) in the production area and record keeping in engineering. For the founder, these documentations are key parts of "quality", but for organizational members, they are not quite as crucial to "quality". According to an organizational member in the quality assurance department, "the sales of the product has really affected, not the product, but the in-house stuff. But the product, nothing is wrong with it."

This explanation helps see the OI gap. Quality, as broadly construed by the founder, is not understood by organizational members making it more so an OI claim. As such, when sales drop, those other aspects of organizing can suffer but not the quality of the product. The quality of the product is core to "who we are" in the minds of organizational members. For example, during this period of reduced sales, employees still wear hairnets all the time, a practice affiliated with safety. They do not throw trash around or become visibly messy. They do not stop caring about each other or halt the integration and zero waste process. No part of what for them constitutes “core values” suffers. They remain consistent in enacting what they understand as their identity and do not enact other aspects of OI claims by the founder.

Furthermore, another demonstration of OI gap is in the question of whether FEMVEL is a one-man business or not. In my interview with the founder, he said that FEMVEL is not a one-man business:

> I have always envisioned a business that will be known like a family operation than anything else…I tell them this is not a one-man business and that they should never see it as that. If I die, their focus should be that this business will continue. Not that I die and the business dies and everybody goes their separate ways. So it’s not.

While the founder makes this OI claim and the organization is registered as a limited liability company rather than a sole proprietorship, his actions as well as organizational members’ OI understanding demonstrate that the business is understood by organizational members as a one-man business. This is an OI gap. All through my interviews, whenever I asked questions about the organization, organizational members would begin talking about the founder. It took a lot of work to try to get them to separate the identity of the founder and talk about the organization instead. For example, at the beginning of my first interview, when I asked Ayo what it is like to work at FEMVEL, he began talking about the founder and how he has not seen any organization where the managing director eats with members of the organization in the canteen and interacts with them as much as the founder does. Questions about the organization’s identity and values during almost all of my interviews always went back to discussing the founder, what he has said, guesses about his intentions and on a few occasions, organizational members directed me to go ask the founder because they didn’t know.

Although he says it is not a one-man business, the founder admits that the organization has taken on his personality. Following Fauchart & Gruber’s (2011) classification of founder types, the founder of FEMVEL is a communitarian and missionary. As a communitarian, he wants profit but is also very much concerned about the quality of their product. As a missionary, he sees his role serving a bigger purpose as a mission for the betterment of the community. These are reflected in the organization and its identity. During my interview with him, the founder demonstrated how most core values come from his own personal beliefs. While this is not unexpected, it contradicts the OI claim that it is not a one-man business, showing instead the existence of an OI gap. Actions he takes such as refusing investors, not having a board to direct affairs, and rejecting Coke’s inputs into how to run the lab all the more reinforce the idea that FEMVEL is a one-man business.

Further supporting this argument, when I interviewed the founder about FEMVEL and its identity, it felt more like I was asking questions about the founder himself. When I asked how FEMVEL is a Nigerian organization, his first response was that he is a Nigerian. When I asked about the organization’s consciousness, the founder talked about himself. When I asked the head of administration for the vision of the organization, he had no idea and suggested that I should ask the founder. The founder has a direct input in the daily running of the business and almost everything has to go through him except for when he is not physically located at the factory. While I was there, I watched as organizational members from the different departments came to the founder with a request slip to do even the minutest things. They needed him to sign for them to take money for procurement, take out the company van, take equipment for the engineering department, get a new lab coat, take out product for sales, and even to take out a new mop stick from the store.

The question of whether FEMVEL is a one-man business thus is a good demonstration of the OI gap. Here, we see how the OI claim of the founder differs from the OI understanding of employees. This OI claim, although communicated to organizational members, never got accepted as organizational identity, thereby leaving an OI gap. Perhaps the OI gap is on the part of the founder who makes an OI claim different from current OI. He may desire that his claims are true but there is a gap between what he claims and the reality which what organizational members understand. The OI claim is not visibly contested but through observations and analysis, it is clear that organizational members have not taken or accepted ownership of the organization. They do not see FEMVEL as "belonging to us." For them, it appears, the founder is the organization and they are serving his business goals – whatever those may be.

Next and final in this discussion of stakeholders' views of organizational identity are OI understandings that do not come from OI claims but from organizational members' social interactions and understanding of the organization's strategic moves.

5.1.4 Who are we: When OI understanding does not emanate from OI claims

FEMVEL stakeholder groups interact with one another and through these interactions make sense of what senior management says about "who we are." Organizational members at FEMVEL also interpret managerial actions and make propositions to one another about "who we are." In these cases, "who we are" is derived from OI understanding (of managerial actions) rather than OI claims (about those actions). In this section, I talk about two examples of this – safety and global organizational identities. In both cases, there is a definitive action taken by the founder and his management team which, through organizational members' OI understanding, concretizes these values as also constituting “who we are”. Ultimately, these OI understandings begin to drive home an even bigger question about who the lab is and its relationship to the rest of the organization.

In my study at FEMVEL, I observed that safety seemed to be important to the organization. Similar to quality, there were signs on the walls that suggested the organization aimed to be a safe place. Some signs said, “do not lubricate or clean machine while in operation.” Another warns, “do not put your finger in the machine” and is followed with a graphic image of a hand with fingers possibly shredded by a machine. Unlike the value of quality, however, these signs associated with safety are found in the production area as well as in other areas around FEMVEL. There are warning signs about biohazard in the lab; warnings against lubricating machines while in operation in the *garri* factory; a reminder about safety first and using personal protective equipment at the engineering workshop; forklift caution signs around the storage area which housed raw materials; a list of ten safety rules for all organizational members placed between engineering and production; and a concluding warning close to production reminding all organizational members that “safety begins with you.” With signs about safety everywhere, one would think that this is an indication that safety is perhaps a very core value at FEMVEL.

Organizational members are required to use hairnets and wear color-coded overcoats all the time. Covered shoes must be worn into the lab office area to prevent contamination even if you are not entering into the protected test areas. Production staff must follow company-provided GMP, which includes not wearing personal gear of any sort into production areas. However, safety did not come up during my interviews as constituting “who we are”. None of the organizational members I interviewed, nor the founder, brought up safety in response to questions about core values with the exception of one lab worker.

I learnt later by investigating this difference between my observations and what organizational members were telling me that safety as a value had actually not always been important to the organization, thus lacking the organizational identity quality of "endurance." According to Esau who works in engineering, safety became a concern for the organization about 2015. This was also around the time that one of the engineering workers had cut a finger while trying to fix a machine that was still in operation. One of the managers told me that following this incident, the organization began holding safety meetings with the organizational members and also put up banners and signs reminding organizational members about safety steps. However, this manager did not identify safety as a core value. Rather, these were perceived more as preventative actions. Safety did not settle as a core value. Thus, organizational members in production and engineering contest it – similar to how they contest the notion of quality as a more broadly defined concept. And as with the other conceptions of quality, safety preventative actions also suffered as sales dropped. As organizational members told me, they more and more neglected safety meetings following the reduction in sales.

In the lab, however, safety seemed to hold a more prominent role in defining organizational identity. In the What's App group chat which lab staff use as their primary means of communication and sharing work related instruction and developments, the very first thing that was communicated to the group is about safety. Interestingly, this was not initiated by the founder, but he was the first to respond to it thereby solidifying, albeit, unintentionally, the place of safety as a core value in the lab:

5/17/18, 13:57 - Femvel - Tayo created group "FEMVEL CLA'S"

5/17/18, 13:57 - Femvel - Tayo added you

5/17/18, 14:06 - Femvel - Tayo: SAFETY FIRST!

5/17/18, 14:30 - Femvel - Founder: Welcome. SAFETY ALWAYS.

One of the lab members told me that “safety is our watchword” and asked that I only ask her questions about the lab because she does not know about the rest of the organization – only values at the lab where she works. For this organizational member, the lab is separate and different from the rest of the organization. In the lab, safety is apparently understood as a core value by organizational members. According to Bonike, who works in the lab, safety is so important that according to her, when trying to get the attention of others or asking another lab analyst to come, “they say safety first, you say safety always, it’s like safety first, safety all the time.” It does make sense that the lab would lay a big emphasis on safety since they work with very delicate materials and there is the fear of contamination. One of the lab analysts described to me how she has to tie her hair differently when she comes to work and wear clothes that are appropriate for the lab. She also has to be concerned with what is most hygienic for what they are working on. In their What’s App chat, the basics of safety are described in terms of personal protective equipment (PPE): “lab coat, hair net and safety shoes as they will not be allowed in without all these mentioned PPEs.” Thus, while there is no OI claim that safety is a core value in the lab, OI understanding of organizational members in the lab establishes safety as being core to their sense of identity as an organization.

Moving forward, another organizational identity formed through OI understanding rather than OI claims is the idea that FEMVEL or more specifically, FEMVEL Laboratory Services Limited as it has been incorporated since June 2018, is a global organization. While it is true that founder recognizes his organization as very distinctive from other Nigerian organizations, he has not at any point identified the organization as being a global organization or aiming for global relevance. In fact, he insists that the organization serves the local community. In hiring, they primarily hire from the town where the organization is located. In the rare case when they do hire anyone not living in the town – as in the case of the lab analysts and at least one of the managers– these hires are required to relocate to the town or a neighboring town.

When the founder began work on the project to create a new snack using soya beans oil, he told me that "basically, the focus is local sourcing. I am trying not to use imported stuff which has always been one of the key focus of this business...locally sourced materials in Nigeria as opposed to using imported ingredients." For FEMVEL, using locally sourced materials is also great because it can lower cost of production. They do not have to spend very much on raw materials especially if they again look inward to raw materials they can backward integrate and produce themselves. This way, they also control for external variables and ensure they get the quality they want every time.

Organizational members, however, see the direction the organization is going and have slowly begun to construe a new and still evolving sense of identity. For an organizational member in engineering that I spoke to, it appears that the desire and mission is to become a multinational like Coca Cola:

> The only thing I can just say about the mission of FEMVEL is that number one, they want everybody to be glory and they want this product we are producing here to be more glory more than the glory we have before. So we are working for the future for the company not that we are just working. We are working for the future to be so bright and to be very very high like Coca Cola.

I could tell that this idea of the mission of the organization is being understood by organizational members because of the recent work relationship established with Coke. In the time since the lab was built, the founder has spent less time in the production areas and more time in the lab. They have also watched as special international guests have come to tour the lab facility, hold meetings with lab analysts or drop-off supplies for analysis. In the mind of one organizational member working in production, the lab is separate and different from the rest of the organization. Although he could not quite articulate what made it different, it was clear to him that they were not the same. There is the lab and there is the rest of FEMVEL.

This OI understanding is not uniquely held by non-lab analysts alone. Even within the lab, there is a notion that the lab on the one hand is different from the rest of the organization and also that the lab is a global organization. As I pointed out earlier, one of the lab analysts asked me to ask questions only about the lab rather than about the entire organization. When I asked if the lab is separate or different from the rest of the organization, this organizational member answered yes, “it’s separate.” Perhaps the most obvious sense in which this idea of the new global organization is demonstrated is in my observations in the lab. Because of their work relationship with Coke, the lab must meet certain global standards. One example is ISO 17025, which contains the general requirements or standards that a lab must meet to get certified for global operations. This is something that Coke requires. They also all sign a sort of contract on “How to be a true professional” which contains guidelines on professionalism that they must all meet. At this time, they also develop their own Good Laboratory Practice (GLP) regulations and paste in the labs.

After the first round of sample tests of Coke products, Coke sent a Polish and a Nigerian representative to the lab to receive the results. The feedback after this round of tests was positive. In an e-mail, Coke complimented their work, acknowledged how well they’ve done, and said they are building "a great team of young talents that I have no doubt, are capable of bringing out quality results all the time...It is a question of time that FEMVEL lab will get into global international lab excellence.”

All these continue to reinforce organizational members' OI understanding of the lab as a global organization. In the debriefing meeting following the test, the founder shared with organizational members at the lab that Coke extended an opportunity for the lab analysts to tour Coke's "KO Global labs" in Brussels, Lagos, Atlanta, or Shanghai if they are interested. At this point, one of the lab workers blurted out loud: "The future is very very bright" and the others laughed.

On a random day at the lab following all these when the founder had gone to supervise work in production, I asked lab analysts just before they got off for lunch break if there is a standard for operating a lab in Nigeria and if standardization is required. This question turned into a ten-minute debate among the lab analysts. Without even realizing it, the argument over whether they need the International Standard Organization (ISO) 17025 certification for lab operations became a discussion and debate over organizational identity. The unspoken question was this: are we a Nigerian organization or a global organization? The answer to which will determine what is important or required for them. While many of the organizational members debated passionately that there are standards for lab operations in Nigeria such as from the Standard Organization of Nigeria, these may or may not be a requirement. One of the lab analysts, Bonike, put the debate to rest by connecting her argument to their shared OI understanding:

> You're trying to say it is not important. It is not mandatory. Even *oga* said it that it is not mandatory, but it is very important. Even if you are working in Nigeria, if you have that kind of thing that you are certified then that means your company is good. It is something that measures your level. So why won't you to have something like that? Why would you say something like that is not important? And for a company that is even going global. You are now saying it is not important. It is mandatory. He is saying if you are working in

Nigeria it is not important, it is nor mandatory. But this company, we all know it is a global company. It is not strictly in Nigeria so then it is mandatory. It is even compulsory. If you are talking about another company now, it is not compulsory but now for us that we know, yes, this is what we want to do. This is what we aim to achieve. We say we want it to be one of the best in the world, you are now telling me that it is not compulsory. He asked about FEMVEL, not another company (Bonike, lab analyst).

It is interesting that she says the company is not strictly in Nigeria, but the organization has only that one location in the town where the factory is. This suggests the way organizational members' OI understanding construes where they are going. It also suggests how they view their relationship to the rest of the organization. Already, they see the lab as separate from the factory where food production is being carried out. The farm is also located a few miles away from the lab so perhaps they also think of the farm as another subsidiary or branch of the organization rather than seeing all of them as a single firm.

What is important from this discussion is that organizational members' understanding of the organization and "who we are" has in a sense taken on a view of identity that is emerging and different from those held by the founder. For organizational members in the lab, safety is perhaps the most core to their understanding of organizational identity even before any sense of quality. Also, for organizational members in the lab, they are a global organization. These, along with other factors, contribute to their construction of their organizational identity understanding as being different from the rest of the organization. Thus, as I proposed in the introduction to this chapter, organizational members through OI understanding, are able to make their own formulations about "who we are" developed and reinforced in their social interactions with one another and sense making or interpretation of organizational leadership's actions. They begin to live this identity and along with OI, these also inform their own actions and beliefs about their organization and who they are.

CHAPTER 6. IN THE END…

"who are we?"
Albert and Whetten (1985)

American professors of organizational studies

6.1 Discussion

6.1.1 Organizational Identity at FEMVEL as Central, Distinctive and Enduring

One of the key goals of this study was to examine how well organizational identity at FEMVEL fit with scholarly conceptions of identity. As the findings demonstrate, for the most part, at FEMVEL, stakeholder groups are well aligned in their beliefs about “who we are.” As Griepentrog et al. (2012) argued, members want to be part of an organization that they feel is distinct, enhances their self-image and is continuous or they believe they fit into. FEMVEL as a family is setup to welcome organizational members as they are. The organization and its members enjoy a positive reputation, which makes FEMVEL a great place to work as this enhances organizational members’ sense of themselves.

Albert and Whetten (1985) conceptualized organizational identity as *necessarily* central, distinctive and enduring (p. 292). I found this to be true of FEMVEL for the most part as every value organizational members self-reported to me as being core to their identity were also distinctive and enduring values. Most were central of course because without a core, there is no conceivable identity (Gioia et al., 2013). Organizational members often had stories that demonstrated the value as being core over time (i.e., enduring). It also makes sense to think of this in terms of the short-term orientation cultural dimension. There is an effort to stay the same because that which changes is seen as bad (Hofstede, 2011, p. 15). Similarly, organizational identity at FEMVEL necessarily had to be enduring in order to create for organizational members a sense of stability given the precariousness of the environment. As Gehman, Trevino and Garud (2013) argued, “the more ambiguous and uncertain the environment, the more stable and enduring values are said to matter” (p. 106; see also Pant & Ojha, 2017, p. ix).

Finally, organizational identity at FEMVEL is distinctive. This third leg of the putative pillars of organizational identity is a little more difficult to align with the literature in the sense that organizational identity was intentionally crafted by the founder to “reset” societal values. From the beginning, the founder had conceived an organization that would stand in direct opposition to societal values and what it means to be an organization in the Nigerian environment. The question, then, is will organizational identity still hold as distinctive if it had not been intentionally set up to look different?

While this study does not answer that question, I think again of every organizational identity value that organizational members shared with me and realize that emphasis had always been on that which set them apart. For example, while it is true that FEMVEL is a food production organization, none of the organizational members I interviewed mentioned this during our interview. Similarly, none of the organizational members defined the organization in terms of the food products (chin chin) or their physical location (Nigeria). The only time Nigeria came up was in the lab over the debate attempting to define who they are as a Nigerian or global organization. For organizational members, it appears organizational identity is defined and understood in their minds more so in terms of what sets them apart. They see themselves as an honest organization being about quality, integrity and family – all of which set them apart in their environment. Perhaps distinctiveness is more so core to how organizational members define themselves in that environment.

According to literature on distinctiveness, optimal distinctiveness (Brewer, 1991) is the goal so that organizational identity is sufficiently similar to other organizations in the industry, yet different enough to be seen as unique (see Brewer, 2003; Gioia et al., 2010; 2013; Navis & Glynn 2010; Snihur, 2016). For FEMVEL, however, it appears that there is more concern for distinctiveness than for similarity. Due to industry standards and government requirements, the organization is constructed in a way that it does not go against regulations and in that area, is similar to other organizations. However, beyond this, organizational members and the founder pride themselves on how different they are from all other Nigerian organizations. Distinctiveness, it appears, might be the prize in constructing and reinforcing identity at FEMVEL. A consistent theme in the founder's responses to my questions was about how he does not think any organization their size or bigger can or will do the things they are doing. He let lab analysts know that they are different from and above their peers following their successful project and feedback from Coke.

One organizational member in engineering told me that in the local community, former organizational members continue to behave like FEMVEL organizational members after leaving the job. Even some that worked for as little as just two days go back into the community and because the behaviors are so unique, he continued, others ask them why they act the way they do when they are not TEEGO staff. The founder did not assert anything about the organization that makes it uniquely Nigerian other than its physical location and the nationality of the founder. It may be fair to say that the organization has a uniqueness complex which makes it continually seek out what makes it different from all others so much that the distinctiveness becomes itself a part of the organization's identity.

Some of the debate in the literature is over whether organizational identity changes or remains the same (enduring) (see Gioia et al., 2013 for a summary). The question is thus, does organizational identity change? In the literature review to this study, I concluded that the discussion has in some sense moved from asking *whether* identities change towards a discourse of the *frequency* of identity change. In this way, identity is seen as episodic (meaning long episodes of stability punctuated by periods of change) or continuous (meaning ongoing, continuous changes) (Gioia et al., 2013; Weick & Quinn, 1999). And also that "*labels are stable, but their meanings are malleable—thus leading to the appearance of stability even as identity evolves*" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 126; emphasis theirs). This view of continuous identity transformation is not wrong. My findings, however, show that at FEMVEL, the organizational identity pillar of "endurance" is a little complicated and in some ways different from simple notions of staying the same or just continuously evolving while keeping labels the same. I discuss this in detail below.

6.1.2 The Adaptability Dimension of Organizational Identity

In my study of organizational identity at FEMVEL, I found that the enduring feature of organizational identity goes beyond simply staying the same or changing over time. I believe what is missing from the literature is the "add-on ability" of organizational identity. Organizational identity at FEMVEL has been enduring but it has also been adaptive (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000) and in that, reactional to needs brought on by the environment. At FEMVEL, the oldest values of the organization have remained core and have not changed nor been eliminated. In this sense then, they have been enduring. However, over the course of its existence, FEMVEL has adapted to its environment and through this adaptation, FEMVEL has added on to its definition of self. For example, caring for one another, that is, being humanitarian (as the founder calls it) or niceness (as organizational members call it) is a core concept of who FEMVEL is. However, this has not always been a part of its core sense of identity.

According to the founder, the organization had been started to fulfill his desire of starting his own thing, feeling good, and making money. However, "the urge to help people over time became stronger." At this point, realizing the need to train his members, the need to reset the societal values of organizational members that stayed committed, and the need to be impactful in the neighborhood by only hiring locally, the organization added on the humanitarian aspect of their organizational identity to what it means to be a family business. The organization did not "change" what it means by who we are, it simply adapted a dimension due to its needs in that environment. As the need grew, it further adapted more aspects of organizational identity to be more prominent than others such as training, honesty and consistency.

This argument for adaptability in some ways aligns with arguments in the literature that an organization's identity changes in order to remain the same (Gagliardi, 1986). Gioia, Schultz, and Corley (2000) also argued for the adaptive instability of organizational identity which helps mediate the relationship between how organizational image affects and fosters changes to organizational identity and the organization's "sense of self-definition with its environment" (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000, p. 74). I do not suggest that organizational identity changes or becomes different because of its environment as it seems Gagliardi (1986) and Gioia, Schultz and Corley (2000) argued. Rather, I am suggesting that perhaps there is an "adaptive" dimension to organizational identity which allows organizations within highly unstable environments to react to the environment in order to remain the same.

Going back again to FEMVEL's adaptation of humanitarianism, it subsumes this value under its core identity of family – or at least, that is how I interpreted it. As a family business, niceness means that the organization is personally concerned with the individual development of in-group members – a stark difference from how organizations typically treat their staff in Nigeria. As I found in the research setting up this study, the majority of the Nigerian population is under 30 (“Nigeria’s population now,” 2017) and more than half of these (about 22.64 million young people) are unemployed or underemployed. This certainly has affected how managers think about their human resources as dispensable and affects employees’ commitment to the organization as well as the sense and place of identity and identification at most organizations in that environment.

At FEMVEL, however, organizational identity reacts to this notion and instead values its employees as a family would its in-group members. The founder built a canteen to feed organizational members the best quality food while they are at work – which they also produce in-house. He encouraged organizational members to start a union or cooperative to help save some of their money. No functioning credit system in Nigeria means they have to pay for everything out-of-pocket, so it is a good idea to have some money tucked away.

To encourage them, he also contributes to the cooperative and purchased land for every member of staff that is an active member and contributor in the cooperative. In total, the founder told me he bought about 3 acres of land. For organizational members, this is a great benefitt. Most of them will build their homes on that land. At FEMVEL, it is important to its leadership that organizational members do not feel threatened on the job. In turn, organizational members are very loyal and committed. Most organizational members with whom I spoke expressed that they have no interest in going to a different organization. Most have also worked at the organization for many years. Some have worked there for as long as it has existed. They are also often willing to go out of their way to ensure the success of the organization.

Furthermore, in reacting to the environment, adaptation seems to also have served organizational identity at FEMVEL as a way of protecting organizational members from themselves. As already established in chapter 2 of this paper, Nigeria is a high-power distance society. This unfortunately breeds despotic leadership and power corruption – even in the workplace. Managers are unquestionable, engage in nepotism, steal, sign off funds for personal use, hire, and fire at will (Osemeke & Osemeke, 2017, p. 330). Worse still is that the hierarchy structure usually does not allow organizational members to speak out against ills in their organization. At FEMVEL, however, the adaptive reaction is that the organization is flattened to level some of that power distance. Organizational members are thus more responsible and accountable thereby protecting them from their own tendency to abuse power – given societal norms regarding power distance.

While there is still some hierarchy, organizational members understand that everyone is equally responsible and accountable for whatever is going on. For example, several organizational members told me how they are allowed, and in some sense expected, to call anyone out for littering or not meeting the organization's expectations for proper behavior. Similarly, when Samuel headed the farm and was belligerent and boorish, organizational members working under him were able to get the situation addressed. In a typical corporate environment, these lower level staff members will be afraid of possible outcomes that may end up worsening the situation. For example, senior management may not address their concerns or worse still, may turn on them instead – rather than dealing with the erratic manager.

There is an argument for why reacting by not hiring extra hands and making everyone participate in housekeeping might count as another way FEMVEL is more egalitarian and in that sense, organizational members are more accountable against corruption. In a typical organization in that environment, cleaning is left for the lowest staff, making cleaning, or not having to clean, a power tool. By making everyone equally responsible for cleaning, the founder strips anyone of any power privilege that they may otherwise hold by not occupying a "cleaning role" and makes everybody (including himself) come to the same level – the lowest level. Thus, anyone can and must pick up any dirt lying around. Everyone must sweep around where they work or anywhere that needs cleaning in the morning. As a family, “we are all responsible.” More importantly, he gives voice to all staff members so that anyone can call anyone else out for dirtying the environment and they are backed by the founder's unseen presence in those circumstances.

Also relevant in thinking about adaptability is looking at how traditional organizational structure design recommendations (developed in the western literature) may not fit in this volatile environment. An example is to look at the network system of organizational design. It is recommended in the literature that "network organizations are best suited to highly complex and uncertain environments where multiple competencies and flexible responses are needed" (Cummings & Worley, 2015, p. 356). The network system allows organizations to focus on their core competencies while outsourcing other areas to organizations who have core competencies in those areas. So, for example, a great manufacturing organization may outsource sales to another organization in a network (Cummings & Worley, 2015). This, according to western organizational development research, increases efficiency and makes organizations more competitive. Nike, Delta Airlines and Geico are perhaps examples. Delta Airlines outsources ground transportation services such as delivering delayed bags to partner organizations. Geico insurance has partners or paid services that take care of roadside assistance.

But counter to these western recommendations, the instability of the Nigerian environment ensured the very opposite at FEMVEL. The more the organization relied on networks and outsourcing, the less competitive it became. It could not ensure quality, timeliness, cost, or anything. Its most central identity traits of quality and integrity were constantly tested and threatened by attempting to use a network system. Thus, integration as an organizational identity was adapted in order for the organization to remain in business and foster its identity. For the founder,

> It addresses the quality question. Because if you know what you need, and you produce it yourself, you're more in control so consistency is more pronounced in your operation … integration is a strategic decision because we know that if we want to be in control of quality in this environment where you get these raw materials today from a supplier, tomorrow, the quality is different and all that, you've got to be a bit in control. So, it's always been part of our core values – strategic value and core value – and that is why we are into farming now, why we are into packaging now – we produce our own packages because of our experiences. If we hadn't done that, we would be in trouble by now. It helps us with our cost control activity because even though it is still difficult in this environment, we have a better handle of it than most companies of our size.

In this environment, FEMVEL must control production and manufacture most things in-house in order to compete and stay relevant. As demonstrated in the results, they have to produce even their own cement blocks if they want good quality materials.

Similarly, FEMVEL controls for other environmental conditions such as the absence of power supply. It ran a diesel generator and a battery inverter almost the whole time I was there conducting this study. The founder told me that running the generator increases their cost by three times of what it would be if government-generated electricity was consistently available. The organization must also source its own water because there is no system in place for that. It also has its own tanker for storing diesel because there are often incessant strikes which can halt production when petrol suppliers stop selling.

In stark opposition to societal challenges in Nigeria, FEMVEL becomes a place that is easy to work in and enjoyable for most organizational members. The organizational identity has, over its life, adapted to better fit in its environment while upholding its core values. Thus, it is my view that organizational identity, more than simply being central, enduring, and distinctive, must in an unstable environment also be adaptive. “Adaptability” does not mean that organizational identity is not stable. Neither does it mean that organizational identity changes to become something else. At FEMVEL, organizational identity has remained essentially the same, but adaptability means that organizational identity has an add-on ability where the organization can augment its central, enduring and distinctive identity with values that help establish stability in its identity and in its operations.

It is easy to assume on the surface that provisions in the literature about organizational identity coming from the organizational leader (see Chreim, 2005; Gioia et al., 2010; 2013; Hannan et al., 2006; Kroezen & Heugens, 2012; Lin, 2004; Rockwell, 2016) will hold very true in a society of high power distance. That is, organizational identity will come simply from the dictates of the single, visible, high power leader who also happens to be the founder. In my findings, however, this assumption is challenged supporting a more social constructionist view of organizational identity. I turn now to a discussion on this subject.

6.1.3 OI Claims, OI understanding and the OI Gap

Organizational identity claims often come from organizational founders whose vision the organization is built on. In the current study, the organization (FEMVEL) is led by the founder as CEO (as described in Pichot, 2016), whose OI claims are in several relationships with organizational members' understanding of "who we are". In my findings, I uncovered four conceptual understandings of these relationships. When leadership claims about identity match members' understanding perfectly; when organizational identity develops or takes on additional life; when there is an OI gap between claims about identity and understanding of same identity; and when understanding socially constructs identity without claims to direct it.

Many of these concepts are perhaps nuances of similar relationships already explored in the literature. For example, it has been established that organizational leaders often serve as rudders for identity, synthesize OI claims, and resolve identity ambiguity (Corley & Gioia, 2004). At FEMVEL, when OI claims and OI understanding matched, organizational identity served as a rudder and source of influence established by organizational leaders (as in Lin, 2004) to direct affairs. Organizational identity itself took on a personality and became a scale by which to measure and justify leadership decisions. Not producing or selling when ingredients were incomplete; not downsizing when sales drastically dropped; not giving out *dash* money to the local police even though other organizations were doing all these. These decisions are understood and supported by organizational members because, simply, that is "who we are."

This is in many ways similar to Dutton and Dukerich's (1991) findings in their study of the New York and New Jersey Port Authority. In a similar fashion, organizational members understood strategic decisions the organization made as well as opportunities forgone by locating these within their sense of identity. Thus, organizational members evaluated decisions based on shared core values. And when management's decision was perhaps counterintuitive to their social reality, as in not selling subpar chin chin or not dashing money to the police, they abided by the decision because it centered on core identity beliefs that they have come to share.

When this is the case, OI becomes a medium that facilitates identification for organizational members and stakeholders as “a (partial) definition of self…[and] a sense of meaningfulness and connection” (Albert, Ashforth & Dutton, 2000, p. 14). This is illustrated in the example of Samuel, who told me how he used to be an aggressive person, but his time at FEMVEL has changed him such that even if someone takes advantage of him, he is unlikely to react aggressively. Esau also shared similar sentiments with contentment. Joseph narrated a story of how, just like the organization, he feels so distinct when he sees engineers at work outside of FEMVEL:

> I’ve known everything. What they wanted to do there I knew it already. So, I don’t need to say I want to learn. What do I want to learn for? If I see panel now, okay. I know the place that I can take meter to read, find the problem and get the thing right. So, what am I going to still learn? Nothing.

In making sense of OI claims, however, mismatches do occur so that what organizational members understand is different from what organizational leaders claim. This is the OI gap. As social constructionists provide, “organizational identity and organizational practices are constantly contested and debated” (Madsen, 2016, p. 218). Without understanding from members, there really is no organizational identity: just OI claims. However, when there is a partial understanding of OI claims, it leaves an OI gap.

It is in this sense that FEMVEL illustrates what the OI literature establishes as the importance of OI understanding in the formation of organizational identity. At FEMVEL, an OI gap, for example, means that there are challenges of quality understood as merely producing premium quality snacks versus quality more broadly defined to also include doing premium quality work all the time (i.e., process in addition to product). This is not necessarily a bad thing. It is important for organizational members to participate in the negotiation of identity which results in increased loyalty and connectedness to the organization when organizational members “feel that they were asked … [and] were actually the drivers” (Madsen, 2016, p. 218) in removing the OI gap. This also holds the potential of increasing organizational members’ motivation to work.

Managers must be aware that when OI gaps do exist, they might possibly be signaling a problem at the organization or a challenge with members’ “buy-in” to the identity. It is thus important that managers perform an organizational diagnosis to locate the challenge causing the OI gap. Several organizational development tools can be used in this process. For example, the research methods in this study resemble the action research model for organizational diagnosis. The only additional steps would be action planning, implementation and evaluation (Cummings & Worley, 2015). The constructionist or sensitivity approach to planned change is another model that can be used. This may work best if there are not already any visible issues. This model collects positive stories and helps create a vision and an action plan which will help remove the OI gap.

At FEMVEL, using methods similar to the action research approach to organizational development, I diagnosed a problem in communication at the organization. The organization has no system, program or department in place for sharing information with its stakeholders. There is no documentation or formal means of getting information across to non-managerial and non-lab analyst organizational members. They rely instead on monthly general meetings (where there are no minutes taken) and word of mouth (which may as well be rumors).

Organizational members at FEMVEL could not tell me for sure why the organization has taken or not taken certain strategic decisions (e.g. stopping the production of soya beans oil) because they were not aware of what was going on. They just know top management did something. There is also inadequate effort to communicate with organizational members about identity and core values. Most just infer from what they see going on. No one knows for sure what the mission or vision of the organization is – not even the head of administration. These are also not posted anywhere in the organization.

Similarly, the organization makes no effort to communicate with its external stakeholders and consumers. So, when the cost of production went up during the 2016 recession, they made no effort to warn publics about the imminent price hike on their products. This was a direct contributor to the loss of market share. The organization assumed that their consumers should know that prices would go up – just as they assume their organizational members are abreast of what is going on at the organization – rather than communicating with them about it. A phrase I heard too often was "everyone can see what is happening."

Thus, rather than communicating in specific and unequivocal terms "who we are" and then negotiating this identity with organizational members, the organization assumes members know. As such, there was a gap between OI claims from senior leadership and OI understanding among organizational members.

Steps taken in an action plan to resolve this OI gap will lead organizational members to see the identity as more authentic. They are thus simultaneously equipped to represent the organization and speak strongly on its behalf among external publics. According to Gioia et al. (2013), there has to be space for negotiating the organization's identity as members need to connect OI claims to their own prior experiences and "make sense of the new identity on their own… if they are to 'buy in' " (p. 164) forming more of a "community identity." Collective identity, however, may also result in identities formed outside of OI claims. These are formed and reinforced in organizational narratives (Gioia et al., 2013) and in their interactions and deliberations about "who we are."

Although organizational members at FEMVEL have not been invited to deliberate identity in a more formal sense, it is clear that in the lab, there is an ongoing social construction of identity as global, safe, and separate from the rest of FEMVEL. Due perhaps to the already established organizational identity of family, lab analysts are equal players in the running and development of the lab. The founder provides leadership but allows their input and recommendations. At lab meetings as well as at their meeting with Coke, he attributed the successes of the lab directly to them. Lab analysts in turn have a strong sense of place in the lab and begin to form a collective identity (Wertsch, 2012) for the lab.

What is not clear at this time is whether these OI understandings by lab members will eventually evolve to become fully formed and accepted organizational identity. If they do, then it means that organizational identity does not require the input of organizational leadership, through OI claims, in order to be formed. That means it is possible for an organization’s identity to be formed entirely through social interactions without the rudder that the organizational leader provides. At the same time, however, it is possible to argue against this view since these OI understandings did not evolve without the input of organizational leadership as the statement might suggest. These OI values came rather from organizational members’ interpretation or understanding of managerial actions thus, suggesting the need for the rudder.

A bigger lesson for organizational leadership is to be strategic and intentional about actions and steps taken, collaborations, and communication activity. At FEMVEL, all the OI understanding at the lab came from what they have seen the founder do. In their arguments over identity, they drew on what they have been asked to do, actions the organization has taken, and things the founder has said. They also drew from the establishment of separate parameters and requirements for entering the lab in contrast to entering other parts of the organization. There is almost an imaginary gate or wall around the factory that keeps other organizational members out.

At this time, it is also not clear from the findings whether these OI understandings will result in creating a dual-identity organization rather than simply providing an add-on to organizational identity. It is not clear how the identity will be ultimately negotiated, but it is certain that it is in the process of evolving. Thus, a recommended future research approach would be a longitudinal design that watches as organizational identity interacts with OI claims and understanding, and how the stakeholder groups begin to define themselves within it.

6.1.4 An addendum for culture and the environment

In this section of the chapter, I explore the findings from this study in context of chapter 2 where I had located the study in Nigeria and explored economic, political, cultural as well as media and activism factors that establish Nigeria as a community very different from others where research in organizational identity has previously been studied. Here, I explore how FEMVEL and its organizational members fit within the culture as well as efforts they make that make them even more adaptive or distinct from their environment.

6.1.4.1 Power Distance

First is the notion of power distance (Hofstede, 2011). The founder of FEMVEL, while Nigerian, had his higher education outside of Nigeria in the United Kingdom and United States where power distance is not as large as it is in Nigeria. He also worked with Coca-Cola and other multinational organizations before starting his company. Thus, for him, reducing power distance was something he tackled head on when he started his company by increasing employee involvement in decision-making and ensuring that organizational members are not threatened on the job:

> Apart from leadership in terms of what we will do and how we will do it, their interconnectivity, I am not involved. All the guys interface with each other. I don't write memo to the staff. I don't do anything of such. I just give leadership in terms of this is how we are going and where we are going to and that trickles down through the bosses. And if there is any erring member of staff, they deal with it. They tell me just for information, but they deal with it on the basis of agreed rules and regulations. I think that's something everybody has come to accept. It's different from a situation in which unless they see me, nothing happens. And it is also different from a situation in which I show up here, a member of staff is coming; he sees me, and he detours. There is no pressure; there is no reason or need for anyone to see me and begin to shiver or feeling that something bad is going to happen -- the pressure of seeing your overall boss which happens in organizations [in this environment]. I deliberately worked on that issue years ago. Right? And people come to me whenever, wherever. I don't think they're limited in anyway ... but that's my feeling about it. I don't know what the reality is for them. (founder, FEMVEL)

Organizational members told me that they are able to access the founder and anyone can talk to him about concerns or ideas that they have. They are also empowered to talk with their direct superiors and suggest changes they can make in the organization that can help them become more efficient. As much as this is true from their own reports, power distance means that to some extent, organizational members are still intimidated by their superiors. For example, while the culture allows organizational members to voice their views and ask questions, none of those I spoke to did this even though they had strong opinions and questions. For example, Father

Abraham who drove the van when I went out with the sales team had many questions about the soya beans oil and why that was not being produced for sale. He also had ideas on other business ideas such as selling animal feed among other things. For him, he saw many smaller companies making profits from these and thought since FEMVEL has the capacity, they should do the same. He, however, has not shared this with the founder or his supervisors. The head of administration expressed similar views to me saying that a comparable factory nearby has been able to move from producing one product to several others in the few years it has been there to stay afloat. He said the organization ideally should emulate that approach so as to remain profitable. While he holds this view, he has not told the founder – and this is the most senior member of staff.

Organizational members told me about things that they felt the organization was not doing right – like not engaging in selling oil, bringing out a new (different) product in time to combat the competition, not seeing the dropping sales as a fight, not meandering between whatever product is currently really selling among others. They shared these with me but they never actually questioned their boss's decision not to pursue any of these opportunities – they didn't even tell him about it. There is a system in place for suggesting new ideas at FEMVEL. However, while they did use it, they did not use it in in any sense that calls into question the founder's decisions. This is like when Peter Enahoro said in his book, *How to be a Nigerian* that in Nigeria, "next to God, there is nothing that fills the heart of the Nigerian with greater awe than a Chairman. God is divine, but the chairman rules the temporal" (Peter Enahoro, 1966, p. 7). The founder is like their chairman.

Similarly, organizational members approach the interviews trying to please the founder – even in his absence. I got the idea that organizational members were telling at first what they believed the founder would say and often referred back to him. I had to constantly persuade them to tell me what they really thought assuring them of confidentiality. I also adapted my interviewing strategy using discriminant sampling, role play and motivational interviewing strategies to help achieve validity in my findings. I believe it reflected power distance and the cultural belief that top management knows better and provides direction and answer to “who we are.” They do not expect to nor realize that they have played a role in determining “who we are.” Rather, their beliefs coming into the interview was that they were coming to tell me who they have been told we are (i.e., OI claims). Power distance also means that there are less formal, obvious or direct contentions to identity. Most, if any, are either unconscious or well hidden from management. Next, I discuss polychrony at FEMVEL.

6.1.4.2 Polychrony

According to Hall and Hall’s (1990) classification of cultures along communication and context, Nigeria is a high-context, polychronic society. This means that there is an expectation of implied meaning by the physical environment or shared values and beliefs. “Most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message” (Hall, 1976; Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 6). This societal value comes into operations at FEMVEL. For all its opposition to societal values, organizational identity here as well as many of its communication operations rely heavily on this societal value of being high-context and polychronic. OI rides on culture and depends on it to help fill in the gap when OI is not communicated or clearly understood. OI lives in their minds as a high-context community. Although organizational members could not articulate to me specifically what the mission and vision of the organization is, it was clear that somehow, they still had as understanding of it. There are unspoken rules and instructions. More often than not, the organization did not have a clear direct communication with its members about its processes. There was also no way to communicate with everyone. Rather, the organization relies on culture and the in-group membership where everyone is expected to be abreast of what is going on. Organizational members know who to report to – even though there is no formal organizational chart. When I asked the head of administration for an organizational chart, he had to just create it freshly.

Riding on culture also has its problems. As demonstrated through the communication problem, polychrony and high-context are not sufficient substitute for a communication program. Organizational members are left to guessing about why things happen at the organization. This will affect how they represent the organization outside. It also leaves room for mixed messages among stakeholders.

Furthermore, polychrony also means that time is unbounded. While I was collecting data, I often found that organizational leaders gave me an appointment to meet at a certain time to meet but then, we didn’t meet until minutes after or in some cases, a couple hours later. At my first meeting with the managers, our meeting time was moved forward by close to three hours without any prior warning. I was at the factory and the head of administration, Ayo, simply asked that I hold on as they were trying to put some things together. When he finally called me to meet, we had to wait a while for one remaining organizational member, Tayo, to show up. After about 10 minutes of waiting, two other managers got up to call her. Even though she was holding up the meeting, she was not in a hurry to join us and did not feel remorseful about delaying the meeting. To her, she had not done anything wrong. Also, during the meeting, two different managers got up to attend to other issues and then joined us again. This is very reflective of the polychronic culture and reflects strongly in how they managed meetings. The same exact experience happened when I had an appointment with Ayo for his interview. It was pushed back by close to two hours and during the interview, we were interrupted by other concerns. While for the most part, people respected the interviews, they did not hesitate to call on the interviewee to ask the person to come attend to some other concerns.

6.1.4.3 Economic stress

Oil has been a key rallying point for political and economic tensions in Nigeria. This had caused the 1967 civil war, intermittent nationwide strikes and civil unrest such as militancy, oil pipeline vandalism all which have led to very high cost of living, high cost of running business and continued instability culminating in the 2016 recession. The 2016 recession has meant that the cost of raw materials for FEMVEL have gone up – making it more critical that they fully integrate. Following the 2016 recession however, the higher cost of raw materials meant increased cost of production and higher cost of the end product which also meant a loss of their competitive advantage. Most consumers in their target market could not afford the new prices. In Nigeria, people have increasingly earned less over the years. Cost of things skyrocket as does the rate of inflation but people earn the same further lowering their purchasing power.

Similarly, when the soya beans oil business initiative failed, they had to stop because of increased cost of soya beans and also their combat with their societal value of corruption. Specifically, merchants were adding stones to the beans which destroyed their oil press machines. It is the corruption in the Nigerian environment that led to this desire to cheat because they wanted the soya beans to weigh more than they were supplying as a way of making more money than they honestly earned. This is a demonstration of how economic conditions and the culture of corruption, dishonesty and cheating has affected business operation at FEMVEL and continues to threaten its existence.

Interesting too is that the organization had to weed out these same corrupt practices out from within itself. As organizational members are part of the larger society, they often bring in some of these ills such as corrupt practices. In the case of the soya beans oil, merchants added stones. In the case of the cement block, merchants were promising a certain high standard but mixing low quality products into the high quality one as a sort of metaphoric "weight gain" to make more money than they honestly earned. Similarly, organizational members were trying to steal a "weight gain" by selling inferior quality chin chin at the same price. At FEMVEL, however, they go through an attitude change and learn that it is not okay to cheat people. They see how those corrupt practices hamper their organization and what they care about; and they learn why they should not do the same.

As can be seen on the whole, the environment strongly affects FEMVEL and its business operations. On the one hand, it serves as a tool for administration. On the other hand, it impedes the organization's growth. With the soya beans oil press business, FEMVEL had to combat increased price of soya beans and diesel; low economic resources of consumers; and cheating from where soya beans is sourced in Makurdi. Same cheating led to the destruction of their oil press machine. The Chinese company where they purchased a replacement part sent them a wrong part and refused to replace it unless FEMVEL paid for the replacement shipment. This of course further increased the already high cost – whereas consumers still could not afford more than what they were paying originally before any of this happened. If prices of raw materials were more stable; if corruption was not so prevalent and people did not try to cheat so much; if Nigeria had a stronger government where concerns like that with the shipping company can easily be addressed; and if consumers had better socio-economic standing and higher purchasing power, the oil press business would not have died and that would have been a steady source of income for the organization. Alas, these environmental factors continue to plague FEMVEL as it continues to struggle to remain in existence.

6.1.5 Implications for Communication

There is a communication problem at FEMVEL. In part, this is because the organization relies on societal culture for some of its operation. I say this because from chapter 2 (Locating the study in Nigeria), it is clear that Nigeria is a high-context, polychronic society. The idea is that in-group members are expected to know what is going on within the organization – even if this has not been directly communicated to them. Polychrony is very much at play in FEMVEL. Between management and organizational members, there is no direct system in place to communicate what is going on at the organization. Yet, organizational members are expected to be abreast of what is going on at the organization. There are periodic general meetings but there is no system for information sharing with non-managerial and non-lab analyst staff. I asked if they have a What's App group with all organizational members included and there is none. As such, there is no channel for communicating directly with organizational members to say, "here is what is going on," "here is why we are doing this," "here is why we are changing this," or "here is why we are entering this collaboration and this is who we are partnering with." In fact, in the current collaboration with Coke, most organizational members probably do not know why or what the collaboration is about. They just know, "oh, we are seeing Coke come here so we must be doing something with Coke. And everyone knows we are doing something with Coke; but what are we doing with Coke?" None of the organizational members really knows specifically what the organization is doing with Coke unless they work in the lab on the projects.

I believe this communication problem affects the organization internally as well as externally with their loss of sales. While out conducting research with the sales team, I got a chance to learn from them as well as being in the market to see their product, the retailers and consumers. During this experience, I realized that the organization expected that organizational members as well as the retailers and consumers should know that because there was a recession and things were getting more expensive in the country, their products would get more expensive as well – rather than making an effort to ensure that they help their publics and consumers ease into the idea of what is coming. Communication could have served them as a sort of lubricant. While there will still have been the need to raise prices due to increased cost, this could have landed on consumers nicer and with less of a surprise. This is the role of Public Relations and the relationship building opportunities that public relations brings. The PR communication function would have helped the organization think of how they can help consumers

The public relations function would have asked questions such as, “Can we help our customers know that we are increasing the price not just because we want more money but here is what is going on?” “Are there steps we could have taken to help communicate the idea and warn them that prices are going to go up and not just suddenly jacking the prices up and by a 100% increase in cost?” When prices at FEMVEL went up, the chin chin products were suddenly being sold for twice the price. The organization blamed the increase in price on other factors such as the recession and the resultant increase in the cost of raw materials. However, while this may be true, they did not make an effort to help consumers ease into the new pricing. As they increased their cost, competitors saw the opportunity to take over FEMVEL’s market share by selling at FEMVEL’s former price. Even after reverting to their former pricing, they still could not regain their market share. FEMVEL could have avoided most of these problems if the price increase had been strategic and padded with effective communication efforts. They would have remained competitive still – even with the higher prices. This is more or less like issues management, a public relations function.

FEMVEL would benefit from creating a communication department or at least having a communication function in place and hiring a staff professionally trained in communication. They do not have either currently. With a staff member or team whose role is to manage their communication efforts, they would be able to resolve many of the challenges they have such as with the OI gap and challenges with their external publics. The organization may also consider using something similar to the matrix system where they can take people from the different established functions to form a communication team (in lieu of a fully developed communication department). The team would manage communication at the organization and also feed information back to members in their different functional departments. These would become the point persons to talk to about any questions regarding communication and information at the organization. They would also design a program for better relationship building with the final consumers and retailers. The organization may take advantage of WhatsApp or other free social media communication tools that organizational members and external publics can easily access. These could serve as media for directly communication with stakeholders and receiving feedback that can help the organization grow and becomes even more successful.

6.2 Recommendations

It is my recommendation that more studies be carried out to identify the existence of this adaptive dimension of organizational identity. Because this is a single case study, it does not necessarily mean that every organization in Nigeria is undergoing the same adaptations to identity. Perhaps an investigation of a more representative sample of organizations within Nigeria, or another equally unstable business environment, might demonstrate how excellent organizations within those environments use this adaptive dimension of organizational identity to stay consistent and keep identity fundamentally the same through the small adaptations. That notwithstanding, I believe this organization could be a model for organizations with business interest in Nigeria –

whether local or multinational – to learn from. Adaptability might be able to help overcome societal challenges while staying true to "who we are."

It is useful also to learn from FEMVEL the central identity of family. This has surprisingly helped the organization thrive. It has built a strong team of very loyal and committed members who come to work with high, positive emotions and are not eager to leave at the end of the day. Organizational members are motivated, and this motivation is not propelled by money but the relationship. In this sense, borrowing from the collectivist culture of the in-group, management may be able to have organizational members commit to one another and the work. If the relationship is good, organizational members want to be close to each other and spend time together at work. Thus, FEMVEL staff come around early and leave late. They support and assist one another and are quick to fill in wherever an extra hand is needed. This might be a big push in motivational work design. Perhaps more research on this topic may help realize the intrinsic value of this approach to organizing.

One thing is certain from this entire study. Organizational leaders, perhaps especially founders, have a crucial role in organizational identity formation, understanding, and enactment. It is important for all managers, whether founders or not, to watch both their intentional as well as unintentional actions, comments, and decisions in the organization. Organizational members look at these in order to decide what to think of and how to make sense of organizational identity. In an environment like Nigeria, organizational members will look up to the visible leader for affirmation of who they are and how they should act and interact with one another. At FEMVEL, many organizational members try to emulate the founder's behaviors and personal values. They carry this forward into their own individual self-concept. Thus, in choosing their visible leaders, organizations will want to consider what values matter most to them as an organization, which leader best emulates these values, and then put in the visible leadership position a leader who embodies most organizational identity and core values.

There is an OI gap at FEMVEL. As I already pointed out in the discussion, managers must from time to time run organizational diagnosis to uncover possible issues (as in the methods using action research) or to build an even stronger sense of identity (using sensitivity training). At FEMVEL, the leadership does not appear to recognize that there is a new identity being developed around the lab in the organization. There also seems to be no management awareness of a communication problem within the organization and with their consumers. With an organizational diagnosis and organizational development intervention, these can be identified and steps can be taken to come out even stronger from these challenges.

To really understand and see the far-reaching effects of the OI gap at FEMVEL, I recommend a longitudinal study. This will help observe as the two OI gaps identified in this study are negotiated among organizational members themselves as well as between organizational members and the founder. It may lead to the creation of a new (and separate) identity making the organization a dual-identity organization or lead to the establishment of the lab as its own organization, with FEMVEL as the parent organization. This will be an interesting study to watch the organic development of organizational identity.

In the light of risks from closely associating the founder with the organization’s identity, I fear that FEMVEL is ultimately setting itself up for challenges in the future. So far, most organizational members have connected to the founder’s values but have no clear idea what the overall vision or mission of the organization is. From my findings, I do not believe that this organization can live on without its founder even though he would like that to be the case. Similarly, in there were to ever be a crisis with the founder – as was the case with Lance Armstrong and the Livestrong foundation – I do not believe the organization will be able to survive it because their identities are too closely tied together. If I were consulting FEMVEL, I would recommend that it develop plans to separate the identities of the organization and its founder. The founder's already established integrity and value have clearly been a strong foundation for FEMVEL, but it is important for the organization to also grow up. This can be accomplished by installing new visible leadership that has keyed into a more specific and well-articulate vision. There can also be a board with the authority to direct affairs at the organization and make key decisions. The organizational identity should have its own personality rather than simply constantly piggybacking wholesale off the personality of the founder. These moves have to be strategic and intentional. Also, the organization -- and not the founder -- needs to have a reserve of capital that can help it self-sustain when sales are slow.

6.3 Limitations

One limitation of this study is that there weren't as many documents to analyze as I had hoped or expected. The organization (perhaps because of its strong focus on the founder) does not carefully document a lot of its processes such as communication efforts. And despite my connection to the organization, the organization was not very willing to release the documents that did exist. I only got a chance to look at the organization's official e-mail one time and I couldn't save the data from it. I relied on signs, posted information and the official What's App group chats as the document part of this study, but those texts do not include non-management and non-lab staff.

This is a qualitative case study and as with all qualitative research generalizability is a limitation.

Although I was there for two months, I believe that more time observing or returning to collect data again after some time may help uncover some key ideas I may either have missed or that are just developing. For example, the organization is about to introduce a new product to the market. More time observing would allow me to see how the rollout of the new product might interact with or possibly create new adaptations to the organization's identity.

Perhaps the biggest limitations came from me. I am a Nigerian, which creates room for bias. I have a foreign higher education, which might distance me from interviewees. I have also come into this study through the founder, who has a background similar to mine. A committee member had pointed this out during my prospectus defense, so while in the field, I tried to combat these in the following ways:

- I started this study with observations and document analysis of signs and posted information. During this time, I introduced the study to organizational members and spent time around organizational members, so they got more familiar with me and seeing me around. With days, I stuck out less and became just another person at the organization.
- Leading into interviews, I spent some time getting organizational members comfortable with me before getting to the core questions. We would make jokes, talk about their work, and concerns about other things not necessarily related to organizational identity. The challenge, though, was that sometimes these conversations started heading into interesting ideas about organizational identity before I even got to start recording.
- In my interviews, I also used games and activities such as role play, motivational interviewing activities and member checking to direct conversations.
- I spent a good amount of time in each interview to iterate confidentiality.

- I always let organizational members know that I had come to learn from them and their experiences rather than finding a capital T truth about the organization.
- I designed some interviews entirely as conversations as Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggest. These provided some of the most interesting results as they were more natural conversations about the organization and their experiences. I subtly directed these conversations around ideas in my memorized interview guide.
- I went out with sales people as well as farm staff and joined them in their work as a participant observer so as to first earn their trust while making observations before asking any directed questions. These also yielded very interesting results.

Language was another limitation. Because I did not have IRB permission to interview in Yoruba, there were many organizational members–particularly in production and security—from whom I could not collect data. For example, I was told that Taju, who opened the gate for me on my first day at FEMVEL, is the oldest member of the organization, joining the founder right when he started the business in 2007. IRB became a limitation as I could not interview him because he only speaks Yoruba.

I also felt in some ways that the research questions became too a priori for the inductive analysis I was conducting. There were several ideas that, because they did not fit into the scope of what I was looking for, I felt I had to drop. There is no telling if those would have been useful later in interpreting organizational identity. An example is the communication problem at FEMVEL.

While in the field, I was also often conflicted about my observation and sensemaking based on the literature I chose as a foundation. It seemed to me that the distinction between "culture" and "identity" was often blurry. So, I leave this research with the question: where does organizational identity end, where does culture start?

6.4 Conclusion

This study on organizational identity sought to locate the study of organizational identity in a non-western, developing nation. The primary argument for the study is that most studies about organizational identity have been conducted in stable Western environments but have assumed that findings about organizational identity in those environments hold true without recourse to how the environment may affect organizational identity. This study thus sought to investigate organizational identity in Nigeria where, unlike the U.S., Canada, and U.K., where most prior studies have been carried out, the environment is not stable. Informed by literature on organizational identity, founder's literature and research into the politics, economy, culture, media and activism systems of Nigeria, the study applied an inductive analysis case study to examine a food company in Nigeria. Specific methods were observations, document analysis and interviews.

The findings of this study show that Albert and Whetten's (1985) conceptualization of organizational identity as central, enduring, and distinctive remain true in the unstable Nigerian business climate. However, a dimension of adaptability was discovered. That is, in the highly volatile environment in which FEMVEL operates, I observed organizational identity to be adaptive to its environment, adding or altering elements of identity in order to remain true to those parts of identity deemed most central. Also, the findings showed that organizational identity is formed not only through organizational leaders' claims about "who we are," but also in organizational members' understanding of "who we are." When OI claims and OI understandings do not align, it leaves an OI gap. Beyond these observations, however, is the finding that sometimes, through organizational members' understanding or interpretation of organizational leadership's actions, comments, and moves, organizational members, through their social interactions with one another, co-construct their OI understanding of "who we are."

In the end, I found that even in an organization dominated by a founder/leader, OI can also be formed and shaped by organizational members without the direct input of organizational leaders' OI claims.

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APPENDIX A. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Organizational identity and identification in two Nigerian organizations

(***Josh Boyd) (Temi Wright)***

(***Lamb School of Communication***)

Purdue University

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research is to study organizational identity and identification in the Nigeria. Just the same way people have an identity or can answer the question “who are you”, an organization also has an identity. You can probably answer if someone asks you who or what your company is. My goal in this study is to understand what identities of organizations look like when they are placed in another environment like here in Nigeria which is very different from the environment in the West such as in America. If you volunteer to participate in this study, your experience, as well as the experiences of other participants, will be studied to observe organizational identity as well as understand how identity and identification may be unique in the Nigerian cultural, economic, and political space.

This research study contributes to a global study of public relations and research on organizations by drawing together research in the management of identity and identification along with the research on environmental variables such as culture, political system, economy, activism and media advanced in the works of Verčič, Sriramesh, and Grunig. Specifically, the notion of organizational identity and identification will be tested in a new environment to expand the understanding of organizational identity and identification theory.

What will I do if I choose to be in this study?

- To participate in this study, you have to be at least 18 years as at the time of signing this consent form. For the purposes of this research project, you may be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. During your participation in this interview, you will be asked questions about your experiences working at your organization, the nature of your organizational culture, and how you see organizational identity and identification at this organization. This interview will be conducted to understand the factors that have led to the formation of identity and identification from your perspective and experience. I will record the audio of the interviews and later transcribe them.

- During the research project, you may also be asked to take part in an observation. Essentially, I will be in the physical location of the organization observing normal business operations and taking notes on what I see and how it contributes to my study. I may sometimes participate in the activities you are doing, but for the most part, I will simply take notes, photographs and maybe hold informal conversations with you when I have questions or need clarification on something. This should not in any way get in the way of your normal operation. Also, I may ask you to allow me to observe you during organization-sponsored recreational and social activities. Photographs will only show you at work engaging in organizational processes.
- Based on what I observe, I may have some questions. To protect your identity, I will write down my observations so that I can ask probe or follow-up questions on my observation at later interviews or as a separate, follow-up interview where we can be certain of the confidentiality of information shared.
- I will also analyze minutes of meetings as well as the company's group chat on What's App which has so far been used for internal communication. Document analysis will provide me with initial insights into what is currently being done to project identity and reinforce its message through communication with organizational members. I may also analyze newsletters, publications, white papers and the company's website and social media accounts – Facebook, Twitter and Linkedin.

How long will I be in the study?

- Semi-structured interviews will last approximately one hour. I might also return at a future time to delve deeper into a topic initially covered during the interview.
- The observations will be ongoing and may last for up to seven hours over the period of the study. In some cases, I may ask you for a quick clarification or further questions that should not take longer than 10 minutes.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

Risks while taking part in the study are minimal. The standard for minimal risk is that they in no way exceed the risks found in everyday life. All efforts will be made to ensure that you feel comfortable in answering interview questions. You also have the right to stop your participation in the study at any time.

There is a risk of breach of confidentiality; please see the "Confidentiality" section of this sheet for further information.

Are there any potential benefits?

There are no direct benefits to the participants as a result of taking part in this study. However, I anticipate that this study will add to the literature on organizational identity while providing deeper understanding on identification. This will help improve the relationship and experiences of organizational leaders and members. In turn, my findings could help make your organization more successful and increase its effectiveness and the satisfaction you derive from working there.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

All efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published and databases in which results may be stored. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law.

Please, be aware that I will copy the information gathered over my observations and interviews for my records. I will not share any data other than de-identified final results with organizational leaders. I will eliminate any references to your name or any identifying descriptions in my notes and during transcription of interviews. Pseudonyms will be used in place of all names.

I will keep the data gathered from interviews in a separate locked file cabinet. Only the PI (Josh Boyd) and I, Temi Wright, the Co-PI of the project, will have access to this data. There is also a locked cabinet in my office in the Lamb School of Communication where I will store data when I return to Purdue.

Audio recordings will be destroyed in August 2021. Information gathered from this research project will be used for academic publications, conference presentations and future research. I will keep transcriptions of audio recordings and other written data indefinitely.

The project's research records may be reviewed by departments at Purdue University responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

You do not have to participate in this research project. If you agree to take part in this study, you can withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. You will not be forced to answer any questions or discuss any topics that make you uncomfortable. Participation or non-participation will not affect your employment standing with your employer.

Who can I contact if I have questions about the study?

You are free to ask questions concerning this study at any time before, during or after the interview. All of your questions will be answered and all of your concerns will be discussed. You can keep the copy of the consent form for your records. The researchers will also keep a copy of the consent form for their records. If you have questions, comments or concerns about this research project, you can contact me:

Temi Wright
Graduate student, Brian Lamb School of Communication
Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-2098
USA
Email: wrigh407@purdue.edu
Phone: (812) 349-8722

Or you may also contact the supervisor of the project:

Josh Boyd,
Associate Professor of Communication,
Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-2098
USA
Office Phone: (765) 494-3333
Email: boyd@purdue.edu

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in the study or have concerns about the treatment of research participants, please call the Human Research Protection Program at (765) 494-5942, email (irb@purdue.edu)or write to:

Human Research Protection Program - Purdue University

Ernest C. Young Hall, Room 1032

155 S. Grant St.,

West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114

Documentation of Informed Consent

I have had the opportunity to read this consent form and have the research study explained. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research project and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research project described above. I will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

☐ Please also check this box if you agree to have your photo taken during observation.

____________________________________ ____________________

Participant's Signature Date

____

Participant's Name

____________________________________ ____________________

Researcher's Signature Date

APPENDIX B. ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL TO ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE **Age:** _____ **Years at org:** _________ **Position:** ______________________

Stakeholder group: ☐ Manager ☐ Operation line ☐ Cooking/maintenance ☐ Sales/marketing

☐ Others: ________________________________ **Pseudonym**: _______________________________

1. What is your role in this organization and how long have you been at this organization?

2. Can you tell me a little about what you do?

3. What other functions or roles have you held at this organization?

4. Moving to questions about the organization: What is it like to work here?

5. Who would you say you are as an organization?

6. I'm supposed to be doing research about organizational identity at [FEMVEL] but I don't know what to study. What do you think I should be looking at?

    a. When talking about identity, how would you describe the identity of this organization?

    b. What guiding principles direct the conduct of business?

7. What would you say are core or most central values?

8. How does this organization set itself apart from other similar organizations/competitors perhaps within the same industry? That is, what are unique attributes of this organization?

9. When/how did you first learn about this organization?

   a. What did you learn?

   b. How have those assumptions been challenged?

10. What are some enduring values that make this organization what it is?

11. How have these values guided the organization and its conduct of business?

12. You are a leader in this organization so perhaps you may have more intimate insights on leadership and values. How would you say these (core) values of the organization's identity were formed?

    a. Where did they come from?

    b. Who decided that these will be the values by which this organization will operate?

13. How have these values been reinforced or challenged in the lifetime of the organization so far?

    a. What are some barriers that you have encountered?

14. Were there contributions from external environment or external influences?

    a. In what ways do you see this organization as a Nigerian organization?

    b. How has it been affected by Nigerian national culture, political system, economy, etc.?

15. Tell me about organizational culture?

16. In what ways do you feel this organization's culture is rooted in its core values?

17. How might societal culture have played a role in forming organizational identity?

18. Have there been intentional or strategic changes to the central, distinctive and enduring values of the organization over its lifetime?
    a. What motivated this?
    b. How did it change?
    c. How did it remain the same?
19. How does the organization communicate or project identity and values to organizational members?
20. What about to external publics?
21. Does organizational identity form a core role in recruitment, training and selection of members?
22. Which values from the organization's core set specifically are front and center in training, recruitment and daily running of business viz organizational culture?
23. How does identity help determine what businesses and partnerships you can venture in(to)? Which associations can be made?
24. Other than central, distinctive and enduring values, what other values form or have helped form your organization's identity?
25. What factors or values affect how you reward behavior? How are these values come about or determined? [By organizational or societal culture?]
26. What are key aspects of organizational communication? How do you keep it consistent and aligned to values? (Internal communication; external communication? How are these different?)

27. How would you describe the Nigerian cultural environment and how it fits with some of the employment practices and values in the organization?

SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL TO ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS

☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE **Age:** _____ **Years at org:** _________ **Position:** ______________________

Stakeholder group: ☐ Manager ☐ Operation line ☐ Cooking/maintenance ☐ Sales/marketing

☐ Others: ________________________________ **Culture**: ________________________________

How do various organizational stakeholders talk about the identity of FEMVEL?

1. What is your role in this organization and how long have you been at this organization?
    a. Can you tell me a little about what you do?
    b. What other functions or roles have you held at this organization?
2. Tell me why you began working for this organization?
3. Moving to questions about the organization: when I say [insert organization's name], what comes to mind?
    a. Do you think of this as referring to you personally?
    b. Do you think of these as values you hold or are working to hold?
4. Explain your connection to this organization.
    a. Do you talk about it outside of work?
    b. When you describe this organization to friends or family, what do you tell them?
        i. What do external publics say about the organization?

c. How do you feel when people talk about the organization? Why?

d. When did you first start feeling that way?

e. Are these attributable to values you feel you share with the organization?

i. What are these values?

ii. Are they central for you as a person outside of this organization?

iii. What would you say connects you most strongly to this organization?

5. Who are you as an organization?

6. Can you tell me a story about this organization and its identity (who you are)?

a. A story from your time working here that you think represents what this organization is about?

7. Since you have been here, what values do you feel have been the most distinguishing? That is, what sets it apart from others [competitors; Nigerian orgs; food companies; etc]?

a. Have you worked anywhere else before now? Was it a Nigerian company?

b. What makes this organization similar to other Nigerian companies? What makes it different? How? Why?

8. Give me an example of your experience here or what you've heard of other's experience elsewhere that represents this idea.

9. Do you consider this a prestigious organization? Why/how come?

a. How does that strengthen the bond you feel to the organization?

b. Has that always been the case? Tell me about it?

c. What role did this play in bringing you to and keeping you at the organization?

10. Why did you choose to come work for this organization? Why have you remained here?
    a. Did the aforementioned values play any role?
    b. Were there distinctive, central, enduring and prestigious values in motivating your working here?
11. Do you in anyway feel that this organization has affected or changed your individual values? How so?
12. Looking at other staff members, what or who would you say is the prototypical organizational member who embodies the values this organization most values?
    a. Can you give an example or name of one ideal organizational member? That is, the prototypical member everyone looks at as the perfect member of the organization and probably often gets big rewards and is complemented for good work, etc.?
13. Why have you made this/these selections?
14. How have you come to know that these are values your organization considers important? [Reward for behavior? Communication? Training? Societal culture? Organizational culture?]
15. How do you see these values manifested in the daily running of business?
    a. Would you consider this a part of organizational culture?
    b. Do you see this anywhere else or perhaps carry this on to anywhere else? [Behaving as a prototypical member even outside of work]

   c. How do you believe these values were formed?

16. How do you feel the culture of the organization is affected by the local culture?

17. Given the Nigerian environmental context, what elements of the Nigerian food organization’s organizational identity are consistent with Nigeria-specific values and practices?

18. Do you identify with the organizational culture?

   a. How is it different from local culture? How was it created, taught and passed on? How does it change?

19. What are practices that are typical of members of this organization, particularly when they are within the physical location that helps reinforce your identities as members of this organization?

20. What are some of those things that are very core to your conduct?

   a. What are some that are so unique you may not find at another organization doing similar business?

   b. What are some things the organization and its members will never do?

21. What changes have you seen at this organization in your time here?

22. Do you feel there have been any changes to the core values or organizational identity you shared earlier?

23. What do you feel has triggered some of the changes that have happened in this organization at the time?

Purdue IRB Protocol #: 1803020426

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Organizational identity and identification in two Nigerian organizations

(*Josh Boyd) (Temi Wright)*
(*Lamb School of Communication*)
Purdue University

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research is to study organizational identity and identification in the Nigeria. Just the same way people have an identity or can answer the question “who are you?”, an organization also has an identity. You can probably answer if someone asks you who or what your company is. The goal of the research team is to understand what identities of organizations look like when they are placed in another environment like here in Nigeria which is very different from the environment in the West such as in America. If you volunteer to participate in this study, your experience, as well as the experiences of other participants, will be studied to observe organizational identity as well as understand how identity and identification may be unique in the Nigerian cultural, economic, and political space.

What will I do if I choose to be in this study?

• To participate in this study, you have to be at least 18 years as at the time of signing this consent form. For the purposes of this research project, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured audio recorded interview. During your participation in this interview, you will be asked questions about your experiences working at your organization, the nature of your organizational culture, and how you see organizational identity and identification at this organization. This interview will be conducted to understand the factors that have led to the formation of identity and identification from your perspective and experience.

• During the research project, you may also be asked to take part in an observation. Essentially, a research team member will be in the physical location of the organization observing normal business operations and taking notes on what is seen and how it contributes to the study. A member of the research team may sometimes participate in the activities you are doing, but for the most part, the researcher will simply take notes, photographs and maybe hold informal conversations with you when questions arise or clarification is needed on something. This should not in any way get in the way of your normal operation. The researcher may also ask you to be observed during organization-sponsored recreational and social activities. Photographs will only show you at work engaging in organizational processes. (Please be aware that to protect your confidentiality, notes and pictures will not be taken while the member of the research team is participating in the organization’s activities. These notes will be taken at the end of the day when the researcher leaves the premises so no one knows who is or is not participating.)

• Based on those observations, there may be some follow up questions. To try to better protect your identity, follow-up interview questions may be conducted at a later date where we can be certain of the confidentiality of information shared.

• The research team will also be analyzing minutes of meetings as well as the company’s group chat on What’s App which has so far been used for internal communication. Document analysis will provide researchers with initial insights into what is currently being done to project identity and reinforce its message through communication with organizational members. Researchers may also analyze newsletters, publications, white papers and the company's website and social media accounts – Facebook, Twitter and Linkedin.

How long will I be in the study?

• Semi-structured interviews will last approximately one hour and there may be some follow-up questions at a future time to delve deeper into a topic initially covered during the interview.

• The observations will be ongoing and may last for up to seven hours over the period of the study. In some cases, you may be asked further questions for clarification that should not take longer than 10 minutes.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

Risks while taking part in the study are minimal. The standard for minimal risk is that they in no way exceed the risks found in everyday life. All efforts will be made to ensure that you feel comfortable in answering interview questions. You also have the right to stop your participation in the study at any time.
There is a risk of breach of confidentiality; please see the "Confidentiality" section of this sheet for further information.

Are there any potential benefits?

There are no direct benefits to the participants as a result of taking part in this study. However, this study may add to the literature on organizational identity while providing deeper understanding on identification. This may help improve the relationship and experiences of organizational leaders and members, which may make your organization more successful and increase its effectiveness and the satisfaction you derive from working there.

Will I Be Compensated?

Participation in this study will not result in compensation.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

All efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published and databases in which results may be stored. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law.
The research team will not share any data other than de-identified final results with organizational leaders. Any references to your name or any identifying descriptions in notes and during transcription of interviews will be eliminated. Pseudonyms will be used in place of all names.
Data gathered from interviews will be kept in a separate locked bag stored in a locked file cabinet while in Nigeria and will be transferred to a locked cabinet in the PI (Joshua Boyd's) office in the Lamb School of Communication upon return to Purdue University. Only the PI (Josh Boyd) and Temi Wright, the Co-PI of the project, will have access to this data.
Audio recordings will be destroyed in August 2021. Information gathered from this research project will be used for academic publications, conference presentations and future research. Transcriptions of audio recordings and other written data will be stored indefinitely.
The project's research records may be reviewed by departments at Purdue University responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

You do not have to participate in this research project. If you agree to take part in this study, you can withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. You will not be forced to answer any questions or discuss any topics that make you uncomfortable. Participation or non-participation will not affect your employment standing with your employer.

Who can I contact if I have questions about the study?

You are free to ask questions concerning this study at any time before, during or after the interview. All of your questions will be answered and all of your concerns will be discussed. You can keep the copy of the consent form for your records. The researchers will also keep a copy of the consent form for their records. If you have questions, comments or concerns about this research project, you can contact me:

Temi Wright
Graduate student, Brian Lamb School of Communication
Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-2098
USA
Email: wrigh407@purdue.edu
Phone: (812) 349-8722

Or you may also contact the supervisor of the project:

Josh Boyd,
Associate Professor of Communication,
Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-2098
USA
Office Phone: (765) 494-3333
Email: boyd@purdue.edu

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in the study or have concerns about the treatment of research participants, please call the Human Research Protection Program at (765) 494-5942, email (irb@purdue.edu)or write to:

Human Research Protection Program - Purdue University
Ernest C. Young Hall, Room 1032
155 S. Grant St.
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114

Please check one (1) of the following:

I agree to have my photo taken during observations.

I do not agree to have my photo taken during observations.

Documentation of Informed Consent

I have had the opportunity to read this consent form and have the research study explained. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research project and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research project described above. I will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

____________________________________ _________________________

Participant’s Signature Date

Participant's Name

Researcher's Signature Date

APPENDIX C. LOCAL APPROVAL LETTER

Affirmation that Temiloluwa Wright's proposed research is appropriate for the Nigerian local culture

Tomi Alade <drtomialade60@gmail.com>
Thu 1/25/2018 11:32 AM
To:irb@purdue.edu <irb@purdue.edu>;
Cc:boyd@purdue.edu <boyd@purdue.edu>; Temiloluwa O Wright <wrigh407@purdue.edu>;

The Purdue Institutional Review Board (IRB):

I am writing regarding Temiloluwa Wright's proposal to conduct research in Nigeria.

I have been informed by him that in order to conduct research in Nigeria, an expert unaffiliated with the research study must review the research and affirm that the research procedures are appropriate for the culture.

I am a senior lecturer at the University of Lagos with more than 10 years of experience researching and teaching research methods at the University of Lagos' Faculty of Education where I am currently the Sub-dean.

I am writing to confirm that Temiloluwa Wright is very familiar with the local culture, having been raised here in Nigeria. He is respectful of the culture and this study is in compliance with what is acceptable according to our local customs. He therefore should be given the approval to continue with this study.

Should you require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,
Tomi Alade <drtomialade60@gmail.com>
Thu 1/25/2018 11:32 AM
Dr Tomi Alade
Senior Lecturer,
Sub-Dean, School of Education,
University of Lagos,
Akoka, Lagos.
+234 805 426 7864
oalade@unilag.edu.ng

APPENDIX D. LETTER PERMITTING THE RESEARCH FROM FMVEL

FMVL
FEMVEL

FEED ME
VENTURES LTD. (FEMV

PLOT 35, FASAKIN ROAD, AKUTE, OGUN STATE. Phone: 01-8965341,01-7338818
Email: femvel1@hotmail.com, femvel1@yahoo.com

Send To:

irb@purdue.edu

CC:

boyd@purdue.edu

wrigh407@purdue.edu

Subject: Confirmation that Temiloluwa Wright is granted access to conduct research within our organization: Feed Me Ventures Limited

The Purdue Institutional Review Board (IRB):

I am writing regarding Temiloluwa Wright's intent to complete his master's thesis by conducting research at our organization, Feed Me Ventures Limited.

I am the founder and Managing Director of Feed Me Ventures Limited, an integrated food processing company. I am granting Temiloluwa Wright unrestricted access to conduct interviews with our staff, make observations and analyse documents for the purpose of studying organizational identity and identification within this company.

Please contact me if you have other questions regarding Feed Me Ventures Limited.

Yours faithfully,

Sola Olawale

Managing Director,
Feed Me Ventures Limited,
OwodeEgba, Ogun state,
Nigeria.
+234 803 525 0813
femvel1@yahoo.com

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Mobile Doc Scanner from www.stoik.com

APPENDIX E. RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Revised 12 April 2018 Ref. #1803020426

Recruitment Script

Hello, my name is Temi Wright. I am a graduate student researcher from Purdue University's department of Communication in the United States. I am conducting research on organizational identity and I need your help to make this research a success. I am inviting you to participate in this study because you have the knowledge and experiences as employees at this company to help me understand what organizational identity looks like in this environment.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you can choose not to be involved but I sincerely hope that you will help me by participating. However, you must be eighteen years of age to participate in this study. This case study uses three methods: document analysis, observation and interviews. For the first two, you do not have to worry too much about them. However, you will notice me around the organization looking at different things and sometimes, I may also be observing your work and how you interact with one another – but only if you give your consent. Don't worry, observations only help me better understand the phenomenon. What you may want to be most directly concerned with are the interviews. I will invite you to talk with me about your experiences for 20 minutes to 45 minutes depending on how our conversations go. It will be private and confidential and no one else will know any of the details you tell me. In fact, I won't even record your real name for this study. You will choose a pseudonym you like which is how I will refer to you on paper and in the results. If you agree to participate, there may also be short follow-up interviews about your experiences and other ideas discovered later in the study. Your entire commitment should be no longer than one-hour total.

There is no compensation for participation in this study. You however do get my deepest gratitude and your participation contributes towards expanding the body of knowledge.

I have here with me consent forms which provide more details on the study. Please feel free to read through and raise any concerns you may have. If you choose to participate in this study, whether through interviews, observations or both, I will need you to sign a consent form providing your consent to be a participant in the study.

Please feel free to ask any questions or bring up any concerns you may have. Also, if you will like more time to decide, please feel free to take a consent form with you and think over it. Alternatively, you may also walk up to me at any time you see me in the factory to provide me with this form or request a form. My phone number which you can reach through What's App is +18123498722. You may also reach my supervisor who is the primary investigator on this project, Dr Josh Boyd, Associate Professor of Communication at Purdue University, at +17654943333 (office phone) or by e-mail at boyd@purdue.edu.

If you have concerns about the treatment of research participants, you can contact the Institutional Review Board at Purdue University, Ernest C. Young Hall, Room 1032, 155 S. Grant St., West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114, USA. The phone number for the Board is (765) 494-5942. The email address is irb@purdue.edu.

Thank you for your time and I hope you will all volunteer to be participants in this study.
Temi Wright