Negotiating 'The Intercultural Moment' Study Abroad and Conflict Mediation between African American and African Students: A Case Study

Vanessa WYNDER QUAINOO
University of Rhode Island, USA

*Abstract:*This case study describes the nature of the conflict and intercultural dynamics between African American and Ghanaian students. In effect, the study is an observation of American students from the University of Rhode Island who traveled to Ghana, West Africa for a study abroad class in African culture and leadership. The methodology includes the researcher as a participant, observation, and content analysis of conflict journals that the students were required to maintain before, during and after the study abroad class. Specifically, this study will analyze the 'intercultural moments' between the two groups of students. These are moments of conflict between study abroad students and individuals of the host culture. Such moments are primarily caused by three factors: incongruent expectation, intercultural preconception and intercultural misunderstanding. Based on the observation, intercultural moments occur more readily between African American and Ghanaian students. As substantiated within the context of a theoretical frame, the African American/Ghanaian student conflict can be attributed to intercultural engagement.

Keywords: African American, African, conflict, conflict mediation, intercultural moment, infraction, offense, study abroad

1.   Introduction

The *URI in Africa Study Abroad Program* is a partnership with the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, West Africa. Yearly, ten to twenty students are accepted into the program and taken through a rigorous three-week orientation. Understanding conflict mediation and resolution are significant parts of the orientation. This study will analyze the 'intercultural moment' or moments of conflict between study abroad students and individuals of the host culture. Analyzing the particular situation of the URI in Africa program, the data reveals that such moments are primarily caused by three factors: incongruent expectations, intercultural preconceptions and intercultural misunderstanding. Based on observation, the intercultural moments occur more readily between African American and Ghanaian students. Surprisingly, this is buoyed by tremendous exuberance, friendship-making and intercultural connectedness between the two groups. An implication of the study is that African American students often romanticize Africa as a land of origin. This can lead to unrealistic expectation. The parameters of this study suggest that the intercultural moment is a typification of conflict occurring, not limited to, but germane to intercultural situations that are accompanied by incongruent expectation, intercultural preconception and intercultural misunderstanding. Furthermore, training in intercultural communication and conflict mediation as part of the orientation for the study abroad program can potentially reduce incongruence, faulty preconception and misunderstanding (University of Rhode Island, 2014). One of

the works that helped us to formulate the research question for this study looks at questions of African American intraethnic and interethnic communication. Although first printed in the 1990's, *African American Communication Ethnic Identity and Cultural Interpretation* by Hecht, Collier and Ribeau (1993) helped us to understand African American communication as a research subject.

2.   Understanding the Context

The flagship higher education institution, the University of Rhode Island has a student body of approximately 14,000 undergraduate students, 3000 graduate students, along with the academic colleges and divisions, several programs and institutes such as the Institute of Oceanographic Study. The racial/ ethnic make-up of the undergraduate student body consists of 21% students of color including African and African American students. The majority of students identify as White, making up approximately 80% of the overall student population. Because racial diversity is naturally lacking in some parts of New England, most universities in the Northeast are making concerted efforts to intentionally diversify the student body and faculty. At the University of Rhode Island, several initiatives have been launched to promote racial and ethnic diversity. Among them are the President's Goals for progress at the University of Rhode Island and among the goals an articulation for not just local diversity, but global and international diversity.

Within this context, URI Study Abroad is viewed as critical to the effort of creating and sustaining a diverse campus community. There are approximately 40 Study Abroad programs at the University of Rhode Island, and in 2009 URI launched its first such program in Africa. The Ghana Study Abroad Program began with nine students who traveled to Cape Coast, Ghana. The students were hosted by the University of Cape Coast and spent two weeks living and studying in the beautiful coastal environs of the central region of Ghana. Since that first class of students in 2009, a total of five Study Abroad programs to Ghana have been offered yearly at the University of Rhode Island. With each year, the staff learns better ways of managing challenges and potential roadblocks to the programs' success.

From the trial and error experience, the staff noticed several patterns of conflict that emerged during the first two years of the program. This is a particular kind of conflict obviously connected to the interface of intercultural interaction and culminating in verbal and nonverbal confrontation; an eruption or tense display of emotion the author of this article calls the intercultural moment. In the first two years of the Study Abroad Program, the conflict was merely noted. In the following three years, conflict management training was added to the URI students' orientation, not just conflict management training, but intercultural conflict management training and subsequent research of the nature of the conflict that emerged primarily between the African American and Ghanaian students. So, the results of the research are organized into two parts. Part one is a case study of the nature of the conflict in relation to the conflict mediation component added to the orientation and part two is a case study of the impact of the conflict mediation component. Part two focuses on the question: Does conflict mediation training make a difference in conflict management between African and African American students? Part two is the subject for further research indicated in the conclusion. This study focuses on part one - the descriptive elements of the conflict.   The reason that the two parts are referred to is because the effort to equip the students (the American students) with mediation training during the orientation gave rise to the need for greater understanding of how conflict functions operatively within the parameters of intercultural communication. More specifically, we asked how conflict informs the study abroad context.

3.   Intercultural Engagement as the Theoretical Frame

In his book, *Communicating Africa: Enabling Centricity For Intercultural Engagement*, premier author and founding scholar of Afrocentric thought, Molefi Asante, writes the following, "Distortions of African realities are at the core of modern discourses about the African continent" (Asante, 2007). He makes the point that generations of scholars have preconceived ideas about Africa based on stereotype and conjecture. When thrust into an intercultural situation, individuals turn to their preconceived ideas. With regards to Africa, these preconceived ideas must be confronted before the study abroad trip. The means by which students' preconceptions are confronted is a form of intercultural engagement.

For the African American student, the engagement is a complex and multi-faceted intellectual as well as social progression. While the larger frames of reference in America cast Africa in often negative and colonialistic images, Afrocentric thought has captivated many African American students. Asante eloquently explains his own cultural maturation, "I was born in Southern Georgia, the great great grandson of enslaved Africans…of Nubian and Yoruba ancestry…a very long way from the African continent physically but very close to the questing spirit and the collective psychology of Africa" (Asante, xi). According to the data, many African American students experience an inexplicable closeness to Africa and are drawn to the study abroad program to explore their personal and intellectual questions about their ancestral home. What is absent is a clear understanding of belonging. As *African* Americans, the students identify with an African consciousness. As African Americans, they identify with American consciousness. This search for group affiliation, even group homogeneity is a phenomenon explored by Castano and Yzerbyt. It is called "the outgroup homogeneity effect or the tendency to perceive greater differences within groups one is a member of than within groups one does not belong to…" (Castano & Yzerbyt, 1998, p. 220).

Although this study focuses on a specific culture (really, two sides of a shared culture), intercultural engagement allows for universal expressions of this phenomenon. "Intercultural scholars tend to treat culture as a stable system and overemphasize the differences of specific contents of psychology in different cultures. This oversight of the invariance in psychological functioning in different cultures often leads to a factual incorrectness" (Chen, p. 10). In essence, invariance is present in and among all cultures, 'intra-culturally' as well as 'inter-culturally'. Intercultural engagement allows the researcher to situate study abroad as a dynamic process within the theoretical and philosophical paradigm of mediation as praxis. Holistically, conflict is the consequence of the maturation of a convergence of values, identity, and race consciousness as well as the discovery of ancestry.

Upon first glance, conflict happening between African American and African students is surprising. One is inclined to characterize the relationship between the two groups in poetic terms, *brothers/sisters* of kindred spirit. Perhaps, the prediction might be a harmonious interaction between them. But, conflict is not always an indication of lack of relationship or a measure of negativity in relationship. Quite often the presence of conflict is an indication of the propensity for relationship, either desired or unrealized. In this case, the theoretical framework allows for the subjects to discover their own narratives as they discover the narratives of ancestral lands. In their important work on Global Intercultural Communication, Asante, Miike and Yin point to future directions for intercultural communication research. The direction that is relevant to this study is the incorporation of indigenous theoretical perspectives into culture and communication studies (Asante, Miike & Yin, 2008, p. 2)

4.   Case Study as Methodology

Descriptive case study is the method used in this study. To define case study, the *Sage Encyclopedia of Case Study* Research is referenced:

> *The means by which we can derive an up-close or otherwise in-depth understanding of a single or small number of cases set in their real-world contexts.* Case study is a research strategy whose characteristics include:
> -   a focus on the interrelationships that constitute the context of a specific entity such as an organization, event, phenomenon or person
> -   analysis of the relationship between the contextual factors and the entity being studied and
> -   the explicit purpose of using those insights (of the interactions between contextual elationships and the entity in question) to generate and/or contribute to theory   (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010, p. xxxii)

And, from noted researcher, Robert K. Yin

> *(Case study is) an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon set within its real world context – especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2009)*
> *Case studies can be used to document and analyze the outcomes of intervention (Yin, 2009, p. xix).*

There are two basic forms of case study. The first is descriptive – the telling of what is happening. The second is explanatory – the telling of how or why the occurrence is taking place. Both forms are characterized by the gathering of data in a natural setting. This study employs descriptive research, observation of a single inquiry and the use of interviews. In this case the observers are researcher participants. The classes were team taught by two professors who traveled with the Study Abroad students and virtually remained with them from departure in the States until the conclusion of the program and the return flight from Ghana to America. (For clarity, it should be noted that the two professors remained in Ghana two weeks beyond the close of the program to conduct further research).

One other factor that led the researchers of this study to select case study as a methodological choice was the work of Tyrone Howard, whose research on African American urban students led him to put students' viewpoint at the center of discussion (Howard, 2001, p. 132). In like manner, Rosemary Traore's article, "Cultural Connections" helped to inform the researchers of this study in a deeper understanding of negotiating as an approach to conflict management (Traore, 2008, p. 10).

4.1.   Setting Up the Case Study

As stated earlier, the conflict between African American and African students emerged in the first and second program. Before the third program the researchers proposed a theoretical frame in which the conflict was posited as the impetus for a research question. African and African American students have a shared ancestry and subsequent shared expectation of both cultures. Could it be that the presence of cultural expectation leads to a romanticization of ancestry? Once confronted with the disparity between

the romanticized view of cultural reality and actual cultural reality, both groups experience a certain amount of "let down" which contributes to disappointment and expressed frustration with members of the "other" group. Adding to this theoretical situation are certain variables. First, all of the students were dealing with the normal amount of intercultural awkwardness. Second, all of the students had individual and group ideas about Ghanaian culture. The researchers used interviews and surveys before and after the program to identify these ideas. To differentiate between group and individual ideas, the researchers conducted two interviews of the American students, one before departure to Ghana and one at the end of the program. In tandem, two interviews of the Ghanaian students were administered, one interview at the beginning of the program and one interview at the end of the program. To preserve the collection of data within the natural setting, so central to case study research, the researchers questioned both the American and Ghanaian students with open-ended questions about their expectations and about their experience. Third, the African American students approached classroom discussion differently from the Ghanaian students. The African American students projected on to the instructors, an expectation to address and resolve intercultural tension. "In the Ghanaian university classroom…teacher immediacy is not a significant predictor of student learning" (Daniels & Goodboy, 2014, p. 105).

Fourth, heightened uncertainty creates greater propensity for misunderstanding based on assumption. "Uncertainty exists when individuals are unsure about what to expect from their environment" (Van Kelegom & Wright, 2013, p. 92).

Fifth, the clash between values can potentially contribute to conflict. In his work on the South African critique of individualism, Watson raises the question of cultural relativism. "Although cultural relativism is a useful check on ethnocentrism, an unintended effect of validating different cultural behaviors is to draw a line between them, forestalling a discussion of how they are each other, even as they manifest differently (Watson, 2014, p. 145).

4.2.   Examining the Data

The data revealed several surprising factors. First, the student responses reflected the subtle distinction between individual expectation and group expectation. Taken from three students' journals, the following statements help to demonstrate this subtlety:

> *Sample #1 - Personally, I think of Africa as a kind of wild place with lots of safari animals and village life but after I talk with the other members of the team I realize that Africa is just place with both cities and villages and safari animals in just some parts of Africa.*
> *Sample #2 - I have always wanted to go to Africa because I think it is the Motherland, the cradle of civilization. After talking to my friends, I really want to go because all black people of my generation want to connect with Africa. People in my parents' generation talk about slavery and the forcing of Africans to America because of slavery, but young people talk about Africa as a very happening place for music, culture and lifestyle.*
> *Sample #3 - I was a little scared to go to Africa, but (Name of a student) talked to me and now, after I met with the group of students who are interested in going, I think going to Ghana is going to be exciting and fun and that I will learn a lot about my own heritage.*

The data revealed an individual level of expectation and a group level of expectation or at least individual expectation that had been influenced by the group.

Second, the data reveal distinctions between African American student expectation and White American student expectation. While this study does not incorporate the White American student experience in the case study research, it is important to point out how their responses contrast with the African American student responses. One hundred percent of all the African American students who responded to the interview questions referenced cultural heritage as a significant variable. It is important to note that the researchers did not evoke, solicit or suggest heritage as a topic or reference point. Several terms emerge in the data collected in the African American student interview responses: Heritage, Motherland, Mother Africa, Africa, ancestors, diaspora, forefathers, history and reclaim. The African American students spoke with great fondness, even passionately about visiting a place from which they have, simultaneously, descended and been historically denied.

The White American student responses demonstrate a more measured appreciation for Africa as one of many interesting places in the world. Their reasons for wanting to travel to Africa ranged from an interest in developing a career in international relations to wanting to understand world poverty to curiosity about a place in the world in which they would be the minority. The data showed that the White American students clearly did not connect with Africa as a place of ancestry but rather as a destination of interest.

4.3. Observation in the Natural Setting

The next step in the methodology is the observation of the students' interactions in "the natural setting". In this case study, it is the Study Abroad program in action in Ghana. Three sites constituted observation settings, the classroom, the meal settings and the daily de-briefing which occurred every evening at 9pm in the hotel conference room (a space seating approximately 30 people, reserved for the URI in Ghana program for the entire 2 week stay in Cape Coast). The categories of observation include expectation, pre-conception and understanding (or misunderstanding). A graduate assistant accompanied the researchers and using a predetermined code, recorded data as students interacted. The code is illustrated in the following graph, and explained in Section 5.
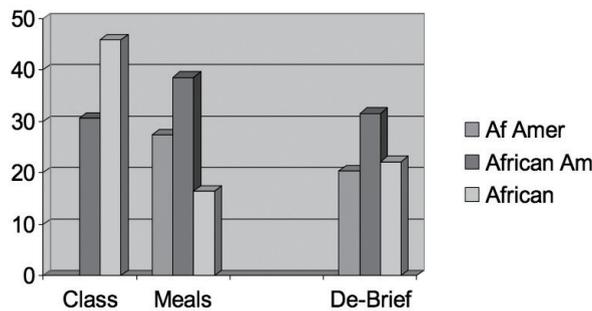
5. Incongruent Expectation

To explain the graph (Figure 1), the recorders noted at least 50 interactions involving conflict across

a broad category of verbal and nonverbal interactions. The African students represent a monolithic group, consistently speaking only after being spoken to. Because of the academic component, the class interactions represent topical and assignment-oriented interaction. At meals and during de-briefing, the African Americans represent two categories within their cultural group. The first is typified as direct confrontation (in dark shading) and the second (labeled "Af Amer") is typified as indirect confrontation (in light shading).

While all three groups of students, White American, African American and Ghanaian interacted reasonably throughout the Program, the African American and Ghanaian students experienced what the study identifies as "intercultural moments". These outward displays of conflict initiated almost always by the African American students toward the Ghanaian students revealed deep-seated expectation of cultural fulfillment based on pre-conceived notions about Africa. The expectations connected to cultural identity phrases such as 'Africa – a land of kings and queens'. Other phrases reference African heritage more directly, 'Black Americans – descendents of kings'. As the students witnessed the sights and sounds of various villages, towns, museums and learning experiences and as they interacted with the local people who represented all levels of economic strata, they experienced incongruence. This is the inability to "fit" what is seen with what is expected or anticipated.

6.   Interaction

This study is about how shared ancestral ethnicity can impact intercultural communication inasmuch as it is about managing study abroad in Africa. It is also about understanding students' grappling with conflict vis-à-vis intercultural expectation.

Specifically we observed the communication between African American students and West African students during the URI in Ghana Study Abroad program. There were actually two groups of people in the West African population, members of the local community and students from the University of Cape Coast who served as student hosts/helpers. The helpers joined the Study Abroad group at breakfast and remained with them throughout the day. They provided valuable insights, such as interpreting the local languages/dialects, teaching the American students and staff about the variety of foods and herbs. They even corrected the group members when they mistakenly assumed false information about their culture. For instance, one student remarked that in a mixed gender crowd, men did most of the talking while the women remained silent and even refrained from eye contact with the men during group conversations. The Study Abroad students surmised that the women feel inferior to men and attributed their silence as reticence to challenge the men. The Study Abroad students concluded that Americans have the right to public expression as a personal privilege that can be exercised equally by males and females and that this should be a universal right without regard to cultural or national context.

This discussion took place during one of the classes. The Ghanaian student helpers who sat in on all of the classes quickly corrected the American students. The Ghanaian women's silence was not an indication of inferiority. In the words of one of the helpers, "It is a value of Ghanaian women to be quiet and reserved. We highly esteem women who are intelligent, just as intelligent as men and present themselves as discreet and of few words. It is a sign of refinement." (Observation, URI Study Abroad, May, 2013)

7.   Distinct Patterns of Conflict

By the second program, we noticed a specific pattern of conflict that occurred between the African American students who had enrolled in the program and the host Ghanaian student helpers. The conflict began as low-grade discontentment between the two groups. At first, the conflict was not apparent and the students seemed to be interacting comfortably. About two days into the program, the African American students would confront the Ghanaian student or students about an action that caused the African Americans offense. In a passive–aggressive response, the Ghanaian students would remain quiet but demonstrate their uneasiness by sitting apart from the African American students at meal times or avoiding eye contact. Before the confrontation, both groups seemed eager to sit with each other.

When we witnessed this pattern again during the third program, we systematically began to record the interactions and responses. We found several patterns of conflict and conflict mediation. The patterns are congruent with prior studies of conflict management in the West African context.

7.1.   Observed Patterns of African American Student Responses to Conflict

A.) Direct confrontation: In this conflict mediation approach, students identify a specific cause of unrest, uneasiness or challenge. The defining characteristic about the infraction from the African American perspective is that the challenge, rather real or perceived is considered an offense. This suggests violation of a personal standard of expectation, of behavior, of interpersonal interaction, of resulting relationship definitives. Based on this concept of offense, the African American students verbally expressed discontent to the Ghanaian students. One example is when an African American student attempted to use the student computer room at the library of one of the local universities in Ghana. The student was told that computer usage was reserved for enrolled students. The Ghanian students who accompanied the American student stated that the American student should not have attempted to use the computer room without the presence of a Professor. The African American student responded that the Ghanaian student was insensitive and uninformed. The African American student directly confronted the Ghanaian student by suggesting that the Ghanaian students should have done more to convince the Librarian to allow the American students to use the computer room. This is just one of many documented examples of how the African American students felt "free" to express emotive responses to what might be classified as expected challenges in a study abroad situation. It is also noted in this case, that the African American students directed their frustration with the rules of the institution toward the Ghanaian students. In essence, the Ghanaian students had no control over a university library guideline.

B.) Indirect confrontation: In this approach, students identify several instances of dissonance and share discontent with members of their declared social group, roommates or members of their own cultural group. With indirect confrontation, students complain to sympathetic listeners but resist speaking directly to the person or persons causing the perceived or real offense or discomfort. An example of indirect confrontation during the Ghana Study Abroad trip is when several of the African American students held a conversation about some of the difficulties involved in communicating with the Ghanaian students. They pointed out the lack of eye contact, the language barrier and the seemingly reticent manner of the Ghanaian students who would not "speak up" to defend themselves. The African

American students expressed their discomfort and difficulties with one another and in this case, showed no attempt or interest in raising these issues with the Ghanaian students.

C.) Competitive confrontation: Some of the students respond to conflict by creating a competitive situation in which cultural bias is thinly veiled by a game or competitive engagement. The typical scenario includes a foot race between several African American students and several Ghanaian students or a board game such as chess. In this way, both groups of students worked out their frustrations without verbalizing the conflict.

7.2.   Observed Patterns of Ghanaian Student Responses to Conflict

The larger Ghanaian cultural response to conflict informed the students overall responses. First, Ghanaian culture values propriety and the avoidance of embarrassment or open verbal challenge. In their study, "Transformational Leadership in the Ghanaian University Classroom", Daniels and Goodboy suggest the following: "…Ghana represents a collectivist, high power distance culture whereas the US…is identified as an individualistic culture with lower power distance" (Daniels & Goodboy, 2014, p.103). From the Ghanaian perspective, the 'privilege' of speaking in public, in class is not necessarily valued as it is in American culture.

Geert Hofstede asserts that, "Ghana represents a collectivistic…African culture. As a result, Ghanaians are more likely to be implicit, indirect and face-saving in communication to maintain group harmony" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 9)

As we observed the Ghanaian students, the patterns of responses to conflict that emerged include the following:

A. *Passive/Withdrawal* – the Ghanaian students would remove themselves from the room or space or sit quietly together during a conversation in which controversial topics were discusssed or when the American students were exhibiting emotional or demonstrative actions. These actions were not necessarily confrontational or discourteous. What seemed to be in the realm of 'normal' communication for the Americans seemed to be, by contrast, excessive for the Ghanian students.

B. *Avoidance/Deflection* – the Ghanaian students often had little or no eye contact when confronted. Often, they deflected the attention away from the topic of conflict by inquiring about a routine matter such as a repeat of the class time or departure time. In several instances, the data revealed that the Ghanaian students would remain silent or speak in quiet tones with one-word or one-sentence responses. This hesitance may also be attributed to the language barrier. Although Ghanaian students are fluent in English, they are keenly aware that the American students speak a distinctly regional and generational form of English. This variation in English was, at times, both challenging and interesting for the Ghanaian students.

C. *Adherence to Authority* – While this observed pattern needs more analysis because of the obvious cultural differences regarding authority and respect for authority, our data revealed that the Ghanaian students factored authority into their decision-making processes more overtly than did the American students (both White and African American). When the students would go out together

for social time away from the study abroad site, the Ghanaian students would characteristically ask "permission" to go. The Ghanaian students exhibited a readiness to defer to the Professors when conflict occurred. They explained on several occasions how it was inappropriate for students to disagree in the presence of their authorities.

These patterns are not conclusive but rather observed behaviors that help us to begin to understand how the two groups, African Americans and Ghanaians, approach conflict. The interpretation of conflict is sharply connected to the mediation of conflict. In the study abroad context, the situation is in some ways a controlled environment. The factors of the study abroad influence are part of the overall experience. Who the students are in the face of conflict may be effected by the study abroad situation but not altogether masked or altered. The conflict was a realistic interpersonal event each time it occurred and subsequently we can trust that the responses were authentic.

8.   Conclusion

The intercultural moment is the defining experience of conflict between African and African American students during the URI in Ghana Study Abroad Program. The complexity of the intercultural relationships forged within that context yield a myriad of expectations. Lodged beneath surface goals of study abroad for experience's sake, many African American students have romanticized preconceptions about Africa as an ancestral home. While yearnings for ancestral connection are not necessarily negative, the students' expectations are met with real-life potentialities such as personality, poverty and the undeniable presence of difference. While these variables require adjustment, the students also encounter connection and shared narrative. This is an intriguing and rich backdrop against which students seek ethnic identity and meaning.

This case study observed the interactions between African American and African students during the Study Abroad Program. While White American students were also present, the focus of the study explored what seemed to be patterns in encounters between the African and African American students. The data points to incongruent expectations, intercultural pre-conceptions and intercultural misunderstanding as causal factors of the conflict.

8.1.   Suggestions for Further Research

The impetus for the case study stems from the presence of the conflict between African and African American students and subsequent need for conflict mediation within the intercultural situation. For further research, the question to address is how effective is a conflict mediation model in orientation training for the American study abroad students. Obviously, this training is designed to take place before the trip. Then, a follow-up question asks, how effective would mediation training for the Ghanaian students be in preparing them before the American students arrive? Both sets of questions move the discussion toward exploring improved conflict management and make more likely the plausibility of intercultural engagement as a theoretical framework in both philosophical inquiry and praxis.

References

Ansu-Kyeremeh, K. (2005). *Indigenous communication in Africa: A conceptual framework*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.

Asante, Molefi. (2011). *As I run toward Africa. A memoir.* New York: Routledge.

Asante, Molefi. (2007). *Communicating Africa: Enabling Centricity for intercultural engagement. China Media Research (3).*

Asante, Molefi. (2009). *From the history of Africa.* New York: Routledge.

Asante, Molefi; Miike, Yoshitaka & Yin, Jing. (2008). *The global intercultural reader.* New York: Routledge.

Castano, Emanuel & Yzerbyt Vincent Y. (1998). *The highs and lows of group homogeneity. Behavioral Processes* vol 42. 219-238.

Chen, Guo-Ming. (2011). Introduction to key concepts in understanding the Chinese: Harmony as the foundation of Chinese communication. *China Media Research, 7*(4).

Daniels, Rita & Goodboy, Alan. (2014). Transformational leadership in the Ghanaian university classroom. *Intercultural Communication Studies, 23*(2), 90-109.

Gundykunst, William. (2000). Methodological issues in conducting theory-based cross-cultural research. In H. Spenser Oatly (Ed.), *Culturally speaking: Managing rapport through talk across cultures* (pp.293-316). London: Continuum International.

Hecht, Michael L.; Collier, Mary Jane & Ribeau, Sidney. A. (1993). *African American communication: Ethnic identity and cultural interpretation.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hofstede, Geert. (2001). *Culture's consequences* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Howard, Tyrone. (2001). Telling their side of the story: African American students' perceptions of culturally relevant teaching. *The Urban Review, 33*(2), 131-149.

Milhouse, Virginia; Asante, Molefi & Nwosu, Peter. (2001). *Transcultural realities: Interdisciplinary perspectives on cross cultural relations.* New York: Routledge.

Mills, Albert J.; Durepos, Gabrielle & Wiebe, Elden (Eds.). (2010). *Encyclopedia of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Traore, Rosemary. (2008). Cultural connections: An alternative to conflict resolution. *Multicultural Education 15*(4), 10-14.

University of Rhode Island Ghana Study Abroad. (2013). Observations of intercultural conflict mediation between African American and Ghanaian students: Data collection by Joseph and Vanessa Quainoo. Providence, RI: University of Rhode Island, USA.

University of Rhode Island Ghana Study Abroad. (2014). Observations of intercultural conflict mediation between African American and Ghanaian students: Data collection by Joseph and Vanessa Quainoo. Providence, RI: University of Rhode Island, USA.

Van Kelegom, Martin & Wright, Courtney. (2013). The use of imagined interactions to manage relational uncertainty. *Southern Communication Journal, 78*(2), 91-106.

Watson, Marcus. (2014). Apartheid in their hearts? How the South African critique of individualism is probably right. *The Howard Journal of Communications, 25*(2), 134-155.

Wilson, Des. (2008). Research on traditional communication in Africa. *African Communication Research, 1*(1), 47-60.

Yin, Robert K. (2009). Case study research: Design and methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Author Note