Ubuntu at Home and Abroad:

A Practical Analysis of Cross-Cultural Hospitality

Student Paper

Ubuntu at Home and Abroad: A Practical Analysis of Cross-Cultural Hospitality

Abstract

While hospitality is generally understood to involve conscientious displays of welcome and acceptance by the host on behalf of a guest, differences in hospitality behavior between cultures have not been adequately studied. Furthermore, it is assumed that hospitality undergirds positive intercultural relationships, but no singular conceptualization or systematic method of praxis exists in the scholarly canon. Individuals' perceptions of hospitality, and the way hospitality as theory manifests in individuals' behaviors, may vary based on the definition of hospitality recognized by their respective societies. For example, *ubuntu,* often expressed through the phrase "a person is a person because of other persons," is a philosophical construct professed by natives of many sub-Saharan African nations and through which previous scholars have interpreted hospitality (Gathogo, 2008, p. 53). This study investigates the nature of intercultural welcoming by gathering subjective data on conceptualizations and expressions of hospitality the dominant culture of the United States and in sub-Saharan African traditions. Qualitative assessments are obtained through open-response surveys from 21 volunteers, synthesized by region, and contrasted with one another. The results indicate that the normative significance of hospitality is more embedded in African philosophy and behavior than in American, while both groups conveyed a desire to share the host culture, including native goods and services, with foreign guests. The discussion concludes with a revised definition of hospitality as conceptualized within the parameters of sub-Saharan African ethos.

Ubuntu at Home and Abroad: A Practical Analysis of Cross-Cultural Hospitality

Introduction

Inconsistencies often arise between belief and practice, an occurrence that researchers of the social sciences find particularly confounding. Upon multiple occasions of visiting Nigeria, where my family was stationed for my father's occupation, over the course of two years, I experienced this contradiction in the way concern for others was enacted. It was difficult to determine whether altruism or an expectation of reciprocity motivated benevolent action by Nigerians toward fellow nationals and foreigners alike. Africa is a nation of incredible diversity with a history of tribalism and both internal and external subjugation, and I wondered at the degree to which genuine hospitality could assuage the latent wounds. These considerations provided the impetus for conducting the following research study on hospitality in sub-Saharan Africa and the United States.

In today's globalized system, the permeability of national borders and degree of precedence of ethnic or cultural identities over patriotic affiliation is in question. The mass influxes of migrants and refugees in particular have met mixed, if well-intentioned, popular and political reactions. The United States' social and economic prosperity renders it an attractive destination for migrant groups and historically has welcomed those who intend to establish permanent residence, but has little experience with asylum seekers and other non-permanent guests. In many cases, the objective of resettlement is not acculturation or assimilation but a state of mutually satisfactory cohabitation between host and guest, yet often displaced peoples become disenfranchised with, and therefore hostile toward, their host nation. A proper enactment of hospitality behavior on an individual rather than political level may be effective in mitigating these responses.

Most people, scholar and layperson alike, conceptualize hospitality as a universal social good that, when expressed, either minimizes the otherness of a guest or reinterprets the guest's otherness in a positive frame. This understanding lacks an additional component required for a complete understanding of hospitality: identification of a structural root. Hospitality behavior varies across cultures and often becomes distorted when transmitted through multiple cultural lenses, resulting in a discontinuity between intention by the host and internalization by the guest. The extent to which these practices conform to a singular ideal has not been determined. Furthermore, expectations of conformist behavior on the part of either host or guest may cause a "defeat of hospitality" despite each party's best intentions (Dervin & Layne, 2013, p. 16).

This study investigates the nature of intercultural welcoming by gathering subjective data on conceptualizations and expressions of hospitality in the United States' dominant culture and in sub-Saharan African cultures. Qualitative assessments are obtained through open-response surveys from 21 volunteers, synthesized by region, and contrasted with one another. Sub-Saharan Africa was selected as a reference point due to a) the vast number of native African immigrants and occupational expatriates to the United States, b) the emergence of many developing African nations as players in the global economy, and c) the likelihood of recruiting participants through personal connections. As the background research was conducted, a unique African perspective on hospitality emerged. It contains elements of both tribalism and multiculturalism, two opposing yet powerful ideologies especially salient in Western political thought. While the paper avoids drawing prescriptive conclusions, the principles espoused by the participants can offer guidance for behavior among host-guest intercultural dyads and provide starting points for future research and application.

Literature Review

Hospitality

Various definitions of hospitality have been posited. Kunwar (2017) notes that today many scholars take an anthropological approach to defining hospitality. This perspective conceptualizes hospitality as a socioeconomic behavior concerned with "entertaining, protecting and securing guests" (p. 57). Essential aspects of hospitality include "feelings of generosity, a desire to please and a genuine regard for the guest as an individual," enacted through behaviors such as providing food, accommodation, and entertainment (p. 59). Thus, it goes beyond offering basic needs by providing relational and emotional care as well. These findings suggest that hospitality is fundamentally concerned with building relationships between host and guest. Guests are conceptualized as persons oriented toward community in spite of their itinerant condition. Hospitality may also have a preservative or protectionary function for both parties. In such cases, it involves verbal or implicit contracts which can be "ritualized and codified" (Dervin & Layne, 2013, p. 3).

Goodhart (2013) takes an etymological approach by analyzing differences in Greek, Hebrew, and Jewish definitions. The word hospitality is derived from the Latin *hospitālitās*, meaning "friendliness to guests," with the root *hospes* indicating a "stranger," "guest," or "host." The link to the Latin *hostis*, or "enemy," carries over into the English. *Hospes*, or host, may carry a connotation of connotation of "welcome, reception, and of preferential treatment" (p. 89), but it may also reference "an army, a crowd or multitude of strangers, a group that arrives to threaten one's home, who would perhaps invade it" (p. 90). The former illustrates an open, positive relationship between host and guest, while the latter may indicate hostility and/or disgust.

Derrida expands on the intersection of stranger and enemy in the practice of hospitality. Two types of hospitality exist—conditional and unconditional—each of which is governed by a

different law (Noble & Noble, 2016). Unconditional hospitality is "to give the new arrival all of one's home, all of oneself, to give him or her one's own, our own, without asking a name, or compensation, or the fulfilment or even the smallest condition" (Derrida, 2000b, p.77). While the unlimited nature of unconditional hospitality renders it a pragmatic impossibility, even limited displays place the host in a position of vulnerability. Expectations of care and sacrifice on behalf of the guest violate the personhood of the host by requiring that the host relinquish his or her property, comforts, and time, often unexpectedly and contrary to his or her will (Noble & Noble, 2016). Such hospitality, or *hostipitality* (Derrida, 2000a), exists in contrast to "pure" hospitality, which connotes "openness to the unknown" (Noble & Noble, 2016, p. 60). Dikeç, Clark, and Barnett (2009) interpret Derrida's conceptualization of hospitality as the following: "Hospitality requires that a guest be greeted, addressed, named as a singular individual. It requires that the guest be welcomed as a Somebody, not as a serialized nobody" (pp. 8-9). Hospitality therefore affirms the individuality of the guest and provides for his or her needs while at the same time protecting the host from physical, emotional, and psychological mistreatment.

Cross-cultural communication and hospitality

In previous research, the experiences of international students in their host countries has been largely negative, with participants reporting feelings of inferiority, experiences of cultural misunderstanding, and being ostracized from members of the host culture. Bardhan and Zhang (2017) used a qualitative survey to interview nonwhite international students from the global South studying at a U.S. midwestern university. They found that international students from the Global South wrestled with the increased impact their race made on their identity, with African students experiencing majority negative effects. Participants described a sense of "otherness" about themselves and exhibited a tendency to stick with their own kind, although the

inside/outside boundaries of otherness remained ambiguous. Subtle racial discrimination was exhibited toward African students in particular, possibly due to a post-colonial attitude that impels Westerners to label international people of color as "other" and ascribe identities to them that prevent them from feeling welcome. A study by Dervin and Layne (2013) analyzing "two versions of a document… published… for international students by a Finnish university" (p. 6) found that in the context of international students, the Finnish student culture was quite inhospitable, expecting international students to become essentially Finnish to attain equal status and holding to a culture where "the host remains the ruler and the guest the hostage" (p. 17). These findings are corroborated by the study on Finnish students, which found that a constructionist approach was taken wherein internationals were expected to essentially become Finns in order to attain equal status (Dervin & Layne, 2013). Although the Finns maintained outward hospitality, their treatment of the international students was contingent on relegating internationals to a place of inferiority, thus preventing the Finns from demonstrating pure hospitality. The motivating factors of the Finns' attitude toward international students were not discussed.

Similarly, in a case study analyzing interactions between international students participating in a study abroad and host culture students, it was found that there were cultural tensions expressed in conflicts between African American international students and host culture Ghanaian students due to unrealized expectations (Wynder Quainoo, 2015). Wynder Quainoo (2015) found distinctions between the attitudes of whites and people of color studying abroad in Ghana, suggesting that ethnicity plays a role in Africans' hospitality behaviors. White student expectations differed from African-American student expectation, with every African American identifying cultural heritage as a primary factor in his or her participation with the study-abroad

program, while white students cited general interest. Incongruent expectations, intercultural preconceptions, and intercultural misunderstanding were determined to play primary roles in creating conflict.

African hospitality: The concept of *ubuntu*

An analysis of African hospitality behaviors must first address the pan-African philosophical ideal referred to in the literature as *ubuntu.* According to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, ubuntu is "the essence of being human" (1999, p. 31). Synonyms in the English language may include "humanity, human nature, human kindness, or humaneness" (McAllister, 2009, p. 1). The etymological origins of ubuntu from roots in the southern Bantu language are twofold. First, the root *ubu* refers to being itself, transcendent to but not independent of manifestation of existence in individual persons (Smith, 2017, p. 82). Although *ubu* is an autonomous concept in the abstract dimension, it cannot be ontologically divorced from *ntu*. The human person is the "nodal point at which being assumes concrete form or a mode of being in the process of continual unfoldment" (Smith, 2017, p. 82). The idea of temporally enacted and perpetually emerging being is critical to understanding ubuntu. While being is manifested in distinct persons, each of whom bears a unique identity, all participate in Heidegger's capital-B Being. A human being is also a *Dasein,* a fundamentally a being-with (Heidegger, 1962). Individuals exist in context of relationship to a broader people or society—"a person is a person because of other persons" (Gathogo, 2008, p. 53). A person's personness is legitimized through "good relations and interactions with others" (Munyaka & Motlhabi, 2009, p. 74). It must be noted that etymological descriptions vary across languages: *Unhu* among the Shona of Zimbabwe; *Ubuntu* among the Nguni speakers of Southern Africa; *Utu* among the Swahili speakers of East Africa; and *Umundu* among the Kikuyu of Kenya, among others (Gathogo, 2008, p. 45). Differences in

the conceptualization of *ubuntu* according to linguistic context have not been studied; therefore, the effects of discrepant definitions understood by the study's participants of different African cultures are not known.

In a study by Hankela (2013) on the relationships within a South African church experiencing racial conflict, the socio-moral rules of reciprocity and survival were found to dictate the enactment of *ubuntu* (p. 78). Reciprocity implies that ubuntu displayed on behalf of the other is expected in return. This both affirms the other's humanity as a being capable of expressing ubuntu and creates a pathway for potential abuse of the other's ubuntu (p. 85). In addition, ubuntu is limited to manifestations that do not threaten the perpetuation of one's own group. Molose, Thomas, and Goldman (2019) developed a quantitative measurement scale for ubuntu based on perceived conceptual elements of compassion, survival, group solidarity, and respect and dignity. It was noted that ubuntu encourages a collectivistic approach to individual and social identity. This supports previous contrasting of ubuntu with Western conceptions of human nature, which emphasize individualism (McAllister, 2009, p. 2).

It has been suggested by etic scholars and African nationals alike that hospitality is a major way in which ubuntu is enacted. Ubuntu is not only an ideal, but a social ethic. However, emic studies of remote African villages have not corroborated ubuntu in the philosophical tradition. McAllister (2009) found that the significance of ubuntu was conditional upon the particular context in which the term was employed. For example, it occasioned that a man was praised by his neighbor for extending hospitality on the justification that "the day you refuse to accept visitors is the day you lose your ubuntu" (McAllister, 2009, p. 5). From this perspective, ubuntu is less a universal African ethic than a value originating from the lived experience of specific African sub-cultures. Furthermore, the prevalence of corruption, violence, exploitation,

neglect, and other social ills undermine the attested preeminence of ubuntu. McAllister suggests that, like unconditional and pure hospitality, ubuntu is an impossible ideal which, if attained, would restore the humanity of all individuals and thus should be continually striven after.

Collectively, the literature identifies ways hospitality is viewed within different cultural paradigms. This study expands upon previous research by investigating the practical representation of hospitality from two distinct cultural positions and codifying the results.

Research Questions

According to this intention, the following research questions are advanced:

RQ1: How do individuals from sub-Saharan Africa conceptualize hospitality in a social or political (vs. commercial) context?

RQ2: What are the key differences and similarities between American and African displays of hospitality?

Method

Participants. A total of 21 individuals from either America or various sub-Saharan African heritages participated in this study. Ages ranged from 25 to 61. Eighteen of the participants represented countries from sub-Saharan Africa; the distribution was: one participant from Tanzania, three participants from Ethiopia, four participants from Nigeria, five participants from Uganda, four participants from South Africa, and one participant from Zimbabwe. Two South African participants were white Afrikaners, while the third was a black African. The ethnicity of the fourth is unknown. The remaining three participants represented the United States, specifically the state of Colorado.

Procedure. A non-random sample was drawn based on personal contacts in sub-Saharan Africa and in the United States. The final sample was drawn from Tanzania, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda,

South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Colorado in the United States. Each participant was given a survey

consisting of ten open-ended questions that assessed participants' values, beliefs, attitudes, and

behaviors regarding the topic of hospitality. This was followed by three demographic questions

assessing nationality, age, and duration of residence in the represented country. The surveys were

distributed both on paper and electronically, and responses were either written or typed.

Measures. To assess conceptualizations and experiences of hospitality, each participant was

asked a number of qualitative questions, including: "What is hospitality in your culture?", "How

is hospitality shown to foreigners?", "Give an example of how you have shown hospitality," and

"What is considered rude behavior on the part of the host?" The results were analyzed and

compared to address the research questions.

Results

RQ1. How do individuals from sub-Saharan Africa conceptualize hospitality in a social or

political (vs. commercial) context?

RQ 2. What are the key differences and similarities between American and African displays of

hospitality?

Tanzania

      Tanzanian hospitality was defined as "the act of service—of welcoming, serving, hosting,

or welcoming guest" [punctuation added]. Hosting involves spurning one's prior time

commitments or desired allocation of resources to prepare homemade foods and drinks and to

provide lodging. Certain elements of hospitality were non-negotiable: "If [s/he] is your guest

then you have no choice to provide shelter, foods drinks, shower and she /he has no limit to

stay." Expressed attitude was distinguished from actual attitude. Family members especially may

arrive without prior signal of their visit and remain indefinitely, but the host may not display any

indication of actual attitudes. Nothing was expected from the guest in return, but the host may be obligated to ensure the guest's safe passage to his/her next destination. The participant emphasized a "smiling face" when displaying hospitality. Greetings are adapted to acknowledge the age of the addressee; for example, elder individuals are addresses as "father/mother," while peers are addressed in the sibling connotation. Finally, the participant rejected tribal, national, or racial associations as a factor in expected hospitality behavior. Addressing an individual according to tribe, nation, or race was considered offensive, as it was indicated that tolerance and affiliation were valued.

Ethiopia

The Ethiopian group defined hospitality as "friendly and generous behavior towards guests, family, and others," and "a willingness to give and share un-stingingly." A theme of generosity appears most prominently among Ethiopian responses. The term "share" and its variations appeared seven times, compared to once in the Tanzanian group (with the caveat that Tanzanians were most underrepresented in this study), once in the Nigerian group, four times in the South African group, once in the Ugandan group (the most represented group), and once in the American group. Underlying their behavior is the belief that "Guest are sent from God, because of this people give them high hospitality." One participant noted the potential negative consequences of generosity when coupled with the potential for exploitation by individuals who are cognizant of the cultural expectation of hospitality beyond the host's financial means. Hospitality behavior is characterized by a complex usage of greetings:

> In Ethiopia hospitality is more shown on our greetings and the way we treat guests or
> new visitors. What makes our greeting style different from other culture, when we say
> how are you? We don't rush we take 3-5minutes and ask on how our day was, family and

life …? Second close friends and family kisses on the check and give hugs. If people

don't extend greeting it means that they are feeling " sad" or "mad". So, there is negative

[c]onnotation, if people are not making greetings. Greetings are taken seriously in

Ethiopia.

In addition, in-group and out-group distinctions were considered significant to hospitality

displays. Participants often referenced hospitality in family relationships, but they voiced

concern with the deepening divisions along ethnic and/or racial lines. For example, saying

feriges (the cultural term for whites) was considered offensive, as well as attempting to extract

financial gifts from them. One participant indicated a positive association with difference from

an experience demonstrating hospitality to friends of other groups; however, another participant

observed than individuals' ethnic identities are often cited to justify stereotyping and treating

others differently according to ethnic group. "They try to assign you to some ethnic group

without getting to know you first and the[n] consider that because you are from that ethnic group

you are something which you are not." Finally, within Ethiopia exist two ethical systems that

define individuals' social and economic responsibilities. These are *edir*, which is described as "a

collection of people who shares responsibility at the time of sympathy and funeral. Edir members

contribute and collect necessary resources and takeover all hospitality responsibility and comfort

all the family members;" and *ekub,* which is described as "a socially acceptable financial system,

there are members and contribute money and they give for one member and these things will

rotate for every member to eradicate financial problems."

Nigeria

Nigerians' definitions of hospitality can be summarized as the following: "the ability to

care, welcome and accommodate people, both native and foreigner, in a conducive and friendly

environment." However, one participant defined hospitality as "respecting your elders," which was different from the other responses. This same participant also described humility ("humbleness") when greeting strangers. An emphasis was placed on caring within the household. Overall, participants' view of hospitality appeared to support the following two objectives: 1) manipulating the environment in a way that would promote the guest's comfort and sense of being at home, or 2) helping the guest navigate unfamiliar environments. This was demonstrated practically through provision to foreigners of "food, shelter, and guide [transportation and/or directions] and to settle [into] new environment." Each of the participants related an example of hospitality that included feeding/being fed ethnic meals by the host, thereby ensuring the physical needs of the guest were accommodated while also allowing the guest to participate in the host culture or home. One participant described the giving of her Christian testimony as an act of hospitality to aid in guests' understanding of Nigerian culture, which was unique to this participant. Another participant cited "the ability to make both foreigner and native have the feeling of belonging and being safe at every point in time" as a positive aspect of Nigerian hospitality. Exploitation by guests and the declining security environment in Nigeria were common concerns expressed by three of four participants. Because of this, Nigerians especially valued hospitality as sharing. Finally, the locality of individuals on either side of the hospitality chain was indicated as a primary marker of identity. When asked to provide their homelands, participants preferentially emphasized intra-Nigerian homelands over the nation itself, such as *Yorubaland; Maiduguri; Borno State, within the North Eastern Region of Nigeria; Illesha in Osun State; and Owode-Yewa in Yewa South Local Government of Ogun State, Nigeria.* They demonstrated a desire to make guests feel safe, orient them geographically, and present an elevated vision of Nigerian culture.

South Africa

One South African participant defined hospitality as "the ability to give freely, whether it is information, assistance, or a cup of coffee to all, friends, foes or stranger." Two participants based their conceptions of hospitality on the concept of *botho* (in Afrikaans) or *ubuntu* (in Zulu), defined as "personhood or humanness, and/or respect for human dignity" and "placing value towards humanity, regardless of what hierarchy standard the next person is." One participant conceptualized this disregard of social hierarchy as considering the guest of a greater status than one's own and "intentionally looking for opportunities to serve." It is noted that this version of hospitality requires conforming one's behavior according to an artificial master-servant relationship, while other South African participants' versions focused on respecting the personhood of guests regardless of perceived social status. Participants expressed pride in their cultural heritage, navigating the space between respect for the guest's culture and impressing the guest with the South African way of doing things. Hospitality is demonstrated by attitudes of inclusivity and humility toward foreigners, eagerness to entertain, "going more than an extra mile," and "acknowledging the person." The sharing of one's home and resources was emphasized as a special aspect of South African hospitality, particularly sharing ethnic food and drink rituals. For example, inviting someone to a *braai*, or barbecue, is a common hospitality gesture. "We have a way of saying 'sit a little bit' directly translating to stay and while and just get to know each other," said one participant. Overall, they emphasized hospitality behaviors unique to South Africa and expressed desires to help their guests "feel at home." Positive aspects of South African hospitality included friendliness and respect. Fear, prejudice, informality (which may refer to lack of personal respect or a hierarchy distribution), disregarding the other's experience, and not sharing a meal with guests were considered rude or negative. One participant

noted, "Not acknowledging a foreigner is as if we are losing our values," indicating a correlation between strong cultural values and propensity to demonstrate those values toward the other. Participants related concerns about the increasing threat of extortion or exploitation due to poverty that may dissuade people from showing hospitality, thus contributing to a loss of South African cultural values (such as hospitality and *ubuntu*). According to one participant, "Being hospitable is a crucial part of our DNA that it becomes automatic to our people. One has to be within our environment to truly experience it."

Uganda

The Ugandan group was the most represented, at five participants. The most salient definition of hospitality was "caring, loving, handling, entertaining all in one basket of being treated well." This group highlighted the aspect of welcome in hospitality; "welcome" and its variants was used 17 times total, compared to 5 times in the Nigerian group (4 participants) and 5 times in the Amerian group (2 responses). Another participant said, "in my culture it is considered that there is no way in a home, implying that whoever comes to your home is a visitor and deserves special treatment." This is displayed by opening homes to visitors, whether local or foreign, and supporting visitors through information-giving and service activities. For example, one participant described two instances a host offered to transport a foreigner to his desired destination within the host's city. The most common hospitality behaviors included showing guests around the host country, helping them navigate unfamiliar environments, and providing transportation. Joy and happiness were desired results of hospitality; one participant cited "This happiness I had when I visited them for two days, the love that I had never received before."

One participant has a unique interpretation of hospitality that warrants additional treatment. He came under the supervision of Samaritan's Purse in Uganda at 7 years old, where

he had the opportunity to interact with individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds. He demonstrated hospitality by performing a traditional dance for his multicultural audience and playing traditional games with them. According to the participant, "this was the time one of them said to me that he is going to be my sponsor, and he told me that it was because of my hospitality to him that is why he decided to be my sponsor."

Greetings are adapted to the culture of the stranger but include elements of "happiness" and "humbleness." Aggressive behavior, such as tough responses, quarrelling, and verbal abuse, was considered especially inappropriate. Two negative aspects of Ugandan hospitality presented: diminution of the host, and welcoming individuals who proved to be criminal offenders. Treating strangers well so that they no longer perceive themselves as unwelcome was highlighted as a positive aspect of Ugandan hospitality. However, it was noted that perceived shared understanding between individuals of Western heritage resulted in differences between how white foreigners were treated in comparison to black nationals, with white foreigners being treated preferentially. Overall, Ugandan hospitality underscored the importance of kindness and friendship between host and guest.

Zimbabwe/Botswana/Rhodesia

Zimbabwean hospitality was described as "an invitation to a private home for a meal or some other social gathering" and occurs within a localized context. Zimbabwe group was the only group to express reservations in relation to foreigners. Most examples of hospitality occurred between individuals with previously established relationships; friends frequently gather to celebrate birthdays, weddings, graduations, births, and deaths. The participant repeatedly emphasized that hospitality "would depend entirely on how well known [the guest is] to the person who is offering." Individuals of a greater ethnic, economic, or other demographical

distance from the host may be treated to a more formal interaction, such as "to accompany them

for a coffee." The distance was not attributed to ethnophobia, but rather a desire to avoid any

offense that might occur due to intercultural miscommunication. Behaviors Zimbabweans

perceive as offensive include assigning the foreigner a label that emphasizes otherness.

Politeness was valued by the participant, while impolite behavior inferred a lack of true

friendship. Courtesies such as males opening doors for females, addressing elders by their last

names, and young males removing their hats when conversing with elders, are common and are

derived from a conglomeration of the land's English, South African, and Zambian historical

influences.

The United States

Hospitality in the United States did not appear to be organized systematically, occuring

instead on an incidental basis. It was defined as "making people feel comfortable and welcome"

and included behaviors such as opening a door for someone or giving directions. Inviting

someone into one's home for a meal was not considered a standard of hospitality, but a deeper

act reserved for special guests. However, small acts of kindness were displayed frequently.

Perceptions of hospitality in the United States were mixed. Some participants noted that "most

people are gracious and kind," and "interested in meeting new people;" while another lamented,

"we are very prejudiced and biased against other cultures," and that hospitality "doesn't exist."

According to one participant, the reason for the dearth of hospitality in the United States is a

fundamental value of self-promotion that exceeds the value of caring for others. "hospitality

means putting the guest/whoever you are trying to be hospitable towards before yourself and

your own needs, and that is not a very American ideal," she says. Nevertheless, participants

affirmed that hospitality should be universally applied regardless of the recipient's race,

nationality, or creed. A distinction was made between rude behavior that would offend

individuals of all cultures and behavior that might be considered culturally insensitive. One

example is "adopting a stance of superiority" to the other's culture, a behavior considered

inappropriate in all contexts.

Key themes for all groups are categorized in Figure 1.1

	In-group /out-group distinctions	Environment manipulation or navigation	Service (sharing time, resources, home)	Respect or hierarchy	Fear	Key words	Positive /negative	Strong emphasis on cultural values
Tanzania	Minimized	Low	Medium	Etiquette emphasized	N/A	Smile	+	N/A
Ethiopia	Affirmed (positively and negatively)	Medium	High	Conditional; Toward foreigners; Shown by greetings	N/A	Generous, invite, greeting, sharing	Both	Yes
Uganda	N/A	Medium	Medium	Toward foreigner at the expense of nationals	N/A	Welcome, love, humbleness	+	Yes
Nigeria	Pride in host culture	High	Medium	Toward elders; When receiving gifts	Yes	Accommodate, safe, acceptance	+	N/A
Zimbabwe	Cautiously approached	N/A	N/A	Etiquette emphasized	N/A	Reserved, polite	Neutral	Yes
South Africa	Emphasized positively; Pride in host culture	Medium	High	Toward foreigners	Yes	Feel at home, braais, ubuntu, friendly	+ Fear of losing cultural values	Yes
United States	Minimized; Behavior modified to accommodate cultural variations	Low	Low	N/A	Yes	Welcome into home	-	No; Behavior modified to accommodate cultural variations
	In-group /out-group distinctions	Environment manipulation or navigation	Service (sharing time, resources, home)	Respect or hierarchy	Fear	Key words	Positive /negative	Strong emphasis on cultural values

Fields marked with N/A indicate that survey responses did not provide enough information to

make a determination in this area.

Discussion

The results of this study build on previous research by establishing a baseline from which

communication of hospitality between sub-Saharan Africans and Americans can be analyzed.

While previous research assessed hospitality as an ideal, this study assesses hospitality in a

domestic, practical context. Individual interpretation and enactment of hospitality may not

always represent the model or standard endorsed by the culture as a whole. Furthermore, there

was a strong tendency among Africans to emphasize the uniqueness of their home culture. They

displayed a sense of cultural and/or national pride. The fear that *ubuntu* as "An identity marker

[*ubuntu*] may be used to distinguish 'them' from 'us' and to essentialise and homogenise

Africans, ignoring African diversity and promoting a superficial and erroneous stereotype"

(McAllister, 2009) was not supported (p. 7). Several themes emerge that address the research

questions.

The study revealed two key similarities between American and African hospitality. While

Americans and Africans differ on their perceptions of how well their cultures practice

hospitality, both indicated a hesitancy toward extending hospitality to strangers. African

participants voiced positive views of their nation's displays of hospitality. One South African

noted that in his country, "There is a general excitement to entertain strangers and going more

than an extra mile. For example it customary to not let visitors go without sharing a meal

together." Despite largely positive perceptions, participants in Nigerian and South Africa voiced

dissatisfaction with corruption and threats of violence leading to exploitation of the host.

Derrida's *hostipitality* was confirmed as an unfortunate reality. As Smith (2017) notes, "it has

been a challenge to understand occasions of injustice and suffering which have manifested

within the same African culture which has given to the world the language and concept of

ubuntu" (p. 91). One similarity to previous research is that hospitality behaviors may vary based on both the ethnicity or race of the host and the guest, and the factor of whether they are of the same race. Americans voiced more mixed opinions about their nation's capacity to practice hospitality, including a wariness toward strangers that impedes hospitality. The source of this wariness was not identified.

Another common theme in African and American hospitality is a mutual desire to share the host culture and resources with visitors. Nigerians offer their shelter and food, Ugandans share traditional dances, and South Africans bond through the *braai*. The American participants mentioned sharing food, housing, and coffee with guests. Secondly, they both focus on the importance of welcoming all ethnicities and cultures. A Nigerian participant noted that his mother "used to help missionaries and pastors settle down in Maiduguri by giving them orientation of going to the market, helping them get domestic staff and showing them where they can shop." Similarly, one American participant stated that Americans often display hospitality to foreigners by "allowing them to tell about their culture." Another American shares that she shows hospitality by welcoming "foreign exchange students into my 'classroom family' and do my best to make them feel welcomed and comfortable." The findings support those of Dervin and Layne (2013) demonstrating the lack of hospitality and cultural sensitivity among Americans in their interactions with foreigners. However, Americans in this study expressed desires to be welcoming toward international students, suggesting that the problems lie within Americans' hospitality behaviors and/or perceptions rather than their attitudes and/or conceptions. Although Africans living in America in described an experience of "otherness" that subsequently compelled them to cluster with individuals of like ethnicity, those in this study demonstrated openness and tolerance to both native and foreign guests (Bardan & Zhang, 2017).

Ubuntu: Personal reflection and interpretation

A final theme is a need to reconceptualize hospitality, as current definitions fail to accommodate the elements of hospitality represented in the results. The data most support Gathogo's (2008) definition of hospitality in sub-Saharan Africa:

Basically, African hospitality can be defined as that extension of generosity, giving freely without strings attached. It can also be seen as "an unconditional readiness to share." This sharing has to be social and religious in scope. In view of this, it can be seen simply as the willingness to give, to help, to assist, to love and to carry one another's burden without necessarily putting profit or rewards as the driving force (p. 42).

It must be noted that no participants cited a religious imperative or principle from which to derive their conceptualization of hospitality. Ubuntu was explicitly referenced only by the South African group, calling into question the salience of *ubuntu* as a cultural ideal and whether it effectively translates into practice. The culture I was raised in included elements of evangelical Christian and Southern traditions, both of which emphasize hospitality in the anthropological sense (Kunwar, 2017) and interacted to construct my expectations of the appropriate mechanisms and methods of hospitality. While the findings of this study appear to corroborate my expectation, indicating that an absolute standard or conceptualization of hospitality may exist, they are inconsistent with my, albeit highly subjective, experience in Nigeria. Nigerians were observed forcing their services on others—for example, porters at the airport vying to assist a traveler with his baggage—where they were neither needed nor appreciated, in hopes of eliciting financial compensation. Similar behaviors were observed across the socioeconomic spectrum. Speaking generally, the disparity between perception and praxis of hospitality among Africans is not resolved by upholding *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* itself may be corrupted by dishonest motivations.

Thus, a new definition is proposed. A consolidated definition of sub-Saharan African hospitality may be, "generously giving one's resources, including time, sustenance, entertainment, and service, to create an environment in which both neighbors and strangers feel comfortable and accepted, acknowledging cultural distinctions while affirming mutual humanity."

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that universal conclusions cannot be drawn; one to five participants do not necessarily represent the national consensus. Furthermore, neither the United States nor sub-Saharan Africa are culturally homogenous geographical entities. A larger study sample is needed to determine whether the results do indeed parallel the conceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of the majority. An expanded sample size is important because cultures with varying values are likely to have differences in their conceptualizations of hospitality. Further research may be able to quantify the efficacy of particular hospitality behaviors based on the findings of this study and others. If so, hosts who are engaged in communicative interactions with guests may have a better framework of hospitality upon which to build mutually satisfactory relationships. Finally, the assessment device by nature cannot account for the myriad forces that induce a particular belief or behavior, leaving the spirit that undergirds the ideal of *ubuntu* for future researchers to investigate.

<div align="center">

Conclusion

</div>

The results suggest that the normative significance of hospitality is more embedded in African philosophy and behavior than in American. Individuals participating in cross-culturally communicative interactions may reference this study to identify universal hospitality behaviors and allow individuals to display hospitality to guests, regardless of cultural background or preconceived perceptions of what it means to be welcomed/welcoming. However, they must be

wary of the risks of generalizing a specific culture or overlooking nuances within a culture that

might further inform hospitality belief and practice. Although hospitality is widely considered a

priority value in familiar contexts, such as within one's family or nation, it is often ignored on

both the individual and state levels in cross-cultural contexts. A proper understanding and

enactment of hospitality has applications beyond domestic interactions. The findings of this

study may also be extrapolated to international business and political relations.

References

Bardhan, N., & Zhang, B. (2017). A post/decolonial view of race and identity through the

    narratives of U.S. international students from the global South. *Communication*

    Quarterly, *65*(3), 285-306.

Derrida, J. (2000a) "Hostipitality." *Angelaki, 5*(3): 3–18

Derrida, J. (2000b). *Of hospitality*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

 Dervin, F., & Layne, H. (2013). A guide to interculturality for international and exchange

    students: An example of hospitality? *Journal of Multicultural Discourses, 8*(1), 1-19.

Dikeç, M., Clark, N., & Barnett, C. (2009). Extending hospitality: Giving space, taking time.

    Paragraph, 32(1), 1-14.

Gathogo, J.M. (2008). African philosophy as expressed in the concepts of hospitality and ubuntu.

    Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, 130, 39-53.

Goodhart, S. (2013). G/hosts, guests, strangers, and enemies: The promise of hospitality in a

    multi-faith world. *Journal of Communication & Religion*, *36*(3), 90-106.

Hankela, E. (2013) Rules of reciprocity and survival in negotiating ubuntu at the Central

    Methodist Mission in Johannesburg. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa,* 147, 74-

    90.

Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.

Kunwar, R. (2017). What is hospitality? *The Gaze: Journal of Tourism and Hospitality*, 8, 55-

    115.

McAllister, P. (2009). Ubuntu: Beyond belief in southern Africa. *Sites: A Journal of Social*

    Anthropology and Cultural Studies, 6(1), 1-10.

Molose, T., Thomas, P., & Goldman, G. (2019). A qualitative approach to developing

      measurement scales for the concept of Ubuntu. *Acta Commercii. 19*(1), a692.

Munyaka, M., & Motlhabi, M. (2009). Ubuntu and its socio-moral significance. In M.P. Murove

      (Ed.), *African ethics: An anthology of comparative and applied ethics.* Pietermaritzburg:

      University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Noble, I. & Noble, T. (2016). Hospitality as a key to the relationship with the other in Levinas

      and Derrida. *AUC Theologica 6*(2), 47-65.

Smith, W. (2017). A postfoundational ubuntu accepts the unwelcomed (by way of 'process'

      transversality). *Verbum et Ecclesia, 38*(3), 79-91.

Tutu, D. M. (1999). *No future without forgiveness.* New York, NY: Doubleday.

Wynder Quainoo, V. (2015). Negotiating the 'intercultural moment' study abroad and conflict

      mediation between African American and African students: A case study. *Intercultural*

      Communication Studies, 24(2), 123-134.