

# Communication Experiences of Ugandan Immigrants during Acculturation to the United States

## A Preliminary Study

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### Abstract

This study examined the communication experiences of a section of Ugandan immigrants during their acculturation process to the U.S. Kim's theory of communication cultural adaptation was applied to identify the communication challenges and strategies used in the acculturation process. Ten women and twelve men were interviewed for the study. Four themes emerged: language, superiority and discrimination, self-promotion and aggressiveness, and adaptation and cultural change. The findings indicated that Ugandans have pursued a strategy of cultural integration as opposed to marginalization, assimilation, or separation. The findings can be used to aid both the immigrants and members of the U.S. host culture to better prepare for intercultural communication involving the two cultures. Also, the research breaks the ground for future studies on a wider array of Ugandan and other African immigrant communities whose unique communication experiences during their acculturation in U.S. have been overlooked.

**Keywords:** *Ugandan immigrants, acculturation, communication cultural adaptation, immigrants in the United States*

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### Introduction

Culturally diverse like no other nation in the world, the U.S. has been dubbed the land of immigrants (Arthur, 2000; Kim, 2001). The country absorbs more immigrants per year than any other nation (United Nations, 2006) and also does so more than all other countries combined (Espenshade & Calhoun, 1993). Immigrants to the U.S. hail from all continents and countries the world over, including Africa and its 54 countries. The number of contemporary African immigrants, in 1990, surpassed the number of Africans forcibly brought to the U.S. during the Atlantic slave trade era (Arthur, 2000). Although the number of contemporary African immigrants to the U.S. pales in comparison with that of their counterparts from Asia or Latin America, the cultural, social, and economic contributions of African immigrants to the country have been notable, so much so their impact "in the areas of medicine, higher education, and engineering [has] been chronicled in major newspapers" (Arthur, 2000 p. vii). Indeed, African immigrants in the U.S. are the most educated cultural group in the country per se (in terms of both baccalaureate and graduate degrees) and also the category that is most employed in the country's labor force when compared with other immigrant populations (Mazrui, 2002).

Drawing on scholars (e.g., Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936; Kopic, Kruglanski, Pierre, & Mannetti, 2004) who define acculturation as change that occurs in the original culture of culturally disparate people that come in contact, this study examines the acculturation experiences of a select portion of contemporary African immigrants in the U.S.: the Ugandan immigrant community in Dallas, Texas. Until recently, Uganda was ranked among the top 10 countries supplying African immigrants to the U.S. (Gordon, 1998). Because African immigrants are not homogenous (Arthur, 2000), examining Ugandan immigrants illuminates the diversity within the African immigrant experience in the U.S. Uganda is an

interesting case study for two major reasons. First, although it has attained some political tranquility and socio-economic development lately, the country has been historically afflicted by some of the worst political, social, and economic conditions the African continent or the entire world has ever witnessed. Hansen and Twaddle (1988) write: “[historically,] Uganda has come to symbolize Third World disaster in its direst form. Famine; tyranny; widespread infringements of human rights . AIDS; malaria . corruption, black marketeering, economic collapse; tribalism, civil war ... (p. 1).” Second, unlike immigrants from other countries such as Hungary (Weinstock, 1969), Japan (Connor, 1977a, b), and China (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1989) who were settled in the U.S. via formal governmental programs, Uganda immigrants who come to the U.S. are mostly left to their own devices.

Such experiences on the part of the Ugandan immigrants are likely to enhance their propensity for voluntary acculturation in the U.S. necessitating to examine how they have communicatively acculturated in the U.S. The centrality of communication in the acculturation process has been noted by scholars (e.g., Callahan, 2010). According to Kim (2001, 1978), communication is the major means by which immigrants seek to functionally cope with their new environment.

## **The Context of Ugandan Immigration to the U.S.**

Nearly five decades since Uganda attained independence from Britain in 1962, many Ugandans have abandoned their motherland to live abroad for various reasons. The 1966 constitutional crisis and the subsequent political and economic instability until 1986 triggered an exodus of Ugandan elite to live in exile for security and economic reasons (Hansen & Twaddle, 1988). Soon after independence, the country witnessed not only the terror of the late Idi Amin’s regime but also a collapsing economy. Additionally, developments in the U.S. immigration policy (e.g., the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, the Immigration Act of 1990, and the Diversity Visa Lottery Program) have made it easier for many Ugandans and other African immigrants to obtain permanent residency in the U.S. (Arthur, 2000).

Although no conclusive statistics exist on Ugandans that have migrated to the U.S., the Uganda North America Association (UNAA, 2012) estimates that over 120,000 Ugandans live in the U.S. and Canada; with the majority residing in the U.S. While insecurity and the economic downturn had been largely reversed in Uganda by 1986, Ugandans continued to flock abroad for better opportunities. In Uganda, the local media has either sanitized this phenomenon as “seeking greener pastures” or demonized it as “Nkuba Kyeyo,” a local epithet that refers to doing odd jobs in the West. This epithet has now been expanded to refer to even white collar jobs the Ugandan immigrants secure abroad (Kaduuli, 2008)

## **Acculturation of Ugandan Immigrants in the U.S.**

Studies of the acculturation experience of Ugandan immigrants in the U.S. are rare. Conrad’s (2009) investigation of the acculturation process of Ugandan immigrants in California stands out as the exception. Based on data from eight Ugandan immigrants in California, Conrad concluded that they espoused traits including “acceptance, determination, and optimism” enabling them to “push forward” with life in their new land (p. 102).

But one of the most daunting challenges reported by these immigrants was prejudicial treatment received from members of the host culture. Although researchers (e.g., Takougang, 2003) on African immigration to the U.S. allude to a wider base of prejudice against African immigrants, they also tend to emphasize an uneasy relationship between contemporary African immigrants and African Americans. The Ugandan immigrants corroborated this finding and reported deliberately avoiding interactions with African Americans and sometimes having spats with them (Conrad, 2009). McDonald, Vinson, Jayaram, and Vickery (2008) examine in more detail the perceptions these two groups harbor about each other, with the hope of ameliorating the friction.

These Ugandan immigrants reported relying on cohesive cultural groups such as UNAA to adjust to U.S. culture while also preserving their Ugandan heritage in its diversity. Arthur (2000) emphasizes the

important role networking and immigrant cultural organizations play in socializing African immigrants. Utilizing organizational platforms like UNAA, Ugandans in the Diaspora have emerged as both a powerful political pressure group wielding considerable influence in Uganda's politics and a strong economic force that now accounts for about 5 per cent of the country's GDP (World Bank, 2011; The Ugandan Diaspora Team, 2011). Despite their small size relative to other minority populations in the U.S., the increasing number of Ugandan immigrants, their growing visibility, and burgeoning influence in Uganda can no longer be ignored.

## The Present Study

The present study employs the concept of acculturation as defined above and aspects of Kim's (2001) theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation (TCCA) to examine how a section of Ugandan immigrants in the U.S. responded to their contact with members of the host culture and the strategies they employed to cope with their new social environment. Previous literature (Berry & Sabatier, 2010) has identified four acculturation strategies that immigrants generally employ as they adjust to a new culture. Integration, involving participation in both the original immigrant culture and the host culture, is heralded as the most beneficial strategy for immigrants and members of their host culture because they select from each culture what enables them to adjust. Marginalization refers to the desertion of both cultures, and is castigated as the least beneficial to either party because such a retreat deprives the immigrant of social support from either culture. Assimilation includes the immigrants eschewing their original culture for the host culture while separation entails the reverse of assimilation—sticking to one's original culture. This entails only modest benefit for the immigrant because assimilation involves totally abandoning one's original culture for the advantages the new culture provides as well as its limitations.

Kim's (2001) TCCA is appealing because it capitalizes on and streamlines major contemporary conceptions of the role of communication in acculturation, such as those stipulated by earlier communication accommodation theory (Gallois, Franklyn-Stokes, Giles & Coupland, 1988). For example, the two theories recognize both verbal and nonverbal communication as key to the acculturation process.

As noted earlier, Kim (2001, 1978) avers that communication is instrumental to the adjustment of immigrants to their new environment. Kim's (1978) study of Korean immigrants in Chicago found that while the immigrants' volume of interpersonal communication with members of their community increased simultaneously with the volume of interpersonal communication with members of the host culture, the immigrants' degree of tapping mass communication channels in their own community decreased as their degree of relying on the host culture's mass communication channels increased. Although Conrad's (2009) work alluded to some communication issues such as the differences in the manner of speech between Ugandan culture and U.S. culture, it did not take a communication approach (nor was this its major purpose) and thus left some major communication aspects unaddressed. A communication approach involves an in-depth examination of specific verbal and nonverbal communication challenges faced by the Ugandan immigrants. Along these lines, the present study posed the first research question: RQ1: What communication challenges do Ugandan immigrants in Dallas, Texas contend with in their acculturation to the U.S.?

An immigrant's cultural efficacy depends on accommodating the host culture. Indeed, Kim's TCCA recognizes the integration strategy of acculturation as the most functional response by immigrants to life in a new land. But, as suggested above, other acculturation choices made by immigrants include marginalization, assimilation, and separation prompting the second research question for the present study: RQ2: What is the acculturation strategy practiced by Ugandan immigrants in Dallas, Texas in the U.S.?

## Method

A case study strategy was adopted because it is widely used by communication researchers to conduct in-depth interviews that capture the experiences of participants about a social reality (Tanno & Jandt, 2002). Rather than identify a large sample to be representative of the entire Ugandan immigrant population in the U.S., no maximum number of participants was predetermined for this study prior to the interviews. All the interviews were conducted in participants' homes where one of the authors was able to observe the different cultural norms as they became manifest either consciously or unconsciously.

Twenty-two participants (twelve men and ten women) took part in the study. They were randomly selected from a list provided by the UNAA of the Greater Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) chapter. The participants came from all the four historical regions of Uganda: Central, Western, Northern and Eastern. Eleven of the participants were naturalized American citizens four of whom had lived in the U.S. for over thirty-five years. The participants had lived in the U.S. for periods ranging from two to thirty-eight years. All participants were proficient in English and had lived relatively middle class lives in Uganda before they came to the U.S. The reasons for their coming to the U.S. and eventually deciding to seek residence in this country were as varied as the participants. While some originally came for academic purposes, sought employment and settled here, others migrated for political reasons with the latest arrivals coming for purely economic reasons.

The average age of the participants was 44; the youngest 21; and the oldest 65 years. For the male participants, the average age was 45.9, the youngest of whom was 21 while the oldest was 65 years. The youngest female participant was 22 years while the oldest was 60 years. Ten of the participants identified themselves as single while twelve said they were married. The oldest couple did not have children while the other five couples had children some of whom had completed college. Other couples had children living with them.

Two of the men interviewed had doctoral degrees, three had master's degrees, one was a master's student while two were college students and four had high school diplomas. Those with graduate degrees and one college graduate had received their higher education in the U.S. while one of the college graduates and the four high school graduates were educated in Uganda. One of the ten women interviewed had a master's degree, three were college graduates, one was a college student and five had high school diplomas. Two of the participants were self-employed; the rest including students were employed by various organizations.

The researchers designed a consent form which the researcher and respondents signed before the interviews began. The consent form requested participants to voluntarily take part in the study. The form stated the academic purpose of the study, a commitment to the anonymity of the respondents, and included the contact information of the researchers.

Also developed by the researchers, included a section that requested demographic information from the respondents and whether the respondents had studied in the U.S. or not. Another section of the schedule included open-ended questions designed to tap the intercultural experiences of Ugandan immigrants as they communicatively interacted when they came into contact with members of the host American culture.

All respondents were separately interviewed in their homes. The interviews were tape-recorded and lasted between 30 to 40 minutes. By the end of the twenty-second interview, the respondents were not offering any new information to enhance the study. Consistent with Kreps, Herndon, and Arneson (1993) at that point of saturation, the interviews were stopped. The interviews were transcribed and labels were given to emerging common themes. A grounded-theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used for data analysis to inductively draw conclusions from data through labeling and the repeated comparison of data. Eight general themes were identified and later collapsed into four distinct themes. The themes were identified using Owen's (1984) three criteria for qualitatively tapping themes in relational communication. First, recurrence refers to the extent to which a certain meaning pervades the data. Second, repetition denotes the frequent use of an expression in the data. Third, forcefulness involves the emphasis in tone identified in the data. The data presented in the next section were selected based on these criteria in addition to being concisely instrumental in portraying the focal theme.

## Results and Discussion

In response to research question one investigating the communication challenges Ugandans in the DFW area of the U.S. cope with in their new cultural environment, four primary themes emerged from the data and were labeled: language challenges, messages of superiority complex and discrimination, messages of self-promotion and aggressiveness, and messages of adaptation and cultural change.

### Language

Language was the overriding theme that every participant expounded on because it is the medium through which members of two distinct cultures interact and accomplish their specific goals. Although many Ugandan immigrants referenced challenges posed by differences in semantics and spelling between American and British English (Uganda is a former British colony with English used as both the official/national and medium of instruction), we will eschew a description of these challenges because the differences between British and American English are well documented in English linguistics and have been so for at least a century. Instead, we will focus on the less well known challenges based on accent and gestures or nonverbal communication.

The theme labeled “accent” enlisted many responses from the participants. They complained that on one hand they were always under a lot of pressure to get acquainted with and “speak with the American accent” to make their speech comprehensible, on the other hand they had to contend with a number of Americans who use the label “accent” to stereotype and racially profile immigrants. However, the participants noted that for those Americans who were genuine about the confusion and misunderstanding regarding what the immigrants said because of the accent, they had to repeat themselves many times before they could be understood. A male respondent who completed high school in Uganda before immigrating to the U.S. for purely economic reasons stated: “Sometimes I had to write the words on paper in order to help my supervisor understand what I was talking about.” A female participant claimed she always got irritated when a misunderstanding in the communication was attributed to her accent. She said some of the Americans used to tell her:

*‘I do not understand what you are saying because of your accent. Can you repeat that?’ I used to get mad whenever I realized that sometimes I was told to repeat myself because they wanted to put me down. Who in this world does not have an accent? I always asked myself.*

A male participant who had lived and worked in the U.S. for over twenty years claimed:

*As long as you are not supervising anybody, you can easily overcome the accent problem. However, as soon as you become a supervisor of sorts, your former peers start complaining that you are not communicating clearly because of your heavy accent. Some of my co-workers started telling me after my promotion that my heavy accent stood between me and communicating clearly because they could not understand my instructions.*

Another participant who had lived in the U.S. for 18 years said that the accent for African Americans is hardest to understand. He said:

*African American accent is hardest to understand especially those who are less educated. It is hard for us to understand them and for them to understand us. Yet, for some African Americans, they want you to be like them, speak like them, dress like them, and behave like them because you are a brother or sister. If you do not do what they like, they will think you are not one of them and they will isolate you.*

The statements by participants above reflect the double meaning attached to the accent label. While in genuine circumstances, interactants misunderstood each other because of different accents, on the other hand, the accent label is depicted as a tool used to stereotype immigrants and project them in a host culture as inadequate, alien, and inferior to members of the host culture. The oldest of the respondents

observed: “When some of them want to alienate you, they use such statements as: ‘You speak with an accent. You are not from here. Where do you come from? When do you plan to go back to your country?’”

Participants noted that questions like those make them feel belittled and constantly reminded that they are outsiders and not part of the mainstream culture. In particular, the testimony by the respondent who reported experiencing difficulties during interactions with some members of the African American population resonates with observations discussed earlier by both Conrad (2009) and Arthur (2000) about problematic relations between African Americans as a group and Ugandan immigrants and African immigrants in general respectively.

Regarding the theme labeled gestures or nonverbal communication, respondents variously elaborated it emphasizing that in order to acculturate well, one had to understand the nonverbal communication of the dominant American culture. One example highlighted by all of the male Ugandan immigrants was the misreading of the nonverbal messages from American women. A male participant who received his two graduate qualifications in the U.S. stated:

*I always had to mentor fellow Ugandan male students to desist from jumping to conclusions about romantic overtures from American women. I always told new arrivals that if an American woman flashes a warm smile at you, gives you a ride in her car, and pats or rubs your shoulders, do not imagine she is interested in a romantic relationship as the case may be in Uganda.*

The statement reflects a misreading and misinterpretation of nonverbal communication that quite often got some Ugandan men in trouble with their American female friends. The men totally misunderstood the nonverbal cues and as a result found themselves in very awkward situations. This finding also reinforces the suggestion that stereotypes can be misleading in intercultural encounters (Kim, 1988, 1995). The fact that American culture is portrayed as promiscuous in many movies (e.g., *American Beauty*) and television programming (e.g., *Girls Gone Wild*) seen all over the world shapes these stereotypes and makes Ugandan men mistakenly assume that American women can only interact with men from other countries for purposes of sex alone.

## **Messages of Superiority Complex and Discrimination**

The second theme constructed from the data was labeled superiority complex and discrimination. Participants reported that there is almost always no parity or equity in the interaction between the immigrant and members of the majority group. They claimed that even when the immigrant’s social status is higher than a member of a majority group, the latter will ask questions that depict him or her as superior and in possession of more power than the immigrant. The participants claimed that even when a semblance of accommodation was extended to them by American interactants, they were condescending in their demeanor. Throughout the interviews, statements that referenced this type of communication behavior were reaffirmed by both male and female participants. A female participant who has lived in the U.S. for the longest period of time said:

*When you meet some Americans and you talk to them for the first time, they will ask you questions like: ‘where do you come from? Why did you come to this country? Do you like it better here than your country? Do you intend to live here in America?’*

Besides sounding intimidating and threatening to the immigrants who are used to indirect and polite forms of communication with strangers in their culture, the direct questioning establishes a power differential between the immigrant and the member of the majority group. Even when the questions are genuine, there is an inherent subtle message that emphasizes the foreignness of the immigrant and the legitimate membership to the society by the hosts. To illustrate this theme further, all the employed participants said that white supervisors and employers favorably listen to fellow whites and are highly likely to hire a white person instead of an immigrant if a job opening is available. One interviewee said:

*Since we are the minority and are foreigners in this country, we have to prove ourselves more than those from the majority group. Even the ones who are clearly less qualified than us sometimes get a favorable hearing from the bosses than us.*

A female participant echoed some of the openly racist treatment immigrants endure by virtue of their black skin color:

*I was substituting as a receptionist in a Nursing home for a sick coworker when one of the directors walked passed the reception area, saw me, and asked my supervisor quietly but loud enough for me to hear: 'Why do you get a black woman to sub as a receptionist? She may scare away our clients.'*

Racist remarks like those were repeated by many respondents to underline some of the outright discrimination they suffer in their workplaces, and were consistent with previous literature discussed earlier on the experience of prejudice by African immigrants in general (Arthur, 2000) and Ugandans in particular (Conrad, 2009). However, the findings here speak more to the broader based prejudice unlike Conrad who mainly addressed prejudice suffered by Ugandans on the part of African Americans. An elderly participant summarized the pragmatic approach to the whole acculturation process in the following statements:

*If you came to work or go to school in America, the message is loud and clear: 'Abide by all the norms in this country or you risk being misunderstood or losing the job or fail in school. They have the power to hire and fire or fail and pass you. You came here for kyeyo (meaning work). The unwritten code is that you need them more than they need you.'*

Statements in the second theme almost depict the entire picture of what an acculturation process looks like for most of these immigrants. They are under pressure to cope with the new culture or risk isolation or marginalization. However, since the purpose of their coming is to accomplish their respective goals, they realize that the onus is on them to adjust their outlook and adapt to the new dominant culture.

## **Messages of Self-promotion and Aggressiveness**

This theme was constructed from statements that referenced overt behavior by the members of the host culture that were perceived either as taboo (immoral), unacceptable, disrespectful, or selfish in the Ugandan immigrant culture. The respondents observed that interaction between members of the host American culture is informal at most levels and reflects disrespect and rudeness. This observation was underscored by the following statements by a male respondent who echoed the observations of the other twenty-one participants: "The language used in the interaction between children and parents, workers and supervisors, and students with Professors is casual and aggressive at the same time making it difficult to tell who the subordinate is." For example, the participant added that:

*The students drink, eat in class, talk back to professors, the children are rude to their parents, and all this is unacceptable behavior in Uganda. No wonder Americans are losing their jobs to outsourcing because they are not respectful in their aggressive manner. No employer would want such type of workforce.*

The statements portray a sharp difference between the two cultures and underscore the degree of changes that the immigrants have to make to cope in the new social environment. Conrad (2009) drew a contrast between the Ugandan immigrant's preference for humility in speech and what they saw as overbearing aggressiveness or assertiveness on the part of the Americans. Explaining their observations on the culture of self-promotion through speech and some other overt public behavior, the respondents in the present study pointed out that in Uganda, people keep a low profile about their personal achievements or failures and leave it to the society to observe and appreciate or denounce them. They expressed surprise that in U.S. culture, one must talk about him or herself at the slightest opportunity or be regarded as a failure or

with suspicion. This aspect of the theme was highlighted by statements from one male college graduate from here:

*Because I did not speak a lot in the US government class, I missed an A grade on the course despite all the "As" I got on the tests. Secondly, you either speak about yourself here or you will be manipulated, oppressed and denied your rights both at school and at work.*

Another male respondent added:

*The unusual thing about this society is that if you are silent, they become suspicious of you and accuse you of not sharing as if you have something to hide. So, the thing to do is be like them: Speak out, get aggressive and you will be accepted and respected.*

In response to research question two examining how members of the Ugandan immigrant group engaged the integration strategy of acculturation, one theme, "Adaptation and Cultural Change" emerged. This theme highlighted respondents' views on the point when they overcame most of the cultural shocks after they had lived here for a continuous period of time and began to perceive what was happening around them as normal. This theme was highlighted by such statements as outlined by a male participant who echoed the comments of the other interviewees:

*I started doing things on time and adapted a schedule for what I needed to do, it was alright for me to do domestic work while my wife went to work, looked after the children, learned to speak with an American accent while I interacted with them, started following the football league, watched the popular television shows to communicate with other people at work, learned the credit system, and bought a house.*

The revelation on seeking out popular U.S. television shows and interactions with members of the host culture as resources for acculturation reinforces stipulations by Kim's (2001) TCCA on how interpersonal and mass communication channels engender the acculturation of immigrants. Though not stated in the above responses, relying on television shows, however, carries the risk of learning a distorted view of the host culture due to the stereotypes awash in this medium. The experience of one of the authors of the present study is instructive. During a stint as a graduate student at a university in Texas, the author recalls watching U.S. soap operas heavily as a strategy for internalizing U.S. culture rapidly so he could better communicate with his American counterparts. Instead, he ended up stereotyping them as promiscuous based on the portrayals of the youth in these popular shows, a development that further strained the interactions. For example, clearly influenced by the shows, he made some strident remarks about the "loose" sexual mores of American college students which his American counterparts found objectionable.

Continuing the theme of "Adaptation and Cultural Change," another male respondent added:

*After sometime, I did what the Americans expected me to do while I was with them and reverted to aspects of my Ugandan culture while at home like speaking my vernacular, listening to Ugandan music, eating Ugandan food, and keeping close contact with my fellow Ugandans around here and elsewhere in the country.*

Also, the respondents stated that public display of affection (PDA) considerably disturbed them because the practice would be considered taboo in Uganda. A former student at a U.S. university said:

*I used to be very uncomfortable at first by such actions as talking to somebody while he or she was busy kissing his or her lover and finding students making out in broad daylight on campus. It took me long to get used to such action because it was inconceivable in Uganda.*

Another participant who has just been in the U.S. for only two years expressed shock: "It is very surprising that people openly declare that they are either homosexual or lesbian including religious

leaders. For me, this is totally inconceivable back in Uganda. However, I am getting used to it.”

The statements by the respondents reflect the integration acculturation strategy discussed by Kim (2001) and illuminated by Berry and Sam (1997). The Ugandan immigrants suggested in the above statements that rather than disregard their own culture or the host culture, they selectively apply traits they have acquired from the host culture but retain the core aspects of their ethnic identity (e.g., speaking vernacular at home). The Ugandan immigrants in California that were examined by Conrad (2009) as reviewed earlier emphasized a similar strategy. Just like their counterparts in Conrad's study, the Ugandan immigrants in Dallas, Texas embrace their immigration status and do what it takes to succeed in America, even when it requires holding their noses to some American behaviors that they find unpalatable (e.g., PDA). However, the male respondents in the present study who confessed taking on household chores that are otherwise reserved for their wives (e.g., domestic childcare) bucked the trend of Ugandan immigrant husbands shirking housework as described by Conrad (2009).

Data in this theme also highlighted in-group differences in the acculturation process between the young new arrivals and the “veterans” who have been here longer. The immigrants who had been in the country longer thought that the young ones who had just arrived were too ambitious or impatient and live in fantasy because they want to get everything in a hurry. One elderly male respondent stated:

*They think they can buy a house in two years, have credit in three months and acquire all the sophisticated equipment and appliances in a short time. They forget that we who have such property toiled for a long time before we got them.*

On the other hand, young ones who have just arrived accuse the “veterans” of frustrating their ambitions and goals and wanting to subject them to unnecessary routines and delays. One man who has just been here for four years complained:

*Because it took them a long time to get used to the system, they want us to go through the same process yet things have changed a lot. They will not frustrate us. We will fight their conservatism. In America, anything is possible.*

Thus far, the data discussed in the four themes have addressed the two research questions raised in this study which sought to illuminate the nature of the hurdles a section of the Ugandan immigrants faced and how they pursued the integration strategy in their acculturation processes. The data show that these Ugandans have not been assimilated, marginalized, or isolated in their interaction with members of the host American culture. Rather, evidence from the data indicates that Ugandans examined in this study are pragmatically adopting elements of the host culture that are necessary for them to cope while at the same time preserving their core values and tastes like food, sense of community, and other traditions.

## Discussion and Conclusion

In an effort to generate material that can be used to aid the acculturation process of Ugandan immigrants to the U.S. (or even other Anglophone African immigrants), this study sought to identify ways in which Ugandan immigrants in DFW, Texas communicatively coped with their new life. Based on Kim's (2001) TCCA which posits communication as central to the acculturation process, and the experiences of a group of 22 Ugandan immigrants generated during interviews; a set of four communication themes have been described in the previous section: language, superiority complex and discrimination, self-promotion and aggressiveness, and adaptation and cultural change. Some of the problems associated with these issues are easier to anticipate and forestall than others. For example, the problems of semantics and spelling associated with the language issue are easier to manage than the strains arising from the issues of superiority complex and discrimination which emanate from entrenched attitudes. Nevertheless, discussing the problems linked to any of these issues regardless of their level of complexity may ameliorate the difficulties they add to the acculturation process. The integration strategy emphasized by this group of immigrants reflects not only the pattern of acculturation prevalent among the Ugandan

immigrants in California as described by Conrad (2009) but also the traits of acceptance, determination, and optimism to which the group subscribes in acculturating to U.S. culture.

It is also noteworthy that the results of this study suggest some acculturation differences between the Ugandan immigrants in Texas and those in California as described by Conrad. In particular, the husbands in Texas group seemed to have adjusted better to American culture where husbands participate in housework (especially when their wives are also in the labor force). What this finding also shows is that although Ugandan immigrants in the U.S. share a number of similarities in their acculturation experiences as indicated above, they also have differences between groups and even within groups (e.g., the conflict between the younger recent Ugandan immigrants and the “veteran” as described earlier).

It may be the case, for example, that perhaps as a result of the ubiquitous availability and use of social media, the most recent younger Ugandan immigrants acquired and applied more cosmopolitan traits that contributed to their seemingly faster or smoother acculturation process than their veteran countrymen. And unlike Conrad (2009), this study underlines and elaborates specific communication constructs--accommodative communicative styles as positive facilitators of the acculturation process and ethnocentrism and stereotyping as detrimental to the attainment of integrative outcomes of an acculturation process.

Future studies should investigate a wider array of Ugandan immigrants (e.g., in other regions of the U.S.) for greater understanding of similarities and differences among them. It is only with such a broad based knowledge about the Ugandan immigrants' communicative experience in the U.S. that superior materials for more effective interventions can be developed.

As mentioned earlier, the African immigrant presence in the U.S. has been distinguished by its disproportionately high level of achievement in both U.S. higher education and the workforce. Because they have been historically a major part of the African community in the U.S. and that they sought to escape some of the most pernicious conditions on the African continent and the world, Ugandan immigrants in the U.S. were the focus of this study to contribute toward a better understanding of their communication experience during the acculturation process.

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