

Analyzing Ghanaian Emotions Through Narrative: A Textual Analysis of Ama Ata Aidoo's Novel *Changes*

Vivian Dzokoto

Fayetteville State University

Glenn Adams

University of Kansas

Contemporary African emotional expression is a cultural artifact that has encoded within it the story of colonial and postcolonial history. Through an analysis of Ama Ata Aidoo's award-winning novel Changes, this article explores how emotions are expressed in contemporary Ghanaian literature. From literal translations of indigenous languages and culturally specific nonverbal communication to Western expressions and locally created neologisms, the contemporary Ghanaian text Changes offers a glimpse into the unique world of Ghanaian emotions—a world that is an interesting mix of the indigenous, Westernization, and time.

Keywords: *emotions; cross-cultural; Africa; text*

INTRODUCTION

Emotion research in the field of psychology has used a variety of data sources ranging from pencil-and-paper measures (e.g., Positive and Negative Affect Schedule; Watson & Clark, 1994), interviews (e.g., Veenhoven, 2005),

AUTHORS' NOTE: *The authors thank the following research assistants for their help with various parts of this research endeavor: Whitney Weathersby, Johnny Leonard, and Kim Dyson-Calhoun. The authors also wish to thank Beryl Nnomma-Addison and Dr. Twumasi-Ankrah for evaluation of the interpretations. Finally, we thank our anonymous reviewers for their feedback. Correspondence should be addressed to Vivian Dzokoto, Department of Psychology, Fayetteville State University, 1200 Murchison Road, Fayetteville, NC 28301; e-mail: vdzokoto@uncfsu.edu.*

JOURNAL OF BLACK PSYCHOLOGY, Vol. 33 No. 1, February 2007 94-112
10.1177/0095798406295097

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pictures of facial expressions (e.g., Ekman, 1972), time sampling using personal digital assistants (Scollon, Diener, Oishi, & Biswas-Diener, 2005), Stroop tasks (e.g., Rutherford, MacLeod, & Campbell, 2004), reaction time, ethnographic approaches (Wierzbicka, 1992), and the analysis of text (Spackman & Parrott, 2001). Although each of these research methods has potential utility, certain methodological issues arise when attempting to embark on a study of the emotions of Black populations, which have been understudied in this area of scholarly endeavor. In particular, it becomes important to consider the impact of historical and political events on the ways in which Black people experience and express emotion. For example, slavery and colonialization resulted in language change and traumatic experiences. The experience of racism undoubtedly impacts emotional experiences of Blacks in North America and South Africa, among others. In sum, Black populations have unique historical factors that may have permanently altered the experience and expression of emotions.

Certainly, characteristics of Black emotional expression will be a function of the specific group studied as well as the source of data examined. For instance, exploring emotion lexica of indigenous languages (e.g., Ameka, 2002; Dzokoto & Okazaki, 2006) would be similar to precolonial and preslavery affective communications because the indigenous languages used in these studies were spoken in precolonial times as well as in the present. In contrast, contemporary communication (discourse) can be conceptualized as an evolved product bearing influences of Westernization as well as traces of the indigenous. The focus of this study is contemporary Ghanaian emotion discourse and forms part of a program of research designed to understand the emotions of various Black populations. In the present article, we analyze emotional expression in Ama Ata Aidoo's (1991) novel *Changes* to illuminate the mutual constitution of culture and feeling in contemporary Ghana. The focus of the analysis is not limited to the effect of larger culture change on individual emotional expression. In addition, the analysis focuses on individual emotional expression as a force in larger cultural change.

THE CONTEXT OF *CHANGES*

The geographic entity of Ghana became a reality in 1957 when the colony called the Gold Coast (along with areas of Togo administered by the United Kingdom under United Nations mandate) won political independence from the United Kingdom. Today, the country of Ghana is home to an estimated 19.25 million people and about 70 indigenous languages that are usually categorized into five major language groups: Akan, Ewe, Ga-Adangbe, Guan, and Mole-Dagbane (Gadzekpo, 1997). However, the legacy of British imperialism persists in the use of English as official language for law, education, and other

governmental services. Use of English language is not restricted to these official settings; instead, English serves as a lingua franca through which many people in Ghanaian settings experience a large proportion of everyday life.

Given that English is the language of instruction in most Ghanaian schools, it is not surprising that much Ghanaian literary production occurs in the medium of English. The first Ghanaian novel, *Ethiopia Unbound*, was written in English by J. E. Casely-Hayford and published in 1911 (Gerard, 1983). Since then, there have been numerous novelists, playwrights, and poets who have published literary works in English that can be classified as Ghanaian.

The choice of English and other languages with European roots is not without controversy in the African literary world. It highlights a concern about the place of local and global in contemporary African experience. On one hand, imperial languages have become the lingua franca of most African countries. Writing in the lingua franca makes the works of the writer more broadly accessible to both national and international audiences.

On the other hand, authors such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) argued the African writers should resist working in these languages. From this perspective, the choice of imperial languages detracts from the authentic Africanness of the author's work. For example, the use of English may constrain the writer's ability to convey emotional expression without distorting the experience of the African subject. Equally important, the choice of imperial languages perpetuates neocolonialism. It contributes to the continued dominance of imperial languages while imposing categories for feeling and other constructions of reality that these languages afford. At the same time, this choice endangers the existence of indigenous languages, along with the categories for feeling and the other constructions of reality that these languages afford.

A more centrist position suggests that African writers can resolve this dilemma by writing in European languages adapted to fit the African context (Achebe, 1973). Implicit in this perspective is the recognition that originally European languages—as well as the ways of feeling and the constructions of reality that these languages afford—have become African languages through their appropriation by African users. These appropriations have resulted in local forms of English that are also African. Zabus (1991) presented the West African Europhone writer as the creator of literature at the crossroads of history, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics and described their work as an act of decolonization and liberation from colonial discourse.

CHANGES

Ama Ata Aidoo is an internationally acclaimed author whose style fits well within this centrist position. The present article analyzes her novel

Changes, a work written about Ghanaians presumably originally intended for a Ghanaian audience but appreciated by a much wider readership. The novel was published in 1991 and won the Commonwealth Prize for Literature in Africa in 1992. It addresses the struggles of educated Ghanaian women within the context of a love story. Set in contemporary, urban Ghana with visits to rural areas, the plot revolves around the changes experienced by three women and the significant people in their lives. The main characters are Esi Sekyi (a statistician with a master's degree), Opokuya Dakwa (a midwife and Esi's friend), Oko (Esi's husband whom she later divorces), Kubi (Opokuya's husband), Ali Kondey (whom Esi later marries), Ogyaanowa (Esi's daughter), and Fusena Kondey (Ali's wife). Esi divorces her husband, has an affair with Ali, and eventually becomes Ali's second wife only to realize that her expectations in that relationship are not met. Ali buys Esi a new car, and Esi sells Opokuya her old one, providing Opokuya with a sense of power as Kubi's monopolization of their car had been a major source of friction in their marriage. Fusena grapples with accepting as Ali's choice of a second wife a woman who has a university degree when Ali discouraged her from furthering her own education.

Critical responses to *Changes* have highlighted a variety of perspectives. McWilliams (1999) hailed Aidoo as a voice of African feminism and observed that the book is an investigation of "how women's sexuality is circumscribed by (neo)colonialism, gender oppression, and compulsory heterosexuality" (p. 335). Uwakweh (1999) identified in *Changes* a celebration of the spirit of the modern Ghanaian woman—especially her status as independent and self-determining—and the dilemmas that these modern changes trigger within the sociocultural milieu. Nfah-Abbenyi (1999) highlighted how the book is simultaneously a demonstration of contributions of the post-colonial woman to her own colonization and of the social and historical capital available for her empowerment. In an analysis of Aidoo's previous work that holds true for *Changes*, Opara (1997) highlighted Aidoo's "comprehensive, composite and pessimistic" view of society filled with "spouses, siblings, traditions, societies, and sexes at variance with one another" and the feminist agendas of "female bonding and emancipation" (p. 144). Odamtten (1994) considered *Changes* a developmental stage in Aidoo's literary ideological journey and suggested that a purpose of the book is to get the reader to think about the impact of neocolonial change and the best ways of coping with the resultant dilemmas. Bryce and Dako (2000) considered *Changes* "an ironic commentary on the disillusion that followed the degeneration of the physical fabric of Ghanaian society and the disappointment of those early hopes" (p. 3). Although useful, we feel that these perspectives on *Changes* are by no means exhaustive.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

We adopt the conceptual framework of mutual constitution (MC; Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998)—the idea that culture and psyche “make each other up” (Shweder, 1990, p. 24)—for the current research endeavor. One side of the MC framework refers to the cultural grounding of psychological experience. From this perspective, the experience of emotion is not “just natural”; instead, it reflects the particular constructions of reality—including those afforded by particular languages—that constitute the building blocks for experience in different cultural worlds.

The cultural grounding of emotional expression is reflected in both content and style of the narratives people appropriate in the course of their own emotional expression. With respect to content, people draw on the particular emotion-relevant stuff that is prevalent in different cultural worlds. This “stuff” includes the emotion concepts that are prevalent in different language communities: both culture-specific emotions (e.g., Wierzbicka, 1992) and local variations of allegedly “universal” emotions that have apparent translational equivalence across different languages—such as the Akan concept *ani-gye* and the English concept happiness (Dzokoto & Okazaki, 2006). This stuff also includes local conventions for the expression of emotion (e.g., whether expression is permissible, either verbally or nonverbally) and locally relevant metaphors that link privately experienced emotion to publicly available meanings. With respect to style, people draw on broader tendencies of narrative expression—like the tendency to elaborate individual psychological experience or instead to emphasize interpersonal meaning (Mesquita, 2001)—that are prevalent in different communities of meaning.

Psychological research on the cultural grounding of emotional expression is in its infancy. With respect to Ghanaian settings, research on the cultural grounding of emotional expression has tended to focus on the embodiment of feeling experience. For instance, in her analysis of bodily sensing among the Anlo people of Southern Ghana, Geurts (2002) highlighted the absence of a clear-cut mind-body dichotomy. She noted that conception and experience of emotion in Anlo settings are best captured by the concept of *sesele-lame* (literally feel-at-flesh-inside), which people use to communicate both physical experiences such as hunger or thirst and reactions to positive and negative events. Resonating with this emphasis on bodily experience in emotion vocabulary, Geurts presented evidence that the body plays a very important role in how the Anlo perceive and interact with their environment.

Similarly, Dzokoto and Okazaki (2006) and Ameka (2002) observed that references to parts of the body are an integral part of the expression of

emotions in three Ghanaian languages—Fante, Dagbani, and Ewe. For example, Dzokoto and Okazaki observed that the equivalent for anxiety literally translates as stomach burn in Fante and eye red in Dagbani. Ameka reported a similar trend in Ewe, where the literal translation for envy is eye red. Dzokoto and Okazaki observed that 50% of emotion labels in Dagbani and Fante contain somatic referents. The communication of emotions as physical responses to external and internal events highlights the important role that the body plays in the cultural narrative of emotion experience in these indigenous languages.

The emphasis on bodily experience of emotion is remarkable because it deviates from the emphasis on psychological aspects of emotion that tend to characterize both Western language traditions and the field of psychological science (Naidoo, Olowu, Gilbert, & Akotia, 1998). In a counter-Cartesian fashion (but consistent with African philosophy, e.g., Parham, White, & Ajamu, 2000), it represents a relationship between the mind and body that assumes a dynamic interactive association between the body, mind, and the environment such that cognition is fundamentally dependent on body sensation, experience, or perspective (Rohrer, 2002).

THE DYNAMIC CONSTRUCTION OF EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

The other side of the MC framework refers to the dynamic construction of cultural reality. Local constructions of feeling are not “just so”; instead, they require emergent acts of individual experience for their reproduction, maintenance, and sometimes change. This emergent process for the construction of emotional experience is important for settings like postcolonial African communities, where the legacy of foreign imperialism (e.g., the status of English as official language, lingua franca, and language of instruction) combined with more “traditional” forms means that people have a particularly diverse, potentially incompatible set of building blocks for emotional expression. Although this diversity has the potential to add to the richness of emotional experience, it may also prove taxing if it requires greater work on part of the psychological subject to integrate potentially incompatible forms. Narrative processes may aid this task of integration (McAdams, 2001) not only at the level of individual experience but also at the level of collective reality. In other words, people can make sense of incompatible experiences by bringing them together in a story of their own life. Novelists and producers of other popular culture media do this integration on a collective level by integrating incompatible experiences in the lives of their characters. These texts of integration then become available for readers as cultural resources to make sense of their own experience.

METHOD

The present study is a textual analysis best described as a hybrid of a limited rhetorical analysis and an instrumental case study. Rather than pure rhetorical criticism in which a speech, editorial, or novel is scrutinized from a rhetorical point of view (Scott & Brock, 1972), our method focuses only on emotional expression by the various characters. Our analysis has elements of metaphoric criticism, narrative criticism, and cluster criticism (Foss, 1989). Rather than a pure instrumental case study, where an in-depth analysis of a case provides insight into an issue (Stake, 2003), our "case" is not necessarily typical, and our analysis is not as in depth as a typical case study due to our research questions. However, consistent with the case study approach, we undertake the analysis with the expectation that will provide useful, valid information about the focus of study that can inform future research in this area and possibly generalize to other cases.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Everyday discourse in contemporary Ghanaian settings occurs in both indigenous African languages and English. What are the implications of this cultural and linguistic multiplicity for emotional experience? Is there any link between properties of an emotion experience and the choice of language used to express this emotion experience? Should one attribute some significance to the decision of a bilingual Fante speaker to express his or reaction to an event—say, winning the lottery—as *anigye* rather than happiness (Dzokoto & Okazaki, 2006), or is this pairing of concept and experience a mere coincidence? Beyond differences in emotion vocabulary, how does the multiplicity of potential emotion narratives inform expression of emotion in contemporary Ghanaian settings? How do people resolve conflicts between incompatible forms of emotional expression? These questions form the basis for this study.

SOURCE OF DATA

Our source of data for this study was a literary text. Texts have been acknowledged as a rich source of cultural information in narrative form of utility to sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists (Patton, 2002). In the field of psychology, narratives have been successfully used to assess psychosocial development (Pettersen & Stewart, 1990), as a learning tool (Coles, 1989), as a medium for psychosocial change in a therapeutic environment (White & Epston, 1990), and to explore descriptions of emotions from three literary periods (Spackman & Parrott, 2001).

What is the importance of narrative in understanding the mutual constitution of culture and emotion? As previously stated, the cultural grounding of emotional expression is reflected in both content and style of the narratives people appropriate in the course of their own emotional expression. The potential relevance of narrative also extends to the dynamic construction side of the mutual constitution process. Although people appropriate narrative forms and other cultural products in their expressions of feeling experience, these appropriations do not completely determine the resulting expression. Instead, one can view narrative as a process by which people spin their own story of emotional expression—one that draws on but is not determined by the building blocks for emotional expression that prevails in different communities. Once expressed, the resulting narrative products replenish the local reservoir of cultural stuff in which emotion experience is grounded in the first place. Thus, these individual acts of narrative expression are an important mechanism for the reproduction and maintenance of cultural reality (Bruner, 1992).

Ghana was the country of choice due to the authors' familiarity with Ghanaian culture. Ama Ata Aidoo was selected as the author because of her international acclaim and because her writing style fits within the centrist position of using and adapting English to reflect and communicate with contemporary readers.

DATA ANALYSIS

In the present article we use the novel *Changes* to help illuminate the role of narrative in the mutually constituting relationship between culture and feeling. Specifically, we achieved this by data categorization and subsequent content analysis. The goal of the analysis was to identify the various methods used by the author to communicate about emotions of the characters in her novel. We analyzed the data in three stages.

First, one of the coauthors of this article read the entire text and identified several categories that were used by the novel's author to communicate her characters' emotions (we discuss these in the results section). Several of these categories were consistent with those obtained in previous studies on contemporary Ghanaian emotion using other data sources (e.g., Dzokoto, 2005). Other categories were deduced from the text. The analytic method involved in this task was a modified componential analysis, a qualitative technique developed by linguists to produce models based on logical relationships among the distinctive features identified across words (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Componential analysis identifies a set of features that best describes the domains of interest and then systematically examines each item. We generated codable units of analysis from the text, considering a

case as an emotion experience if it described an affective state, and with no maximum length limit set for the units (Spackman & Parrott, 2001). Following an anonymous reviewer's suggestion, we revised our initial minimum criteria for the units of analysis and excluded one category (single English emotion words) from the analysis.

Second, two undergraduate research assistants independently read the text and coded each codable unit of emotion. Coders used previously identified emotion categories as a starting point to code the data with the expectation that coders would add to the preexisting categories if they encountered data that suggested the creation of new ones. However, coders encountered no additional categories as the content analysis progressed. The resulting interrater reliability was 100%. We attribute this statistic to the mutually exclusive nature of the coding categories and the prior identification of codable units.

The third and last stage of analysis involved qualitative interpretational analysis of various categories (figures of speech, nonverbal expression, indigenous expressions, and religion). The first author interpreted each emotion incident in these categories on the basis of context within the novel, knowledge of Ghanaian culture, and knowledge of Fante and Ghanaian-English slang. Two Fante-speaking, Ghanaian consultants—one of whom had read the book and another who had not (but was provided with the context of each example)—checked the quality of these interpretations. No one disagreed with or recommended changes to the interpretations, providing some evidence for their validity.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

References to emotion are present throughout *Changes: A Love Story*. Aidoo introduced the reader to her story with the statement "Esi was feeling angry with herself" (p. 1) and ended the story with a description of Esi's feelings of desolation and need for comfort. The results discussed in the following address the various ways in which the author communicated emotion other than the use of English emotion words like *happy*, *sad*, and *angry*.

CODING CATEGORY 1: FIGURES OF SPEECH (METAPHORS AND SIMILES)

Even if Aidoo used predominantly English labels (excluded from the analysis) to describe emotion experience, other aspects of her narrative reveal the grounding of emotion in more "traditional" or "indigenous" manifestations. A prominent example is her use of similes. Consider the following description of the expression of the emotion surprise:

In any case, why should her getting a new car from Ali have that effect on Opokuya, who now stood, a little pathetic, as she opened and shut her mouth like fish out of a drag-net, desperately hopping around for water on a hot beach? (p. 153)

Although presented in English, this example draws on imagery and stylistic conventions reminiscent of local traditions. For example, fishing has long been an important source of livelihood in the coastal communities of Southern Ghana. Its importance is reflected in stories and proverbs that presume intimate familiarity with fishing activity. Aidoo draws on both the content and style of these cultural products in describing this case of emotional expression.

Another example comes from this description of love: “[Love] is deceitfully sweet like the wine from a fresh palm tree at dawn” (p. 41). The cultural grounding of emotional expression is clearly evident here in the content of the simile. That is, one must have some sense for both the sweetness of palm wine at dawn and the knowledge that drinking palm wine at dawn is regarded in some quarters as a form of reckless indulgence. Again however, the cultural grounding of emotional expression is also evident in the style of the simile, which is reminiscent of local proverbs.

Lakoff and Johnson (2003) argued that metaphors, rather than simply being flowery prose, are manifestations of a basic human cognitive process. Through metaphors, humans interpret novel experiences in their likeness to preexisting physical and social experiences. They argued that this process is so fundamental to human existence that metaphors can shape perceptions and actions without awareness by the perceiver/actor. In contrast, Aidoo appears to use similes deliberately to connect expression of affect and cultural contexts.

CODING CATEGORY 2: NONVERBAL EXPRESSION OF EMOTION

Yet another example of the cultural grounding of emotion in Aidoo's *Changes* concerns nonverbal expressions of emotion. Consider this description of Esi's reaction to an extremely unpleasant incident involving her husband

Esi's anger rose to an exploding pitch. . . . What really finished her was her eyes catching sight of the cloth trailing behind Oko who looked like some arrogant king, as he opened the door to get to the bathroom before her. She sucked her teeth, or made the noise which is normally described, inadequately, in English as a sucking of the teeth. It was thin, but loud, and very long. In a contest with any of the fishwives about ten kilometers down the road from the Hotel Twentieth Century, she would have won. (p. 10)

Sucking of teeth is a sign used to express anger, irritation, and/or frustration through nonverbal means. Significant in this passage are both the description of Esi's reaction and also the volume of emotion that went unspoken. Although Esi's anger "rose to an exploding pitch," she "sucked her teeth" rather than verbalize the emotion of anger.

Later Esi refers to the incident that triggered the teeth sucking as marital rape. Again, Aidoo's account of Esi's reaction reflects the cultural grounding of emotional expression in embodied rather than verbal forms: Esi dumps her keys irritably in her handbag, runs to her office in an unconscious haste, and then sits there motionless. What is noteworthy in this case is the emphasis on motionlessness as a form of emotional expression. Given a conception of emotional expression as psychological activity, this response to the event might be characterized as flatness of affect or absence of expression. In contrast, given a conception of emotional expression that emphasizes bodily experience, motionlessness becomes a form of emotional expression.

This example illustrates another dimension of the embodiment (and thus cultural grounding) of emotional expression. Rather than limit consideration to facial expression as the primary site of embodiment, local constructions of emotional expression in many African settings emphasize motion (and motionlessness). Similarly, consider the place of motion in the following description of Opokuya's reaction to Esi's announcement that she was engaged (a reaction that could be interpreted as excitement):

Opokuya noticed the ring on Esi's finger. . . . Upon hearing all about it, Opokuya remarked that if she were a white woman, she would have fainted away. But as an African woman, she could only do her thing, which was exclaiming "Eh, ei" several times over, marching up and down the length of the sitting room, and finally taking a hold of Esi's hand, having a proper look at it and asking her whether she was sure of what she was saying. (pp. 90-91)

Besides the use of movement to express the emotion of excitement, the other noteworthy feature of this passage is its explicit reference to expectations of cultural difference in emotional expression. Notice however that the expectation of difference is not between somatic and psychological expressions, the dimension of difference noted by psychologists and other social scientists. Instead, the speaker imagines differences between somatic expressions of emotion (fainting vs. marching around the room), suggesting an assumption of somatic expression as the natural (and universal) form of human experience.

CODING CATEGORY 3: WHEN ENGLISH IS NOT ENOUGH

The preceding examples reveal the cultural grounding of emotional expression in what one might refer to as “traditional” or indigenous worlds. It is remarkable (and somewhat ironic) that the linguistic vehicle for conveying this cultural grounding of emotion is the former imperial language, English. This trend implies that English may suffice for expressing many emotional experiences of contemporary inhabitants of Ghanaian worlds.

However, there are a few instances in *Changes* when Aidoo uses expressions that cannot be found in a dictionary of Standard English. These instances are an indication that despite being the official language of Ghana, Standard English does not always suffice as a vehicle for local emotional expression.

In some cases, Aidoo borrows from her mother tongue, Fante, to express emotions that she apparently finds English inadequate to express. For example, Aidoo uses this Fante proverb to express a feeling akin to love: “*Nyenyefo mpo wo ne nkaeda*—having to love a burdensome child because one day you will miss her. Trust our elders to come out with a proverb to describe every situation” (p. 77).

The proverb expresses a mix of love, devotion, duty, and inescapable connection that is difficult to render in Standard English. This explains the decision to include the Fante expression in addition to the English translation: Even the translation would be insufficient to express the emotion.

In other cases, Aidoo’s characters resolve the apparent inadequacy of Standard English by creating neologisms coined from real English words to better express an emotional experience. A prominent example is *flabberwhelmed*—a combination of *flabbergasted* and *overwhelmed*. Aidoo has Esi use this phrase as a description her feeling while sitting in her new car (a surprise gift from Ali) on New Year’s Day in the parking lot of the Hotel Twentieth Century:

Esi was flabbergasted. Or rather “flabberwhelmed”! Then she laughed softly to herself as she remembered the freakish word. Trust Ghanaians again. They had decided to create out of “overwhelmed” and “flabbergasted” a new word to describe an emotional state which they had decided the English were not capable of experiencing, and therefore had no expression in their language for. . . . Yes, flabberwhelmed. (p. 145)

Both examples illustrate the dynamic construction of emotional expression: the active production of feeling expression from diverse sets of building blocks and emergent characteristics of the present situation. In the course of constructing their own emotional expressions, people necessarily draw on

the forms of expression (including emotion narratives) that are prominent in the worlds that they inhabit. However, people do not simply regurgitate these appropriated forms of expression in a fax-like, mechanistic fashion; instead, they tailor these expressions to fit contingencies of present circumstances. Through processes such as these, individuals deal with language constraints on emotional expression without distorting their experiences.

CODING CATEGORY 4: IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Finally, the cultural grounding of emotion is evident in Aidoo's novel through the place of spirituality in psychological experience. Within *Changes*, this feature is evident in the frequent references to religion and spirituality by characters in the course of everyday conversation. The following examples illustrate this idea:

One morning, Fusena had announced that she was not going to marry the *alhaji*. Allah! Everyone thought she was joking. But whether the madness was her own or something someone had given her, Fusena never changed her mind. (p. 59)

And now here was Ali telling her that he was thinking of making a woman with a university degree his second wife. So, Allah, what was she supposed to say? What was she supposed to do? (p. 66)

These examples suggest the extent to which religion and spirituality suffuse emotional expression and other domains of psychological experience in contemporary Ghanaian worlds. Although the preceding examples refer to an Islamic context, the phenomenon is also prominent in Christian or "traditional" religious settings. The relatively frequent invocation of divinity across a variety of emotion-arousing situations suggests the extent to which religion and spirituality are not a separable aspect of experience but instead pervade psychological experience. See Adams and Dzokoto (2003) for a discussion of Ghanaian spirituality.

DISCUSSION

Despite the use of Fante in the few cases where the English language was not enough to label the experience, *Changes* is a Ghanaian, not a Fante novel. It is not set in Fanteland and includes non-Fante Ghanaian characters. The novel includes characters from different social classes ranging from the

wealthy Alhaji (who Fusena refused to marry) to the fishwives who apparently held the unofficial national record for “teeth sucking” until Esi broke it. It reflects contemporary life in urban and rural Ghana, highlighting the struggles that women face. Aidoo tells the story of multiple characters from diverse backgrounds and concludes with a variety of outcomes for the various characters, reflecting the heterogeneity of contemporary Ghanaian people and experiences. In short, Aidoo’s novel is a window that affords us a glimpse into the reality of modern Ghana. Although it may not be representative of the experiences of the entire country, it is a useful source of data for the analysis of emotional expression in Ghanaian English speakers.

Analysis of these incidents of emotional expression provides insights into the dialectical relationship between culture and feeling. Because most research on the cultural and linguistic grounding of emotion has focused on the implications of different emotion labels (e.g., Wierzbicka, 1992), we started our analysis with this issue. If Aidoo used non-English labels to describe some experiences, it would imply a belief that the English labels were inferior to the indigenous language label for conveying the emotional experience. However, there are no cases in which Aidoo uses an indigenous emotion label. Although this low frequency should not be surprising given that the novel is written in English, the frequent use of English labels to describe characters’ experience implies the expectation that at least some emotional experiences may transcend culture and language.

Does this mean that the English language is adequate to communicate the emotional experiences of Ghanaians? The answer is an emphatic no. Although the use of English may be perceived as necessary in contemporary Ghana, this novel affirms that it is by no means a sufficient medium of the emotional expression. Aidoo used Fante expressions on several occasions (when English was not enough). Perhaps, Aidoo chose to use Fante rather than other Ghanaian languages because she is Fante. Nevertheless, the technique of using other Ghanaian languages in addition to English to effectively communicate experience is not atypical of non-Fante Ghanaian authors and the general Ghanaian public alike.

Due to Ghana’s colonial history and the impact of Westernization, Ghanaians today inhabit a complex reality—a multiplicity of overlapping, cultural worlds, each of which provides unique building blocks for the experience and expression of emotion. A potential result of this could be experiencing this multiplicity as a disjointed alternation between separate realities. However, Aidoo’s novel showcases a more or less unified experience of self and feeling through a hybridization of the indigenous, the Western, and the novel, resulting in a reality that is uniquely Ghanaian and different from both the Western and the indigenous.

Aidoo's novel showcases contemporary Ghanaians, some of whom may be considered inauthentic due to the influence of Westernization. For example, some would consider Esi not to be a "real" Ghanaian because she lives in a city, has a university degree, and presumably is middle class (suggesting that "real Ghanaians" are uneducated, poor, rural dwellers, as typically depicted in media representations of Africa). In reality, modern Ghana involves a hybrid of the "authentic" and Western; Esi drives a new car and sucks her teeth (better and longer than any fishwife could) when she is angry. Opokuya, who cannot afford a car, exclaims "Eh, ei" and marches up and down the length of the sitting room when she is excited. Although an exploration of what is and is not Ghanaian is beyond the scope of this article, the characters in Aidoo's novel clearly have emotion narratives that are uniquely Ghanaian.

As cultural products, emotion narratives form part of the common ground from which people appropriate to make sense of their own feeling experience. As psychological activity, narrative is an important process by which the integration of emotion experience occurs. As people in contemporary Ghanaian settings spin stories to express their experience of feeling, they draw on a diverse set of building blocks for emotional expression: some associated with indigenous forms and others associated more with Western encounters. In the process of spinning stories of emotional expression, they integrate aspects of these diverse building blocks into a more or less coherent whole.

The motivations for integration may reside mainly in making sense of the individual experience. However, when narrative products become publicly available artifacts, they represent integration at the level of cultural communities. In this way, psychological subjects—be they fishwives, statisticians, or novelists—contribute to the reproduction of cultural worlds in everyday acts of narrative construction. They creatively manipulate the narrative forms at their disposal in an attempt to adequately communicate their own and others' experience. In the process, they become agents of larger change. The typical reading of these changes emphasizes the impact of larger cultural forces on individual experience. However, novels like *Changes*—and the production of emotional expressions like *flabberwhelmed*—emphasize the important point that forces of change operate in the reverse direction too. Acts of individual expression promote changes in larger forms, as when the imperial English language gets shaped to fit local contexts of emotional expression.

Should one attribute some significance to when a character expresses emotion in a particular ways, or is Aidoo's pairing of concept and experience a mere coincidence? The novel suggests a possible pathway for the Anglophone Ghanaian expressing emotions in English: English emotion labels first, then nonverbal behavior and/or English expressions (e.g., metaphors). If these

avenues are insufficient, borrowing from an indigenous language is the next stage in this speculative pathway. Finally, if none of these result in a satisfactory communication of the emotional experience or if the emotional experience and available forms of expression are incompatible, a new word can be created.

The creation of new words is by no means exclusive to the Ghanaian experience: History, politics, technology, and other factors affect the human experience. Recently, words such as *Googling*, *e-mailing*, and *text-messaging* have gained status as official verbs. What makes this different from the Ghanaian experience however is that these words are related to the use of new technology and its permeation into every aspect of life. The behaviors were new because the technology was new. People could not google before there was Google or e-mail before there was e-mail, or send text messages before that technology was available. With emotion however, Ghanaians undoubtedly experienced emotion before the British and Dutch arrived in Cape Coast.

The concept of emotion neologisms begs the following chicken-and-egg question: Did Ghanaians feel flabberwhelmed before they coined the term? On one hand, the absence of a term for an emotion does not necessarily imply that people in a setting cannot experience the emotion. Perhaps Ghanaians experienced the indigenous “equivalent” of the emotion, and the neologism *flabberwhelmed* simply provided a way to describe and express this preexisting emotional experience. On the other hand, the invention of a name for a latent emotional experience does creative or productive work. It elaborates a previously unelaborated aspect of local emotion experience and increases the availability of the concept and all of its socially constructed meaning for other inhabitants of the cultural space. To stick with the chicken-and-egg metaphor, the egg of flabberwhelmed experience may have been present before it had a name. However, the creation of the name does productive work, changes the preexisting egg into a more specialized variety that has more elaborated, emergent properties that have a more refined or distinctive flavor and make for a tastier omelet.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The present study found that despite the influence of Westernization and the adaptation of English as the official language of communication for Ghanaians, English-speaking Ghanaians do not express their emotions solely using Standard English. The expression of affect in contemporary Ghana is

an interesting mix of the past and the present. Resources available for the verbal expression of emotion include English emotion labels, indigenous expressions, and deliberately created new Ghanaian English words.

The conclusions of this study are clearly limited by the source of data and method of investigation. For example, as a reviewer pointed out, we used only one text as a data source. Aidoo used Fante and no other Ghanaian languages in her novel. These factors raise the possibility that other modes of emotional expression not captured by this novel may be present in the cultural world of contemporary Ghanaians. Likewise, we used American (not Ghanaian) research assistants in one of the stages of analysis as well as some Fante-speaking interpreters who had not read the book. In addition, the independent raters did not find additional emotion categories. These factors raise the possibility that our findings may not be exhaustive. Thus, we consider our findings a window into the emotional expression of the English-speaking Ghanaian rather than a comprehensive overview of all Ghanaians everywhere.

The limitations of the current study raise several questions that can inform future research. Can these forms of emotional expression be observed in the works of other Ghanaian authors and other sources of data? Can the speculative pathway of labeling emotions deduced from Aidoo's novel be observed and supported empirically? Can these mechanics of emotional expression be found in non-Ghanaian populations? Are there other categories of Ghanaian emotional expression not addressed in this study or in previous studies of Ghanaian emotions? These questions elicit yet another: How do these questions make a researcher interested in these issues feel? The answer, as Aidoo demonstrates in her novel, and as the concept of mutual constitution suggests, is not a simple one. Perhaps there is an English label to describe the affective state. Perhaps, a proverb or metaphor will be appropriate. Alternatively, we might borrow an expression from a local Ghanaian language or use the body to communicate the response. Finally, if none of these avenues are deemed sufficient, we might manipulate our linguistic environment and deliberately create a new emotion word.

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