**Analysis**

In retrospect, after the trip to Ghana, I now realize how naively unique my views were. From observations in the field of the day-to-day social interactions between the Ghanaian people at shopping malls, supermarkets, restaurants, and the like. Through interviews with relevant actors within the framework of the Ghanaian society, such as politicians, legal professionals, business owners and non-profit administrators. To riding shoulder to shoulder with locals in taxi cabs and other forms of public transportation, or shopping and bargaining at major outdoor markets. And even watching the interactions between our group and the indigenous Ghanaians, the lens that I view Ghanaian life with has shifted dramatically and the focus has become much clearer.

My ideas about the similarities between Ghanaian and African American youth were dashed, but why the disparate differences. Research in American culture has found direct links between poverty and social ills especially in the African American community. But why no such finding in the Ghanaian community, what influence or influences might be the causal factor in preventing these behaviors. So I surmised three possible reasons for the lack. First, maybe I was in the wrong community. It is possible that my lack of familiarity with the city did not allow me to find neighborhoods where my hypotheses might be valid. Second, perhaps there were no drugs to be had due to strict law enforcement which would help to curtail other deviant and anti-social behaviors. Third, maybe there were built in cultural norms that stopped young people from participating in actions that might be viewed as anti-social or deviant. In this instance it would be easier to test the third idea since it would not necessitate leaving my sphere of activity nor making inquiries to the police about the whereabouts of drugs and the like.

In this paper I will attempt to summarize into a few statements the findings which are the basis for analysis in my final report. For that purpose I have distilled the overarching themes I felt were the ones which stood out the most for me as I began to see some overlap in conversation from separate and distinct individuals. These themes are;

1. Tradition
2. Politicizing of issues
3. Hopefulness

In most of the conversations although the foregoing themes may not have been the subject matter for some reason or another they kept coming to the forefront, therefore I deduced, correctly I hope, that these things were in the back of peoples minds no matter what was going on in the foreground.

*Tradition:*

The subject of tradition and traditions seemed to be the center of gravity for many interviewees. The importance of letting go of the past should not be confused with the importance of maintaining tradition. How can this matter best be stated? Possibly in this vein. The history of colonialism for most is something from the past that most Ghanaians would not want to dredge up in everyday conversation, and most references to that time would probably only take place within the framework of some academic argument. But at the same time the traditions of Kingship and tribal Chieftaincy along with worship of traditional gods and the viability of the priesthood are still acknowledged and promoted to this day.

From this idea came the thought that a well structured and ordered social environment would have a definite limiting effect on young people doing things that were frowned upon. In fact I did not see many instances of public drunkenness, arguing, or violence. There was only one incident where there was an actual accident, (a car nearly ran a motorcyclist over) where I heard people talk in an argumentative tone. If this is true in fact there may be opportunities for those in the states involved in efforts to stem violent behaviors to implement structured programming that would help instill the values of traditional life into young peoples educational programming which may in turn have a nullifying effect on their behaviors. But in the case of the Ghanaian, tradition can be a two edged sword that cuts both ways. It could prevent the inculcation of new and forward thinking ideas or since one always has tradition to fall back on. There is a possibility that it may serve as a barrier to development of new strategies to deal with age old problems and in turn limit progress. This matter needs to be researched further in order to find any possible linkages that may have a positive influence on both cultures, and lead to problem solving in both environments.

*Politicizing of Issues:*

As Americans our network to access political environments is conveniently available. If there is an issue we can call our city councilman, our mayor, our state representative etc., but in Ghana it is not necessarily so. And, without that access many Ghanaians felt that instead of what the average everyday citizen saw as a problem to be addressed by government, the situation was turned into a political football to be used as a way to belittle the other party and ultimately serve as a vote getter in the next election. In one case people, more often than not, do not use the network. In the other people do not have a network. This limits the citizen’s ability to advocate and petition his/her elected officials for policies that are beneficial to all., especially the less fortunate.

I am not quite sure how this affects young peoples attitudes toward crime and drugs, but I would hazard to guess that in lieu of social policies that provide safety nets for citizens, individuals are less likely to involve themselves in deviant and anti-social behavior. No welfare programs, free medical care for the poor, drug treatment facilities, or social security, or free legal aid may be incentives not to deviate to far from the norm. Instead of waiting around for a check that can be used to support a habit, people would probably do their best to avoid having habits. In fact upon reflection on that matter it seems as if I did not even see as many people smoking cigarettes during my time there as I normally see on an average day in the states. This factor may also be a major contributing factor to help limit the common social ills associated with poverty.

*Hopefulness:*

Ghana was in no way everything it should be neither politically, economically, educationally, nor in any other way form or fashion, but there was a sense of hope in the voices of people on the street, in business owners, in the words of politicians, and everywhere else that gave one the sense that Ghana is on the move toward some future that is much brighter, and so much bigger than its present day existence. This feeling was pervasive and contagious and gave the visitor a feeling of wanting to belong. Therefore in many instances of social deviance perhaps it is just a matter of seeing the glass half full or half empty. Even if things may not be going your way, attitude can be the subtle difference between success and failure. Maybe opportunity or the lack thereof can have a profound impact on the actions of those who have opted for social deviance.

In the streets of Ghana everyone is selling something in order to make a living. I am not sure how that works for the population in general but there are more panhandlers outside my corner store than I saw in all of Ghana for the duration of my stay there. That is not to say having someone pushing goods in your face constantly as you walk down the street is a better proposition, but it was I hate to admit a welcome difference, if only in the sense there would be no fear of any retaliatory follow-up for saying no. Therefore, in Ghana it may be the need of young people to present themselves as trustworthy to the suppliers who provide the goods that they sell that may be a major inducement not to participate in behaviors that are seen contrary to social norms, such as drug use and violence.

It appears as if my hypotheses and the observations made during the trip are at odds with each other. Contrary to popular belief black youth do not categorically fall into states of despair, drug use, and social deviance because of poverty, there was poverty in Ghana, and plenty of it. Crime, theft and murder are not part and parcel of every poor man’s life. Why?

Undoubtedly there are other social dynamics at work when this does or does not occur. But what those dynamics are and how they operate should be the focus of further study. Perhaps America should look to Ghana in order to search for answers to the problems it finds in its communities of color, with the hope of developing strategies for real problem resolution. And perhaps Ghana should look to America to better understand the dynamics that have produced this negative culture with the sincere hope and expectation that it can prevent a future where it finds itself fighting similar demons. There are no easy answers, that is for sure but better questions can help us find the hard answers.