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Review

Traditional oath-taking as a panacea to ‘democratic corruption’ in Nigeria

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No society can survive outside its culture and tradition. The preponderance reality of this claim reveals the need and essence of cultural values and traditions in advancing the course of a nation. Therefore, this paper interrogates the possibility of approving traditional oath-taking with particular reference to Yoruba as a panacea to ‘democratic corruption’ in the Nigeria political space. This necessitates a conceptual narrative of ‘democratic corruption’ within the purview of democratic principles vis-à-vis its operation in Nigeria. The paper adopts the analytical and critical methods of philosophical investigation to advocate the adoption of traditional oath-taking in curbing ‘democratic corruption’ in Nigeria. It hopes that when this is done, ‘democratic corruption’ would be reduced drastically while on the other hand, it will help in stabilizing the political stance of the nation.

Key words: Oath-taking, ‘democratic corruption’, Yoruba, Nigeria, democratic governance.

INTRODUCTION

This paper sets to examine the present democratic governance in Nigeria. It, among other things, delves into the meaning and nature of democracy as a form of governance within the purview of its technical principles. These principles, though many of them given the psychic of Nigerians are considered utopia in nature, such as equality, equity, accountability, free and fair election; nevertheless, it appraises their tenacity in galvanizing the standard of human experience and essence of humanity.

The study, however, argues that one of the major obstacles to the attainment of right sense of democratic principles hinges on the fact that the political class who are supposed to utilize the democratic principles to better the lots of the nation are found wanting as they often contravene their oath of office. This act is not unconnected with the fact that the contents and

instrumentality of oath-taking in Nigeria democratic culture gives room for corruption. The process in itself is culturally unsuitable for Nigerians who through their contact with new religions and philosophies emanating from democracy have devalued their respect for their traditional cultures, values and heritages. Thus, the significance of oath-taking as that which plays cautionary roles under the democratic governance and administration is not functional in Nigeria because of its corrupt nature in which virtually all the principles and tenets of democracy has been jettisoned. This is evident in the religious beliefs of the new religions, exemplified in Christianity and Islam, where forgiveness of sin is of utmost importance. With this possibility, majority of the political office holders delight in corrupting the system on the platter of seeking forgiveness after their misdeeds

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from a loving father whose name is used in taking oath of allegiance.

Against this presupposition, the paper suggests the adoption of traditional oath-taking with reference to Yoruba culture as a leeway out of the corrupt attitudes of office holders in the Nigeria political space. It is believed that the viability of instant reprisal of defaulters of oath in traditional Yoruba society could go a long way in salvaging Nigeria body politics from doldrums which pictured 'democratic corruption.' The argument of this paper, therefore, is built on the need to have a viable democratic culture that will take cognizance of African culture without necessarily super-imposing western ideas of governance on Africans and the Africa continent. It is crystal clear that for Africa to have a good footing in her governance there is a need to harmonize her past with the contemporary happenings and deduce how the past could be used in establishing a robust and workable social order. Much as cited by Fayemi (2009) articulates this necessity and argues that, "our democracy must neither be a mere return to traditional Africa, nor a replication of Western modes of governance. Africa, he notes, cannot move from one extreme to the other without mapping out its own original path, while taking due cognizance of democratic development in other social formations." The implication of this is that while Africa cannot totally shy away from adopting some elements of contemporary acts of governance as the whole world is tilting toward democracy, it is fundamental that some of the indigenous tools that promote her political and social order be repackaged to meet up with contemporary realities that confront us in the present age. This precaution alludes to Gyekye's (1997) submission that "ingenious ways and means of hammering the autochthonous democratic elements as well as elements inherited from alien source...into acceptable and viable democratic form in the setting of the modern world." Thus, it will not be out of place if African culture is blended with western culture to attain the desired goals that promote human existence. According to Falola (2016) "In real life, flexibility bends and survives, rigidity breaks and dies." Falola's position as captured here suggests the possibility of developing a new culture of sustainable democracy in Nigeria from the diverse cultural practices and that of other societies. In view of this suggestion, the present model of oath-taking is not effective as demonstrated in the failure of the political office holders to adhere to the demands of the oath of allegiance sworn to, after which they go scot free at the end of their tenure in office. This is because the effect of the oath taken by the political players that ought to deter others and/or would be political players from promoting personal gains at the detriment of collective interest is not visible. It is within this practicality that it is apt to suggest a way out. Thus, this presentation of the adoption of African model of oath-taking in African democracies should be seen as one of the ways of

injecting African culture to universal democracies without losing the grip of what governance entails. Additionally, this paper presents an analysis of the notion of traditional oath-taking from the Yoruba perspective. It also attempts to narrate what 'democratic corruption' is, from the understanding of the principles of democracy, in order to proffer a viable democratic culture to curb the current challenges of governance in Nigeria.

OATH-TAKING IN YORUBA SOCIETY

Oath-taking is universal. Though it is believed to serve same purpose(s), its processes differ from one culture to the other. Oviasuyi et al. (2011) aver that "Oath from the Anglo Saxon *eoth*, is an explicate pledge invoking a god, spirit, ancestor, place, or sacred object as witness unto the truth of the words sworn, and is among the most ancient forms of ritual solemnity. A much-venerated pagan relic is the Hippocratic Oath, a pledge of medical ethics held in high esteem among healers from the 1st century onward. Its preamble calls forward the gods of curing to bear witness to the oath: 'I swear by Apollo Physician and Asclepius and Hygieia and Panacea and all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses...' The oath concludes by pronouncing that he who remains true to the oath shall prosper, while he who does not shall attain 'the opposite lot', inviting the scrutiny of the gods themselves upon his actions." The implication derivable from the nature of oath is that it has to be honoured by the oath taker and the god by whom such oath is taken. This is evident from the wordings of oath in which the oath taker placed his/her life and possessions in the hand of the gods through whom such oath is sworn. Failure to honour the contents of traditional oath is believed to have a great adverse effect on the violators for such being is bound to face the wrath of the deities in the presence of whom the oath is taken.

Oath-taking in Yorùbá traditional society is herculean in nature. It is believed to have a metaphysical backup. In a matter of necessity, it is held in high esteem. The Yorùbá, therefore do not play with oath-taking especially when it has to do with duties and responsibilities. The nature and procedure of oath-taking in Yorùbá traditional society is sacrosanct and a means of codifying the essence of truth in discharging one's duties to the community. It is important to note that the archon of oath-taking in the Yoruba society are believed to be the gods and deities and any person who takes an oath to perform a task and run contrary to the allegiance of the oath he/she is disposed to stand the wrath of the gods/divinities.

It is pertinent to reiterate that for the Yorùbás, invocations of the gods are involved during oath-taking and symbols of these gods are used as instrument of oath-taking. Some of these instruments include thunder stone (*edun ara*), and waden (*ose sango*) for Sango and cutlass (*ada*) for *Ogun* as god of iron. Olaoba (2001)

gives a vivid exposition of the instrument. He writes:

Aside from the iron object (sacred to the god of iron) used for oath-taking, the Yorubas also use *apasa* (weaving instrument) and *iru* (chiefly scepter), royal shrine or religious sanctuaries are also used. The wrath of the gods is used for eliciting facts of the dispute. Such gods as Sango (god of Thunder), *Yemoja* (goddess of river) and *Ayelala* (guardian of social morality) are used to ascertain the veracity of the story told by disputants.

Though Olaoba's investigate the place of oath-taking as it relates to conflict resolution, it is apposite to explain that as it is effective in dispute/conflict resolution so it is in addressing abuse of office. Hence, abuse of office could also be classified as conflict in its own right. An instance cited by Oyebode (2016) that corroborates this goes thus:

Ògún ò féro
Sàngó ò fé ètàn
Ení bá ríjà Ògún rí
Ení bá ríjà Sàngó rí
Kò ní í parò - sètàn jalè ni Koso

Meaning that:

Ògún detests lies
Sàngó detests deceit
 Anybody who has witnessed *Ògún* vex
 Anybody who has witnessed *Sàngó* vex
 Will not lie and deceive to steal in *Kòso* (the home base of *Sàngó*).

The essence of oath-taking in Yorùbá traditional society therefore is to enhance the commitment to saying the truth and doing what is supposedly to be done dutifully by the occupant of any post to the betterment of the society and not for personal benefit. The content of the oath in traditional Yoruba setting has to do with the person taking the oath asking some evil things and/or calamities to befall him/her if any attempt is made to act contrary to the course of what such oath is taken for. In a way of clarifying this, Bascom (1965) espoused the nitty-gritty of the process and essence of oath-taking in Yorùbá society. He observes that, "a plaintiff (political office holder) may be made to answer to *Ògún*, the god of iron, touching his tongue on an iron object while asking to die if he is not telling the truth, or to drink from the ground at the *Ògbóni* house while swearing on the earth." Alao (2009) with reference to Sandra Barnes and John Pemberton III, shares Bascom's position by arguing that "apart from the use of sanctions and religious symbols to induce the truth, oath-taking was considered a necessary part of encouraging people to say the truth in their dispositions. The sacred object of *Ògún*, the fiery god of thunder and lightning, was usually used to take oath." This is because, "oath taken either in front of divinity or

religious emblems makes Yoruba people to comport themselves well in the society. A newly enthroned king who swears to deliver justice without fear or favor is duty bound to keep it. Anything contrary to the oath leads to disaster" (Ogunleye, 2013). Akin to the newly enthroned king here, are the political office holders as they are also in charge of making life meaningful for the electorate.

Oath-taking is a tool of ensuring social order in Yoruba traditional society especially when there are misdeeds on the part of those saddled with the responsibilities of protecting the commonwealth of the society. It is unlike what operates in contemporary oath-taking where allegiance is pleaded to a course and reverse is always the case and yet nothing follows. For instance, the dramatic and heroic suicide committed by Kurumi could not, but be linked with his allegiance to protect his people. This is evidence when he considered not the pains and agonies that could result from him sending his five sons to the war, for his belief that when a leader has led his people to disaster and what is left of him is a shadow of his proud past, then his time to be leader no more. For this reason, Kurumi, a Yoruba leader of his own time committed suicide instead of seeking political asylum in another land (Ola, 1971). He, like Socrates, lives and dies for what he preaches, an option not readily adopted by contemporary democratic leaders in Nigeria.

In order to curb such misdemeanor in Yoruba traditional society, whenever it becomes difficult to believe the leader as doing what is expected of the occupant of the post, they often zero down for oath-taking and this according to Fayemi (2009) "they do through administering metaphysical oaths of the spirit of the gods and other primordial entities among conflicting parties (the office holder and the people) in order to ensure compliance to the voluntary terms of agreement." This presupposes the fact that in Yorùbá traditional society, the place of oath-taking is considered to be sacred, such that, Ogungbemi (2011) points out "the efficacy of oath-taking in Yorùbá society is eminent for it *affecting presence*." In the same vein, Oladipupo (2012) argued that "the gods sworn to in traditional Yorùbá societies are known for instant justice." The instantaneous reflection of punishment alluded to oath-taking in Yorùbá traditional society, though may want to be considered as draconic for not giving room for second chance; nevertheless, one is poised to argue that the pragmatic attribute of oath-taking in Yoruba traditional society makes it more active in curbing abnormality than what is entailed in the constitutional sense of oath-taking. This draconic nature of the effect of oath-taking in Yoruba society is taken care of, as part of Yoruba culture. Awolalu as cited by Ogunleye (2013) revealed this inevitability. He posits "A person who is given to oath breaking or falsehood is believed not to be prospering in life. It is strongly believed among the Yoruba that, anybody who swear falsely or break an oath to which *Ògún* (The Yoruba god of iron) is a witness cannot escape severe judgment in a ghastly

accident.”

It is relevant to explain here that the effect of Oath-taking in Yorùbá traditional society often goes beyond the individual that swore to an oath. Its effects can manifest in the family such that family members share in the consequences associated with oath taken. Hence, their notion of *ègún àjogúnbá* - inherited curse. This suggests that oath-taking in Yorùbá traditional society has dual legitimacy. This dual nature of oath-taking in Yoruba traditional society is often achieved by appealing to the supernatural being to intervene when human efforts fail or when trust is not reposed on the human panel. Mbiti (1970), explaining this necessity argues that, “it is not the means but the end that matters most. Sometimes that end is sought or attained, but not by the individual alone, but corporately with or on behalf of his wider community of which he is a member or whose religious function is entrusted to him.” It is deducible from Mbiti’s argument that oath-taking at times is beyond private affairs. Formal oaths in Yorùbá traditional society just like any other African society are used:

As method of establishing and maintaining good human relationships, oaths place great moral and mystical obligations upon the parties concerned and any breach of the covenant is feared to bring about misfortunes. The belief behind oath is that God or some power higher than the individual man will punish the person who breaks the requirement of the oath or covenant ... thus traditional oath-taking is no respecter of persons, because every person is ontologically equal in the eyes of the gods (Dukor, 2007).

In fact, in traditional Yorùbá society whenever anybody is placed under oath, the society always remains calm believing that the gods will necessarily visit the wrongdoer. This is not only applicable to the victim but to the society at large, because it is believed that such oath is effective and efficient and cannot but fulfil its mandate. In view of this, it is fundamental to espouse the meaning of ‘democratic corruption’ as adopted in this study.

‘DEMOCRATIC CORRUPTION’ IN NIGERIAN POLITICAL SPACE

‘Democratic corruption’ is a niche coined to rebuff the acceptability of the current practice of democracy in Nigeria. This coinage is informed by the need for sustainable democratic values in Nigeria. As such ‘democratic corruption’ represents an avid disruption of doctrines and principles of democracy under the guise of it being assumed as a widely accepted form of government. By implication, ‘democratic corruption’ in the context of this piece connotes a negation of the fundamentals of democracy as echoed by many scholars and intellectuals.

The etymological conception of democracy is believed to have been derived from two Latin words “*demo*” and “*cratia*” meaning “people” and “rule” respectively (Bamikole, 2000). This etymological conceptualization of democracy has certain credibility. One apart from its pioneering status, the conceptualization is credited for unearthing two fundamental assumptions in democracy, namely, people and rule. The relationship between the two major requirements is that the former is a necessary ground for the latter to exist. Hence, where there are people, there is bound to be a way they govern themselves. This, to the advocates of democracy is “government of the people” or “democracy.”

Beyond the above credibility, however, the definition suffers certain deficiencies. This consists in the failure to carve a unique character for democracy, which should be properly distinguished from those of other political ideologies. For instance, it could be opined that the definition is too broad such that all political convictions qualify for the status of democracy. This is because all governments are “government of the people,” and to define democracy as such blurs the distinction between democracy and other political ideologies.

It should be noted, however, that the most acceptable definition of democracy is the one given by Abraham Lincoln. This was built from the apparent ruins of the etymological definition of democracy. Lincoln, in his bid to push the etymological conception of democracy to its logical conclusion defines democracy “as the government of the people, by the people and for the people” (Bamikole, 2000). It should be noted further, however, that the two definitions are based on the reality obtained in the political arena of the ancient Greek city states. Suffice it to say that democracy was still then understood only in its primary sense, in which all the qualified persons were to have a direct participation in the decision making process of the government.

In recent times, however, democracy has assumed a different dimension. The concept of democracy has gone beyond being contemplated along its people *orientedness*. It is rather now viewed from the perspective of popular support and majority rule. The new outlook of democracy in the contemporary world is partly explicable in terms of the sophisticated level of complexity that characterized the modern world, such that it would be wrong to define democracy strictly as a political system in which all citizens participate in the day to day policy making. The reason for this is that, there is no democracy in which ‘all’ citizens participate in the decision making process. The implication of this realization suggests that democracy as a political ideology was originally designed for society where there is an avenue for all qualified citizens to converge and deliberate on issues affecting them. And since no such avenue exists in modern time, it logically follows that democracy as originally conceived does not include the complexity of modern society.

The possibility of the above claim therefore suggests a corruption of the traditional and etymological definition of democracy as “the government of the people, by the people, and for the people” (William, 2006). Though, this definition appears to be the standard on which democratic ideology is based. The concept of “the people” and “rule” as obtained in Lincoln’s definition is nebulous, and thus in need of clarification. In response to the question who are the people in Lincoln’s definition, William Alton Kelso (1978) contends that “the society is composed of myriad groups of people, many of whom might be called issue publics, thus he identified different kinds of groups representing the people to include, ‘interest group’, ‘promotional group’, ‘group bargaining’.”

In furtherance of the above view, Kelso (1978) identifies two senses of “the people” as construed by the populists and the pluralists in the following:

... the populists have envisaged the people as the majority of citizens and have insisted that they should express their views through referendums, while the pluralists have usually argued that the numerous issue publics in the society should be the relevant public to decide important issues, and they have argued that these interests should exercise their say primarily through the give-and-take of political bargaining.

It is in this sense that the observation raised by John H. Yoder (1977) is considered appropriate in stating that, “our situation is one in which the question we are least likely to ask is why it should be good that there should be “rule by the people.” He, Yoder (1977) notes that “it again has become visible how in the rhetoric of both sides the appeal to “the people” is both unanswerable and on closer scrutiny undefinable.” This position, to a large extent, has shown that the concept of the people, from Lincoln’s definition, remains ambiguous. In clarifying this ambiguity, John Locke as cited by Scroll and Popkin (1979) opined that “the people” should connote the majority, where the majority is understood from the utilitarian point of view. Kelso (1978), however, warns that, “the notion of majority should not be stretched beyond its limit as such may bring about the danger of always permitting a numerical majority to prevail over their minority counterparts on issues that are of utmost importance to the latter.”

It is apposite in this sense to suggest that the meaning ascribed to the word ‘the people’ as those who are entitled to participate in governance is anchored on what could be termed “the situational assumption behind Lincoln’s definition.” For instance, in the Athenian democracy, only adult males were allowed to vote. That is, they operated what in the modern democracy is regarded as adult male suffrage which disallows women, slaves, children, among others from voting. The idea of suffrage therefore suffices. This is clearly stated in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that voting

age is 18 years but since the practice has been corrupted, the country has been witnessing underage voting in the recent past. Not only this, experience has shown in previous elections that opposition always find it difficult to have their franchise exercised at will which raises the logical question of whether “the people” in the context of Lincoln’s definition is in the final analysis not the minority. Without this clarification the words “of people” in Lincoln’s definition of democracy remains ambiguous. Nevertheless, Dahl (1970) argues that, if we describe “the people” as those who are entitled to participate in governance, we will risk circularity, by oscillating on the word “people.”

Thus, the question of participation becomes imminent. The nature of political participation as evident in Nigeria political space is mutilated as the political godfather dictates the rule of the game with impunity. By this, political participation in Nigeria democracy has equally been corrupted as what operates is against the five basic elements without which no community can claim to be truly democratic. These elements according to Heater (1964) are “equality, sovereignty of the people, respect for human life, the rule of law, and liberty of the individual.”

Given this possibility, electioneering process in Nigerian democratic experience over the years remains corrupted. This reflects the age long doubt expressed about the diverse process of elections within the democratic culture by Diamond (nd). He explains:

In addition to popular participation in the electoral process and respect for the civil and political rights of the people, it must be noted, though, that the existence of numerous parties and the conduct of periodic elections may not result in popular choice of leadership.

Similarly, what operates in Nigeria’s democracy is a deviation of the process of making the decision binding in democratic setting in the sense that citizens who “ought to have an adequate opportunity and an equal opportunity for placing questions on the agenda and for expressing reasons for endorsing one outcome rather than another,” (Dahl, 1989) are not reckoned with. The practice of democracy in Nigeria denied the preponderance doctrine of democracy where “for a decision-making process to be truly democratic and binding as such, each interested participant in it should be in position to enjoy effective participation in the debate that normally should precede the making of a collective decision” (Oladosu, 2004).

Against this backdrop, what operates in Nigeria is a dissenting allusion to the fact that, in democracy, decision making is subjected to critical argument and reasoning and not the status of their authors, for others are allowed to present their opinion on a decision or policy. Democracy as understood and within its tenets needs not necessarily impose decisions of an individual on the masses without debates and counter debates before reaching a consensus. This gives credence to Irving

Copî's (1986) explanation that "democratic institution requires that citizens think for themselves, discuss problems freely with one another, and decide issues on the basis of deliberation and weighing of evidence." Consequently, it is evident from Copî's elucidation that in democratic environment the citizens will need to be harnessed in the act of governance. One will not but agree with the claim that the public has the sovereign power to decide all issues of importance, and unless the preferences of each man are counted equally, the wishes of the larger public may be superseded by the wishes of various minority groups, thereby violating the spirit of democratic government (Kelso, 1978). The case with Nigeria democracy is an outcry of this for the suppression of popular opinion by the political money bags in Nigeria to corrupt the status quo. This transmutes to a situation where citizens do not wield the power to influence the political decisions that concern them nor allow them to initiate political decisions that will change their lives, except those that are in the interest of the political office holders. The recent and on-going cry for restructuring and call for reduction of the jumbo pay of the political office holders, especially, the legislature are few examples.

The principle of accountability that resonates the essence of democracy is thwarted on the altar of corruption. What this signifies is that accountability which is one of the major ingredients of democracy has been corrupted which in turn makes sham of the democratic governance in Nigeria political space. Articulating 'democratic corruption' from the point of view of accountability is to raise the questions: What is the principle of accountability? What does it mean to be accountable, and why is it necessary to the survival of the contemporary sense of democracy? Can people be said to be truly accountable? Proffering answers to the above posers is to suggest that the concept of accountability cannot be pinned down without certain sense of right and wrong. This is because the meaning of the concept varies from society to society to the extent that the more complex a society is, the more likely difficult it is to define its idea of accountability (Owolabi, 1999). On a general note, however, accountability refers to the power of the ruled to question the rationality or the justification of the actions and inactions of their rulers. This probably forms the position of Sklar (1986) in the following assertions:

Democracy dies hard. Its vital force is the accountability of rulers to subjects. Democracy stirs and wakens from the deepest slumber whenever the principle of accountability is asserted by members of a community or conceded by those who rule.

It is fathomable from Sklar's argument that the moral justification of the principle of accountability is anchored on the popular participation of the masses. The assumption is, since the representatives did not put themselves into positions of authority, there is moral need

or obligation on their part to be accountable to the electorate, whose popular support brings them into power.

The moral imperative of accountability is often softened by transparency on the part of the elected representatives. Transparency in democratic government ensures that nothing is done without the thorough permission or consent of the electorate. The absence of transparency in Nigeria democracy as it is, is raising concerns in and among the citizens, hence, the continuous agitation by various ethnic groups challenging the right of the government to embark on certain lines of actions. It is therefore a plausible position to hold that when transparency is omitted in a political organization, as obtained in Nigeria democracy the people always resort to the agitation for accountability since they are not pre-informed on the purported motive of the government, which in most cases, could be treacherous. It is this posture that often metamorphoses to acts that engender terrorism, especially when the governed could no longer bear the burden of neglect.

It is, however, pertinent to make recourse to the fact that popular participation and accountability are not the ultimate end in democracy; they are mere means to an end as observed in the words of Owolabi (1999) who asserts that:

Participation and accountability are not the ultimate objective of democracy. Their ultimate objective, which ought to be that of political systems, is the good life, or the happiness of all which has been the theme of political philosophy since Socrates. The assumption of democracy is that when all the people participate, their interest as individuals and corporate beings shall not be compromised.

Though it could be argued that accountability is utopian, given the nature of man which might have informed Owolabi (1999) saying that "accountability as the total responsiveness and responsibility of a democratic government to its people is more of an ideal than actuality," it is important to note that moderation is one of the most enviable virtues that need to be acculturated in making meaning of democracy. This would guide against what operates in the *a-historical* narratives of *Hobbesians'* state of nature where life is solitary, nasty, brutish, short, and poor. One fundamental source of the acidity of 'democratic corruption' is assumed to have been occasioned by the contents and workings of the form of oath-taking before assumptions of duty by political office holders. Thus, there is the need for a revisit of oath-taking in Africa with particular reference to Yoruba tradition.

TOWARDS A VIABLE DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE

The question of adopting African traditional oath-taking

process in pursuance of democratic ideals has received serious lethargy in African socio-political discourse. Some scholars and politicians perceived such possibility as absurd; this belief is not unconnected with the fact that African (Nigerian) democracy is structured in line with the western models and practices of democracy. The belief, however, seems to have assumed a new dimension as scholars of African orientation in recent times have started to agitate for a revitalization of African worldview woven around their cultural heritage and tradition toward shaping a democratic ideal that would take the continent out of its current democratic quagmire.

The reality on ground as regards Nigeria democratic culture presupposes that it is not in tandem with the doctrines and principles of the widely accepted notion of democracy. This is not unconnected with the assumed possibility of its alien nature to Nigeria traditional culture. By this, it is meant that democracy as it is, in Nigeria political space is more theoretical than practical. The inability of Nigerian democratic leaders to operate within the tenets of democracy makes Nigerian democracy a corrupted democracy. What then do we do?

The importance of the need to revamp Nigeria political order suggests re-invention of some attributes of governance that gives room for care and respect for human person as against the *I aloneism* of current crops of leaders. To achieve this, however, certain things must go, especially, things that destroy African traditional way of life instead of promoting her peace and harmony. These indices, which include but not limited to advance corruption, greed, ineffectiveness of judicial system, unpatriotism, perverted moral laws and crime, which are considered alien to Africa (Yorùbá) must be eradicated. Though the current social order has put in place some mechanism to avert its preponderance in the body politics, it is evident that they are not potent enough as these mechanisms are at variance with African culture. It, therefore behooves the African (Yorùbá) intellectuals to look for a way of re-inventing the glorious past and seek for alternatives that could quicken the attainment of the essence of humanity, hence, the argument of this discourse.

In view of the above presupposition, the argument of this discourse shares the doctrine of traditionalism (others being universalism and eclecticism) one of the categorization of scholars' responses to democratic question as orchestrated from its practice in Africa. Traditionalism is that category of democracy that frowns at the way democracy is practiced today in the continent. In their view, the tenets of democracy as currently practised in Africa cannot solve the problem, for the principles debase African culture. Fayemi (2009) captured this perspective as he argues:

For this school, democracy as currently practiced in Africa can neither be sustained, nor can it solve the bulk of the crises besetting the continent. The apologists of

this orientation have sympathy for an indigenous democratic system, which they believe is more natural to African culture. They have put forward different arguments to establish that the Western idea of democracy, which is gaining currency in contemporary Africa, should be jettisoned in lieu of our indigenous democratic culture.

Without engaging in unnecessary polemics, it is arguable that the practice of democracy could be subsumed under relativism that stipulates the inevitability of changes from one worldview or tradition to another. Given this, then the relative nature of oath-taking is to be adopted to meet the socio-cultural milieu of those involved in different situations, different approaches are often developed to address contradictions. Thus, one is poised to suggest and justify the ebb of culture in democracy. If this possibility is poised, then amending the status quo to enable the usage and adoption of traditional oath-taking processes will serve a potential role in emplacing a viable democratic system in Africa *a la* Nigeria. The profundity of this rhetoric is built on the fact that "many traditional African societies were democratic, even in their monarchical social organizations, and that resorting to their values and principles in contemporary Africa would be an antidote to the plethora of Africa's problems" (Fayemi, 2009). The incongruity of democratic frailty that has raised its hydra-headed quagmire in Nigerian political space could be checked through the deep-rooted and precursor of African traditional oath-taking processes as the existing instrument of oath-taking seems not to possess the prowess and the attendance expectation of its roles in dealing with defaulters. Hence, oath of office sworn by political office holders and followers are broken at will Momoh (1991) reverberates this propensity in the following words:

The present oath by our public officers during swearing-in ceremonies is a passive one. What we need is an active oath. An active oath is one Invoked in the name of indigenous gods, or spirits or juju... spelling out what should befall the oath taker if he willingly and deliberately enriches himself, friends or relations by exploiting or abusing his office.

The probability of people demurrals to this possibility is paramount as the current crops of political office holders' religious faith does not permit swearing in the names of indigenous gods or spirits, especially with their belief in God's commandment that urged them not to have another god except Him, the Almighty God. While on the other hand, especially from self-deception, the political office holders who are keen in not doing the right things despite their nocturnal hobnobs with traditional religionists to seek for power to sustain themselves in power would label such act as primitive and retrogressive within contemporary realities. The authenticity of these possible refutations can be invalidated, if the swearer is ready to follow the process of traditional method of oath-

taking where the oath is administered by a priest of the god whose spirit is involved. This is suggestive of making even swearing of oath through the use of Bible or Quran more active than its passive nature. This could be achieved by calling on faithful spiritual leaders of such religious faith to administer the oath with reading of relevant passages from the relevant Holy Book, followed by an invocation of what should befall him/her immediately he/she acts contrary to the rule of law, duties and obligations of his/her position. This proposal, if taken could have culminated into making the use of Bible and Quran as tools of oath-taking active than its current passive nature. However, the presupposition that for anything to work through the contents of the Bible and Quran, the user (oath taker) in this case, must have a strong belief and allegiance to the holy books with unquestioned commitment to the basic tenets of the religions which bring into being the potency of the Holy books, and poses a serious challenge to any attempt at making the contemporary instruments of oath-taking active. Aside this, there is nothing primitive or retrogressive about active oath-taking as associated with the instruments and contents of oath-taking in Yoruba culture. In fact, apart from making indigenous culture relevant in contemporary African democracy, active oath-taking will engender faith and loyalty in the political system. As the public officer who has been actively sworn-in will be conscious of the invisible mystical force tele-guiding him/her, the citizens will be taking cues from the actions/inactions of the leaders (Fayemi, 2009).

This call becomes inevitable since the political office holders are not living up to expectation in the discharge of their constitutional duties. The present model of oath-taking is not effective in the fact that despite the political office holders swearing oath of allegiance to be faithful and loyal in the art and act of carrying out their official duties and responsibilities, yet with their failure, evident in their compromise of collective gains for personal benefits, there has not been any viable repercussion whatsoever that shows that an oath has been violated. It is within this practicality, that it is apt to suggest a way out. Hence, the need to revisit and adopt the traditional method of oath-taking which is believed to have affecting presence, that metamorphose into active repercussion on defaulters. Furtherance to this, is the awesome respect for traditional values before the incursion of western culture which is often displayed by the people in reflecting the scary but responsive nature and aftermath of oath when taken.

Thus, the active potency of traditional oath-taking would make people in authority to keep faith with oath of office and the consequences of violating such an oath.

Given Nigerian situation, it is suggestive that a strong preference for traditional oath-taking for political office oath-taking, as repercussion that are envisaged are very slow with modern ways, hence, some of them that violate the oath often escape the expected wrath. Therefore, it is suggested that every political office holder and other non-

political office holders should be sworn-in into office with the symbols of the gods. Symbols like cutlass (*ada*), thunder stone (*edun ara*), waden (*Ose Sango*), dane-gun (*Ibon*) should be adopted as instruments for oath-taking in place of Bible and Quran. Also, occasion of swearing in should be performed and conducted by tested and trusted priests of the gods for no society can survive outside its culture.

CONCLUSION

Two things are important; one, it is either we realize that Africans are gullible and vulnerable with our religious mentality and two, African must take a better approach to politics, that would be from their own perspectives and being devoid of hypocrisy, self-deception and selfishness. If the latter should be the case, then, there is, therefore, the need to recognize our traditional political systems which makes meaning to our past and conforms to our religious philosophy as canvassed in this paper.

Instead of new religions' (Christianity and Islam) doctrine of consoling ourselves by leaving our political office holders into the hand of God because of the sacrosanct belief that Africans are religious, it is therefore arguable that if we want to be religious, we should adopt the tenet of African religion, one of such is oath-taking because the current democratic summersault in vogue in Nigeria cannot be addressed without a moral mindset of the political office holders and the followers that is grounded in African cultural values of which Nigeria belongs. However, if it becomes necessary to adopt any form of new religion's tool of oath taking, it should be made active by inviting religious leaders of proven integrity to administer the oath on the oath takers in place of ordinary people who do not keep to the sanctity of such religious faith.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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Full Length Research

Reintegrating released and rehabilitated offenders: A case of Windhoek Correctional Facility on Khomas Region, Namibia

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National correctional services such as life and social skills aims to rehabilitate and integrate offenders into the communities where they came from with a purpose of balancing societies and enabling offenders to overcome economic, social and personal challenges that may come their way. Such programs have a great impact on society because education thereof denotes change. This study examines the experiences of ex-offenders after being released from lawful custody and sent back to their communities. Using a qualitative approach, designed with convenience and criteria sampling techniques, five (5) released and reintegrated offenders, rehabilitated through vocational education and training. Offenders felt that, families and communities showed rejections. Initial isolation and stigmatization from society was also noted as employers are often reluctant to hire former offenders. In some cases, the absence of stable housing allows an ex-offender to feel a routine in a safe environment. It is recommended that policy makers within the Department of Correctional Services in Windhoek, Namibia should generate and improve on existing policies to help released offenders obtain their self-esteem, confidence and self-respect. It is further recommended that social workers may educate families and societies about the support released offenders need. The Correctional facility should have a better release plan with community-based organizations, including faith-based organizations to make services available after release.

Key words: Rehabilitation, integration, isolation, rejection, self-esteem, experiences.

INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations, rehabilitation of offenders and their successful social reintegration into society should be among the basic objectives of the criminal justice system in any country. The declaration binds Namibia legally with international human rights conventions, as well as the United Nations standards and

norms in crime prevention and criminal justice. The primary objective of providing social reintegration programs to offer released rehabilitated offenders with the assistance and supervision that they may need and successfully reintegrate them into the community to avoid a relapse into criminal behavior.

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It is evident in the world over that, one of the most challenging and most needed rehabilitative and integrated delivery systems is the one found within the correctional services (Conrath, 2017). Rehabilitation and integrating programs therefore, aims to rehabilitate offenders to have a great impact on society, because education denotes change according to Conrath. Change is certainly the desired outcome for the incarcerated, therefore, the conundrum lies between being in custody and the goals of education which are freedom, growth, and self-actualization which cannot be ignored (Conrath, 2017).

Offenders in the United States who received rehabilitating and integrating programs are significantly less likely to return to correctional facilities after release and are more likely to find employment than peers who did not receive such opportunities (Davis, 2015a).

Many youths in South Africa and Namibia who break the law have no basic education, knowledge, and skills for employment, and as such their ability to secure sustainable livelihood is limited. They attribute their waywardness to various reasons such as, the breakdown of the family structure resulting in single parenting or parents separated from their children for financial reasons, unemployment, poverty, depression, frustration, anger and lack of parental or adult supervision (Bruyns and Nieuwenhuizen, 2016). Lack of role-models within societies also contributes significantly to young people growing up with moral values resulting in behaviors and influences they emulate from the media and their peers. There is a belief among some people that violence is a viable means of solving problems. These reasons and many others result in a society where young people end up in conflict with the law and are put into Correctional Centre's or experience recidivism (Bruyns and Nieuwenhuizen, 2016). The new democratic and political turn in South Africa and Namibia shares this sentiment about correctional facilities (Jovanić, 2017), where the essence of rehabilitation and reintegration programs lies in the rehabilitation of offenders.

Rehabilitation programs are meant to empower offenders with life and social skills which focus on basic reading and writing skills within the context of social and positive decision-making to the benefit of the offender (Namibia Correctional Services, 2014). The Namibian Correctional Services is therefore, emphasizing on the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders in the mainstream with less pressure to avoid re-offending. This is a clear commitment by the government of the Republic of Namibia towards the rehabilitation of offenders (Ministry of Prisons and Correctional Services, 2001). Government of the Republic of Namibia (2012) (Correctional Services Act No. 9 of 2012) provides for a range of rehabilitation programs to address the needs of offenders to contribute to their successful reintegration into society and mechanisms for the release of offenders.

Offenders released from correctional institutions are

often confronted by a range of social, economic and personal challenges which make it difficult for them to survive (Borzycki and Baldry, 2015). These challenges contributed to the offenders past experience which are more directly associated with the consequences of incarceration and the transition back into the community (Borzycki and Baldry, 2015). According to Schultz, unemployment and low-quality employment is associated with high arrest rates for young adults (Schultz, 2013). Offenders have a history of social isolation, physical and emotional abuse, poor employment or no employment, and involvement in a criminal lifestyle that began at an early age. According to Borzycki and Baldry (2015) states that offenders are challenged by skills deficits that make it difficult for them to compete and succeed in the community due to poor interpersonal skills, low levels of formal education, illiteracy or innumeracy, poor cognitive and emotional functioning (Jovanić, 2017).

Researchers consistently support the notion that academic achievement decreases criminal involvement among various groups of adult (Schultz, 2013). This study, therefore, explores the understanding of offenders given education during confinement and, how they benefitted from these rehabilitation and reintegration programs upon release. The perceived benefit of these rehabilitation and re-integration programs is that offenders reintegrate with greater success rates into their respective communities.

Education, vocational programs, skills building, and other programs are vital tools to ensure that offenders returning to their communities will be able to lead productive lives. However, these programs can be challenging to the offenders that are rehabilitated and released from correctional centers as they find re-integration difficult to cope with communities.

The financial and logistics problems they face may exacerbate their daily life. Incarcerated individuals with low levels of education often find themselves without the financial resources or social support systems upon their release from correctional facilities and therefore are vulnerable to re-offending rather than becoming fully reintegrated into societies.

It is therefore, important that this study examines the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration programs within the Namibian correctional services system. It also seeks to find strategies that could be introduced to help released offenders fully integrate into societal roles and responsibilities.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative research approach by interviewing five (5) released and re-integrated offenders. All interviews were conducted at the Windhoek Correctional facility, in Namibia. Qualitative research aims to seek an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and

motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypothesis for potential qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2009).

This approach is appropriate as it give the researcher a detailed understanding of the phenomenon, and at the same time explores the insights and experiences of the individuals. This study used the non- probability sampling procedures where five (5) released and reintegrated offenders were interviewed in the study. Ethical approval to the study was obtained from the National Commission on Research Science and Technology (NCRST) to carry out data-collection. The Department of Correctional Services requested the Commissioner-General to grant the researcher permission to gather data.

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Rehabilitation and Re-integration programs

The period of transition from custody to the community can be particularly difficult for offenders. Amato and Previti (2015) makes it clear that released offenders opt for divorce because of extramarital affairs by their outside spouse. Ethical approval to the study was obtained from the National Commission on Research Science and Technology (NCRST) to carry out data-collection. The Department of Correctional Services requested the Commissioner-General to grant the researcher permission to gather data.

Incompatibility, lack of closeness or communication as attractions may fade away which often leads to divorce. This is very crucial for the offender whether he/she will be successful in the process of social reintegration into the community. It is therefore important that post released programs are seen as a continuation of the rehabilitation efforts started while in the correctional facility.

In Kenya, the Department of Probation and Aftercare Services did implement an aftercare support program that provides supervision and support to former offenders as a program for re-entry into society. This program views former offenders not only as disadvantaged and needing welfare assistance but also as having a responsibility to avoid reoffending. The program is built on that offenders deserve not only punishment but also an opportunity to build a crime-free life upon being released from the correctional system (Department of Probation and Aftercare services, 2007). The cyclical nature of crime in Kenya is to thrive because of the lack of mechanisms that force the ex-offenders in the communities to seek alternative means for survival or earnings and to develop social mechanisms or formal mechanisms that will stop them from relapse into criminal behaviors.

The South Africa criminal justice system sees rehabilitation and reintegration as part of a holistic approach in the view of allowing a collective responsibility from society. They believe that successful rehabilitation and reintegration of released offenders can only be possible if the participation of multi-stakeholders are involved, making the courts, police, communities, organizations an integral part within the entire rehabilitation and integration process (Singh 2016).

According to Griffiths and Murdoch (2017) there are three types of programs used in the South Africa correctional system which is institutional-based, surveillance-based transition and assistance based programs which at times might not be effective within the South African system. Griffiths further emphasize that these programs should be continuous and consistent through the transition. It is in the view of Griffiths that these programs should start before release while the offender is still incarcerated to ensure a smooth transition in society.

Challenges that rehabilitated and released offenders experience in the mainstream

The effects of isolation and stigmatization from society have severe and persistent effects on the ex-offender (Davis, 2015b). Employers are often reluctant to hire former offenders, especially if such individuals are yet to prove themselves after their release from custody and suffer from the stigma associated of being incarcerated. Former offenders may have little skills, expertise or experience that employers are looking for making it difficult to obtain and maintain employment (Niven and Olagundoye, 2018). The gains of employment concerning reducing re-offending may not be linked solely to the former offender finding a job but the quality of the job. Furthermore, the relationship between lawful employment and reduced recidivism may be strongly influenced by the interaction of stable accommodation, having employment-related qualifications, not being affected by drug use disorders and being proactive in asking for help with job searches (Uggen, 2016).

Released offenders typically face many barriers in accessing housing, education and health services in the community, including those of a financial or psychological nature. Offenders further suffer hardship due to the fact of being incarcerated they are not covered by a social security scheme or receive some kind of assistance with health and social security issues. Reluctant by the community health services in the treatment and prevention of illnesses such as HIV (Aids) and TB is of major concern for the released offenders (Nilsson, 2015).

Released offenders often find that they are being rejected by their loved ones and the community making it hard for them to adjust to their new environment. It happens that before incarceration the offenders were known to the community and upon released being stereotyped. Family and community support is the essence for rehabilitation and reintegration therefore by refusing to accommodate them may lead to re-offending. Without their support released offenders become destitute without food, shelter, and clothing which put more strain on their already difficult life (Charkoudian, 2015).

Effects of incarceration experiences on the lives of the rehabilitated and released offenders in the mainstream

Correctional facilities are highly controlled environments, with strict routines. Despite the boredom inherent in the setting, it is common for former offenders to have become dependent on strict routines and rules. Depending on the length of their sentence, offenders can experience a loss of life skills and knowledge of contemporary life.

Living in an environment of fear and violence can lead to the development of a hyper-vigilant state among ex-offenders, which increases the levels of anxiety. Most offenders experience a loss of family and support network while in the facility, social isolation and disconnection from former relations are also common. Most offenders develop post-traumatic stress as a result of the experience inside.

Ex-offenders who suffer from the stigma of incarceration often tend to believe that holding on to connections from their criminal past is a necessity. Released offenders do face experiences after confinement since employers are reluctant to hire offenders with criminal records. According to Haymond, many released offenders are facing prejudice from the community and systemic barriers to reintegration such as having to declare their criminal record to potential employers and a wide range of public agencies. Correctional or prison record usually stand in the way of a released offender to establish a normal life. Many offenders report that it is difficult to be in hiding in the modern age. In some instances, released offenders report that people use the internet to search for details about them routinely. (Haymond, 2014) released offenders generally find low paying job which provides few or no benefit with

little opportunity for upward mobility. Released offenders do face the disadvantage of being educationally, economically and socially deprived which further perpetuates them from inequality. In summary released offenders are still experiencing the burden of being label a criminal which put significant challenges on the individual?

Strategies that could be introduced to strengthen reintegration

It is important by engaging with communities in the planning and the delivery of interventions to foster community ownership. It is crucial to differentiate between special categories of offenders, by using methods for assessing their risks and needs, as well as the specific social reintegration issues that they may face.

According to the Correctional Services Act of 2012 of Namibia stipulates that all offenders in its facilities should be subjected to education, vocational training, and employment readiness to be both effective and compliant to society. The Act made further make provision in Nr: 95:1 (a) as far as is practicable, be engaged in such work programs as will promote and nurture the training and industrial skills of such offender to equip him or her to manage his or her life productively after release; and (b) perform such tasks on public works and other duties as may be assigned to him or her by a correctional officer.

In summary it is vital to include a well-thought-out communications and community relations strategy to foster and maintain community support and engagement. With effective monitoring and evaluation components that allow the interventions to evolve in self-improved and accountable crime reduction results (United Nations Office, 2006).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The primary data were collected from the in-depth interviews of participants. The data were narratively presented following a thematic structure that was guided by the research questions of the study. Statements that showed patterns and relationships were grouped to form themes and any other related data formed the subthemes. Verbatim was used to confirm and show credibility of data presentation and analysis.

Level of education during incarceration and after release

The participants enter Windhoek Correctional facility with very low levels of education. This issue is the social and economic inequality that contributes to fewer quality educational opportunities being available to them before incarceration. Living in a poor area often means high crime rate and peer pressure. The lack of academic and employment experience, high poverty level will continue without educational reform, both inside and outside of the correctional facility.

During the interview with the Participants, the researcher observed that all of them (the five (5) released offenders who participated in the interview) did have a history of social isolation, physical or emotional abuse, poor employment or unemployment, and involvement in a

criminal lifestyle before incarceration. Excessive use of substances and drug addiction deteriorated their physical and mental health status.

Participant 1

"I have realized that education appears to be a worthy investment for me. I am of the opinion that the main aim is to release rehabilitated offenders as productive members of society. Therefore continue education, plays a significant role in the reintegration process".

According to Uggen (2016), it is important that post released programs are seen as a continuation of the rehabilitation efforts started while in the correctional facility. It is clear from the above that the entire process should start during incarceration as this will ensure a smooth transition into society. The researchers think that, while incarcerated programs should aim at issues the offender is going to face upon release.

Challenges experienced by offenders at the time of their release

The researcher investigated the challenges that are experienced by offenders when they have been released from correctional facilities. The following are responses from some of the five (5) several participants:

Participant 3

"I feel I was confronted with a range of social, economic and personal challenges that complicate my social reintegration. The challenges are of my own circumstances and experiences. It is because of direct consequences of incarceration and the community's attitude towards me".

In this specific case the participant found himself rejected by the family and community members. The family and community as stakeholders in dealing with a crime must be educated on the importance of accepting released offenders by helping them to reintegrate. It is clear from the above statement of the participant that he did face rejection from families and the community therefore, making him vulnerable for re-offending. It is in the opinion of the researcher that family and societies are the keys to an offender's reintegration.

Participant 4

"I face practical challenges such as finding suitable accommodation with very limited means, managing financially with little or no savings until I begin to earn some lawful remuneration, accessing my basic needs".

Housing is the key factor affecting the extent to which an offender can successfully reintegrate into his or her community, as it is also likely to have direct implications for employment and social support services (Niven and Olagundoye, 2018). The researcher believes that stable housing allows an ex-offender to feel a routine in a safe environment, this will allow the offender to build positive social networks and ultimately reintegrate into the community in a sustainable way. It will foster that interconnectedness with a community which will ensure a sense of belonging.

Participant 2

“It would seem that prospective employers view employing ex-offenders as a risk not worth taking. It is clear that low paying jobs is what keeps me busy which provide few benefits and little to none progress”.

Employers are often reluctant to hire former offenders, especially if such individuals have yet to prove themselves after their release from custody and suffer from the stigma associated with being incarcerated (Niven and Olagundoye, 2018).

It is therefore, in the view of the researcher that society is unforgiving when it comes to giving second chances and offering employment opportunities to ex-offenders.

Participant 1

“I was devastated what unemployment did to me. I was having stress, low self-esteem, depression and feel a sense of worthlessness. I felt that if the doors to employment closed for me is even harder to survive”.

The gains of employment concerning reducing reoffending may not be linked solely to the former offender finding a job but the quality of the job. Furthermore, the relationship between lawful employment and reduced recidivism may be strongly influenced by the interaction of stable accommodation, having employment-related qualifications, not being affected by drug use disorders and being proactive in asking for help with job searches (Uggen, 2016). It is therefore critical that employment opportunities be given to ex-offenders to support their reintegration into society and reduce the chances of recidivism. According to the Namibian Act 9 of 2012, 97:1 b states “providing financial assistance to offenders to facilitate their reintegration into society,” which is currently non-existent in the country as many released offenders are still struggling to survive.

Strategies to be introduced to strengthen reintegration

It is clear from the interviewed five (5) participants that

offenders need serious intervention from communities and stakeholders.

Participants 3

“When I first enter the facility I needed to start with the functional literacy and numeracy and vocational education programs which were the foundation of my personal change and development”.

According to the Correctional Services Act of 2012 stipulates that all offenders in its facilities should be subjected to education, vocational training, and employment readiness to be both effective and compliant to society. It is clear from the above that offenders went through constructive activities, fostering their employability upon release and therefore their ability to successfully reintegrate into society. It is therefore in the opinion of the researcher that the Correctional Services strive to improve on its facilities across the country to achieve a positive impact on the inside of their facilities.

Participant 5

“The activities were meaningful in the facility and it assists me in rendering life in the facility more similar to life outside. I enjoyed the outdoor work and could not wait for the experience that awaits me”.

It is clear in the study that, the government did make provision in the Act as follows: as far as is practicable, be engaged in such work programs as will promote and nurture the training and industrial skills of such offender to equip him or her to manage his or her life in a productive manner after release; and (b) perform such tasks on public works and other duties as may be assigned to him or her by a correctional officer. According to the above, these programs in the facility helped them to develop a positive environment because of these constructive activities. This fosters a sense of responsibility and accountability towards the programs as the researcher had noticed. Offenders should be held accountable and responsible for their own choices and actions, but strike a balance between control support and assistance. It is of utmost importance to render assistance in an orderly manner which is coordinated with agencies involved and based on strong inter-agency cooperation the facility is having outside their premises.

Participant 4

“In my opinion, I feel with the support of the community and stakeholder my reintegration will be successful. I feel that community-based initiatives should be designed to reduce crime and to address problems of crime and social disorder in communities, and at the same time

providing rehabilitation and reintegration assistance to released offenders”.

It is vital to include a well-thought-out communications and community relations strategy to foster and maintain community support and engagement. With effective monitoring and evaluation components that allow the interventions to evolve in self-improve and accountable crime reduction results (United Nations Office, 2006).

Strategies must be required to mobilize, and sustain, community interest and involvement in assistance and supervision programs. Therefore, it can be said that communities can play an active role in the social reintegration of offenders. It is focused on the needs of the offender, their family, and neighborhoods. The researcher finds it suitable that such community involvement with the different stakeholders can address factors by focusing on motivation, education, and development of skills, employment, accommodation, interpersonal relationships, drug, and alcohol treatment.

Participant 1

“If I was involved in a transitional job program that would have provided me with temporary employment which can open my doors to the private sector employment. My understanding is these programs provide full-time work at a non-profit organization, with an emphasis on improving skills such as reliability and interpersonal skills”.

The need to educate the public about the needs of released offenders whose reintegration must be supported to ensure successful social reintegration. The researcher believes that these programs should be considered to boost job development and placement services, by offering incentives to employers and by identifying employment opportunities, to foster partnerships with private employers, and helping released offenders stay employed.

The experience of life after release

The general observation of the participants as they are still amazed at the adjustment from confinement to society as this had changed their routine of doing things when they were released. It was a learning curve for them from re-experiencing the past with today's changing world. According to participant 2 the experiences of life after released is as follows:

Participant 2

“I could felt that when the inside is where I conceal and suppress my emotions. It is who I become, and if I am are hardened in the beginning then you become even

harder, you become even colder, you become more detached”.

Living in an environment of fear and violence can lead to the development of a hyper-vigilant state among ex-offenders, which increases the levels of anxiety. Most offenders experience a loss of family and support network while in the facility, social isolation that leads to personality changes and disconnection from former relations are also common. Most offenders develop post-traumatic stress as a result of the experience inside (Shinkfield and Graffam, 2017).

The researcher's view is that poor management of mental health issues during the transition from the correctional facility to the community can be possible because of weak pre-release planning. Many ex-offenders do have mental health conditions that require them to make use of prescribing medication. Even if these conditions are managed in the environment, this can change quickly when released. Offenders may stop taking their medication or choose not to receive psychological support. This may result in the situation or condition getting worse by placing them at risk of returning to the facility.

Conclusions

It is clear from this study that a released offender's successful reintegration into society can be viewed through the ability to sustain oneself in the society which can only be achieved in the light of livelihood, accommodation, family, society, and health. Therefore attaining these basic needs comes with challenges faced by the released offender. The researcher in this study observed that according to Borzycki and Baldry (2015) states that offenders are challenged by skills deficits that make it difficult for them to compete and succeed in the community due to poor interpersonal skills, low levels of formal education, illiteracy or innumeracy, poor cognitive and emotional functioning.

The study postulates that, released offenders from correctional facilities face numerous challenges such as family and community rejection, skills deficit, lack of accommodation, and unemployment. It can be said that all these challenges are interrelated towards each other. The released offenders assert that, without decent accommodation and family support they have nowhere to go, to have access to their basic needs.

Social isolation and community rejection make it even harder for the released offender to adjust to the new environment. Charkoudian (2015) emphasizes that without food, shelter, and clothing life becomes very difficult and stressed-out. Skill deficit, unemployment and stigmatization make it difficult for the rehabilitated participants to be hired for jobs. The participants in the interview were however, clear that the criminal past and record contributed to the reluctance of employers to hire

them.

However, the Correctional Service Act 9 of 2012 makes it clear that, its functions are to ensure that every offender should be part of rehabilitation programs and activities which contribute to the rehabilitation and successful reintegration of offenders into the community as law-abiding citizens.

The participants think that adjusting from a confined environment is to completely re-learn from the experience into the life outside. The researcher observed from the interviews that the participants had emotional mood swings as a result of their incarceration, personality traits, and fear. Therefore, Shinkfield and Graffam (2017) states that released offenders developed post-traumatic stress due to the experience encountered while in the inside. It was very difficult for some of the participants in the interview to adjust due to personality changes that make it even harder for them to trust anyone. Offenders in correctional facilities experience high risk of homeless instability that causes difficulties for them in living a normal life.

Another approach to successful reintegration and rehabilitation of released offenders is to have a proper correctional education and programs in place. Therefore it is in the view of the researcher that, pre-released programs should prepare ready to be released offenders with job and life skills, education programs, and mental health counseling to become productive members of society. The participants however, were clear that constructive programs were used within the Windhoek Correctional facility which fosters employability. Undergoing the educational activities in the facility, the offenders develop a positive sense of responsibility and accountability.

It is clear from the Correctional Service Act of 2012 that stipulates that all offenders in its facilities should be subjected to education, vocational training, and employment readiness to be both effective and compliant to society. It is in this light that Windhoek Correctional facility renders support in rehabilitation programs to help released offenders cope not only with their daily lives outside but will also helps them to adapt to societal morals and values.

The researcher further noticed that the released offenders were highly in favor of a community, stakeholder engagement as this strategy will foster and maintain community support and engagement. The researcher thinks this will mobilize and sustain community interest and involvement in the process of rehabilitation and integration and at the same time enhance assistance and support. Through community involvement with different stakeholders such as the social workers, it will motivate, educate, develop skills and foster employment for all released offenders. Transitional job programs is another strategy that can be utilized according to Bloom (2015), he emphasizes that it can lead to better long term employment outcomes for

released offenders, by improving soft skills and building work history.

Recommendations

The aim of this study is to structure and design programs run in the Windhoek Correctional Facility and for that matter all correctional facilities to become a vital tool to ensure that released offenders returning to their communities should be able to lead productive lives. Additionally, that the study findings would foster the effectiveness of rehabilitation and integration within the guidelines of the Namibian Correctional system and others elsewhere. The strength of this study lies in the identification of factors that will enhance the smooth reintegration of offenders into society. The outcome of this study will be beneficial for policymakers to generate and improve the implementation of suitable programs. As this study concentrates on the benefit of released offenders, this will help them to pursue and achieve attainable goals which will help them to obtain their self-esteem, confidence, and self-respect.

It is of utmost importance that, social workers do have a very important role to play to educate families and societies about the support released offender's needs. The criminal justice system should be made aware that the reintegration of released offenders is a collective responsibility of the entire society. Therefore, the importance of accepting released offenders will help them to successfully reintegrate into society and this can only be achieved through education.

There is the need to educate the community about the challenges facing returning offenders. Community forums and informal discussions with community residents can establish trust and lead to appropriate types of services that fit the particular needs of communities. Furthermore, it is important to encourage the development of partnerships between government agencies and community organizations.

By engaging the communities in the planning and the delivery of interventions will foster community ownership when it comes to releasing of offenders. The correctional facility should have better-released planning activities in place with community-based organizations to make way for smooth integration on their release.

Religious Programs are recognized as a strong intrinsic motivator of change. This however, relies heavily on volunteers from our communities to provide religious counseling programs to help in offender management and rehabilitation programs. A more holistic approach to religious counseling should be adopted; where the conduct of religious programs on scripture reading, should include the element of rehabilitation and follow up support in the community. The Windhoek Correctional facility should create a family-focused program as the incarceration of a family member creates emotional strain

and financial difficulties for the families. These programs can be incorporated with community welfare organizations, with the aim of enhancing families coping skills and ultimately building supportive family networks for released offenders. This program can include various topics ranging from communication and reconciliation issues.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflicts of interests.

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Full Length Research

Of races: From social constructionism to biological realism

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Racial constructionists tend to make three claims about race: (1) races have their origin as social constructs—that races arise at a particular time in history; (2) races were either created with the purpose or have had the effect of creating hierarchies of power that require treating socially constructed groups in distinct ways; and (3) biological racial realism is false. These claims amount to the larger claim that because races have been (and are) social constructs, they must continue to be social constructs, and that as social constructs races cannot be (or become) biological. In this work, it is assumed the first two claims, and that the third and larger claims can be false. This work provides reasons for inferring possible conditions that would produce biologically real races from certain racial constructionists' claims, the tenability of epigenetics, culture and identity, and institutional racism.

Key words: Races, social constructionism, biological realism, epigenetics, power, politics, culture, identity, institutional racism.

INTRODUCTION

"We were all ranked together at the valuation. Men and women, old and young, married and single, were ranked with horses, sheep, and swine. There were horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children, all holding the same rank in the scale of being, and were all subjected to the same narrow examination. Silvery-headed age and sprightly youth, maids and matrons, had to undergo the same indelicate inspection. At this moment, I saw more clearly than ever the brutalizing effects of slavery upon both slave and slaveholder."

—Frederick Douglass (*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*)

In current debates about the nature of race, (political) racial constructionists (as opposed to cultural racial constructionists) tend to make three claims about race, namely that: 1) races have their origin as social

constructs—that races arise at a particular time in modern history; 2) races were either created with the purpose or have had the effect of creating hierarchies of power that require treating socially constructed groups in distinct ways; and 3) biological racial realism is false. For a brief discussion of a few of these themes, see Andreasen (2000). These claims are made by philosophers, anthropologists, and sociologists such as: Omi and Winant (2015); Haney-Lopez (2006); Mills (1997); Sundstrom (2002); Taylor (2004); Root (2008); Haslanger (2012); Sussman (2014). Those who are committed to these claims tend to make the larger claim that because races have been (and are) social constructs, they must continue to be social constructs, and that as social constructs races cannot be (or become) biological; races can only be social constructs—no more, no less.

Further, in much of the current debate philosophers

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tend to commit to an assumption about particular requirements of race if it is to be a biological concept. Philosophers of race tend to assume that groups thought to be races in accordance with everyday use must exhibit genetic distinctions if there are in fact biological races—that is, a biological notion of race only makes sense if there are genetic distinctions separating groups ordinarily thought to be races. So whether one is a contemporary racial skeptic (Appiah, 1985; Glasgow, 2009; 2019), a constructionist (Haslanger, 2012; 2019; Jeffers, 2019), or a biological realist (Kitcher, 1999; Andreasen, 2000; Spencer, 2019) there tends to be an underlying assumption that evidence of genetic distinctness is required in order for an adequate biological conception of race to exist.

However, let us assume both that races have their beginning in society and that they are currently socially constructed. From these assumptions, it is proposed the following. If it can be (1) supported that there are gene-expressional adaptations and inheritances that are caused by particular environmental stresses, (2) thought that responses to those stresses (through culture and the internalization of racial identities) could lead to gene-expressional adaptations and inheritances along socially constructed racial lines, and (3) that there is something like “institutional racism” (as a specific context that produces distinct cultures and the internalization of racial identities) that tends to affect distinct racial groups in specific ways, then we have reason to infer conditions for the possible emergence (or perhaps even reemergence) of biological (though non-genetic) races. And so this work aims at metaphysics, and not an ontology, of race. The latter is used to describe existing phenomena; it answers *what is*. The former describes conditions for the possible emergence of some phenomena; it answers what must be the case in order for *what is (or in my case—what might be)* to exist. This work describes conditions for the possible emergence of a biological (though non-genetic) notion of race. This notion of race would exist even if divisions were caused and are maintained by constructed categories. In fact, this biological notion would rely on the maintenance of the social categories. Further, this notion would challenge what is assumed in the debate about the nature of race, namely that what is required in order to have a biological notion of race is genetic differentiation—whether genetic essences, similarities, or clusters. The aim here is to present reasons for inferring possible conditions that would produce biologically real races from certain racial constructionists’ claims, the tenability of epigenetics, culture and identity, and institutional racism.

EPIGENETIC ADAPTATIONS AND INHERITANCES AS GROUNDS FOR BIOLOGICAL REALISM

Epigenetics is a theory about gene-expression. Definitionally: “Epigenetics refers to how genetic material

is activated or deactivated—that is, expressed—in different contexts or situations.” It “refers to interactions between DNA and other molecules in its local environment, interactions that influence gene expression” (Moore, 2015). The theory posits that for living organisms there are ranges of possible adaptations to environmental conditions within the range of species-specific genetic traits. Modifications may occur in some organism given environmental conditions without genes themselves being altered (Harper, 1989; 2005; 2013; Carey 2012). Rather, within a species-specific range, the manner in which genes are expressed get altered. These alterations can be cashed out in terms of phenotypic traits. Consequently, there are phenotypic alterations without genotypic modifications—phenotypic changes that do not involve changes to DNA sequences.

Epigenetic (gene-expressional) adaptations are implicated in at least two systems, namely methylation and histone modification. Methylation is a process wherein a compound known as methyl (CH_3) attaches to certain cytosine bases of DNA and acts as a binding site for other proteins. The more methyl attaches to DNA, the more gene-expression is inhibited (turned down) or becomes dormant (turned off). As such, methylation modifies the function of genes. Additionally, methylation “may also stop DNA transcription machinery from binding to the gene promoter, and this prevents mRNA messenger molecule from being produced” (Carey, 2012, 59). Here, mRNA cannot be copied from DNA because DNA becomes too tightly coiled to be read and thereby copied.

With regard to histone modification, certain proteins (called histones), around which DNA is wrapped, can be modified by methyl or acetyl attachments in a way that leads to either activating, turning up, turning down, or deactivating genes—that is, histones can become modified in a way that leads to varying degrees of gene-expression by affecting nearby genes (Carey, 2012; Moore, 2015). Histone acetylation is thought to have the reverse effect of DNA methylation. Whereas DNA methylation deactivates or turns down gene-expression, histone acetylation activates or turns gene expression up. Now the attachment of methyl and acetyl molecules to acids in histone bodies can, among other things, “alter the affinities to both DNA sequences and other proteins, thereby facilitating or inhibiting the likelihood of gene expression within a cell line” (Harper, 2013, 330). Here the spacial conformation of chromatin is modified.

Though both of these systems affect gene-expression, they differ in an important respect. Methylation “is a very stable epigenetic change” (Carey, 2012, 72). Once a cytosine base becomes methylated, it tends to stay methylated. Histone modifications are different. “Most histone modifications are much more plastic than this. A specific modification can be put on a histone at a particular gene, removed and then put back on again” (Ibid). Insulin, estrogen, addictive drugs, fatty acids in

intestines all modify histones in a way that can be re-modified. And so for epigeneticists the process through which genes are expressed is an interplay between pre-given biological inheritances and environmental conditions, and these adaptations in gene-expression can impact an organism for the entirety of its life.

Many epigeneticists also theorize that organisms can pass on patterns of gene-expression to offspring. Now it is important to note that epigenetic inheritance, as processes of the transmission of epigenetic effects from ancestors to descendants, is much more controversial than epigenetic adaptations, and there is widespread disagreement as to whether and how much it occurs. To avoid controversy, this study takes Moore (2015)'s understanding of inheritance, wherein "a phenotype 'inherited 'as long as it is reproduced reliably in successive generations" (165). Epigenetic inheritance can occur in one of two separable (but perhaps connected) ways. First, an organism is deeply affected during fetal development in the organism's mother's uterus, which we might take to be an "internal environment." This internal environment is theorized to reflect the mother's social environment—the "external environment"—wherein it takes shape. An organism's mother's hormones can be said to inform the maturing fetus of probable stresses and other environmental conditions that the organism will face. "[T]he pregnant mother's responses to factors in her immediate surroundings, such as the availability of nutrients, may transmit signals to her developing offspring impacting their later metabolic responses, food preferences, and neural development" (Harper, 2013, 334-335). And further, environmental conditions affecting the organism's father can also affect the organism's fetal development (Harper, 2013, 335; Carey 2012, 104-105). The father's "gamete, sperm, can transmit a signal to nutrient quality experienced by a previous generation" (Harper, 2013, 335).

Second, patterns of methylation and modifications to histone can themselves be replicated in offspring. Here, patterns get passed on from parent to offspring by a pattern known as reprogramming, where epigenetic modifications from parents that were stripped when male and female pronuclei are fused to form a zygote become installed in the early development of the zygote (Carey 2012, 121-126). These inheritances may occur even absent the environmental conditions that produced the gene-expressions responsible for altered phenotypic traits in parents.

So as opposed to genetic inheritances, which are taken to be invariable and static, epigenetic inheritances are thought to be more malleable but can become stable, particularly given stability in environments—that is, stability in the experiences and surroundings of offsprings' ancestors (Harper, 2005, 344; Carey, 2012, 106). Given transmissions of signals and direct patterns of epigenetic modifications, organisms are thought to

develop certain dispositions, preferences, and phenotypic traits in accordance with many of his/her/its parents' experiences even before entering a world wherein he/she/it is cultured.

Evidence of gene-expressions (epigenetic adaptations) and inherited patterns of gene-expressions (epigenetic inheritances) is quite numerous (Harper, 2013; Pembrey et al., 2005; Carey, 2012; Stringhini and Vineis, 2018; Szyf and Bick, 2012). And in addition to citing purely physiological expressions and transmissions, scholars note psycho-behavioral adaptations and inheritances (Weaver et al., 2004; Moore, 2015; Harper, 2013; Carey, 2012; Essex et al., 2011). And so, organisms' genes only tell us a part of the story of the organisms' physiology and psycho-behavior. To get a more accurate picture, we must consider environments wherein organisms' and their ancestors' experiences occur, insofar as these help to explain why certain of the offspring's genes get expressed in certain ways (Harper, 2013, 332).

Now many epigenetic adaptations are thought to be the result of pressures placed on organisms, which suggests that they better satisfy the demands of survival (Harper, 2013, 344-345). This suggests that they are the result of a biological response to dealing with stress in environments. As it relates to humans, it is first theorized that limitations in food supply is a condition that causes adaptations and inheritances (Harper, 2013, 345). Second, "the occurrence of migration and/or invasion, often leading to the enslavement of the vanquished peoples for multiple generations" is thought to cause adaptations and inheritances (Harper, 2013, 345-346). Third, limitations in resources are thought to have an effect on neural development, such that organisms become less able to "think outside of the box"—to conceptualize new ways to solve problems or propose new materials (Harper, 2013, 346).

Two questions can be raised about these conditions in thinking about a biological notion of race. First, why think that these kinds of stress are the only ones that cause adaptations? Might we not think that excessive access to food, conquest, and voracious access to resources produce adaptations? As is implicated in Sullivan (2014)'s work, there is no reason to exclude these from being possible causes of adaptations and inheritances.

Second, why think that problem-solving mechanisms or innovative response-preserving adaptations are blocked given limitations in resources? One might acknowledge that certain environments place restrictions on agents' ability to "think outside of the box" in conventionally ways. However, what if humans have a basic drive to solve problems or imagine possible futures and to innovate? And what if there are always responses that preserve this ability? In fact cultures and culture-products might be explained by a drive to preserve these abilities while surviving in certain environments.

Consider Ellison (1999)'s description of the blues: "The blues is an impulse to keep the painful details and

episodes of a brutal experience alive in one's aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grain, and to transcend it, not by the consolation of philosophy, but by squeezing from it a near-tragic, near-comic lyricism" (264). Ellison describes the blues as an innovative survival tool that a group creates and embraces wherein members realize that they cannot escape the pain of life, but must face it, and that facing it requires smiling and sharing a laugh. His implicit point is that blues is a creative problem-solving culture-product that derives from and is embraced within a particular set of environmental stresses to which must be adapted so that people survive.

CULTURE, RACIAL IDENTITY, AND EPIGENETIC ADAPTATIONS

Now culture should neither be overlooked nor underestimated in a discussion about epigenetics and race. One might imagine that culture—which entails producing a certain style of beauty, customs, technological advances, and other survival/non-survival related modes of interaction, as a response to certain environmental factors—could cause epigenetic adaptations and inheritances. Additionally, culture is important for our discussion of epigenetics because of its effect on identity, specifically given how identity influences and constrains humans' strivings in ways that may cause epigenetic adaptations.

One might think that environmental factors such as particular stresses that socially constructed groups face cause certain cultures to become attributable to or characteristic of them given stereotypes and endorsements by group-members. And so one might think that certain culture-types become endorsed by members of socially constructed groups. Members form their identities around them, thereby defining themselves and "legitimate" members of groups by acceptance, and an "acting out" or "acting from within" them. Here, agents are legitimate members of some group G to the extent that they accept and act out or from within traits $t_1, t_2, t_3, \dots, t_n$. Endorsing certain traits and forming identities around them could participate in members of socially constructed races exhibiting similarities in gene-expressions, thus contributing to the emergence of a biological conception of race. This is fleshed out by appeal to claims made about culture and identity by a few philosophers of race.

Locke (2012) attempts to answer a longstanding impasse regarding the relationship between races and cultures. On one side anthropologists took culture to depend on race such that different races invariably (perhaps by nature) produce different cultures. On the other side anthropologists denied any relationship between race and culture. Locke's goal is to refute both, and to explain that races are social phenomena deriving

from cultures, thereby illustrating some stable, though unnecessary link between them.

For Locke races develop historically and socially. Historical and social conditions section off people in certain sorts of ways that tend to produce a varying degree of proclivities towards certain values, ways of seeing the world, modes of expression, etc. These conditions lead people to produce varying styles of beauty, customs, technological advances, and other survival/non-survival related modes of interaction as specific traits of culture-types. What binds members of groups together is a likeness in culture-types, as a somewhat stable though malleable set of culture-traits. Race, then, becomes the idea (a sort of name under which groups understand themselves) that better binds the group-members together, and thereby becomes a value that further unifies culture-traits by causing a robust sense of solidarity among those who understand themselves as a unified group with a specific culture-type (Locke, 2012, 274). It is culture-heredity, and "[i]nstead therefore of regarding culture as expressive of race, race by this interpretation is regarded as itself a culture product" (Locke, 2012, 273). Here, Locke seems committed to a type of racial category constructionism, where the creation and persistence of race is brought about by cultural practices that represent a certain race as the particular one that it is.

At least in this particular article, the type of racial category construction to which Locke seems committed is something of a performative theory of race, where race exists and operates within a matrix of preferring certain culture-traits of a type and performing certain social roles related to some specified culture-type that, when performed make one a member of this race. "Race operates as tradition, as preferred traits and values.... Race, then...seems to lie in that peculiar selective preference for certain culture-traits and resistance to certain others..." (Locke, 2012, 274). A member of $Race_R$ is a member of $Race_R$ because and to the extent that he/she prefers (and seemingly performs from his/her preference) culture-traits ($v_1, v_2, v_3, \dots, v_n$) that are accepted as being the content of culture-type- T . It would appear that performance is necessary because the member of $Race_R$ understands (identifies) him/herself as a member of $Race_R$ in solidarity with others, which requires a public embrace or expression—an acting out—of culture-traits ($v_1, v_2, v_3, \dots, v_n$).

Let us say that race operates as tradition, particularly as a name for preferring and performing from certain culture-traits. (Now it is important to note that one need not think that there must always be conscious and intentional preferences or performances from preferred culture-traits, and thus that every trait of a type is either understood or consciously valued. In preferring trait $_x$ one might indirectly, that is, unconsciously or unintentionally, prefer or perform from some $-y$. A member of $Race_R$ might desire to mate with another member of the same

race, and in so doing, indirectly prefer and perform culture-trait, because of that desire, failing to either understand or consciously endorse the preference.) However, groups construct certain culture-types and begin to express preferences for these types. Members of groups understand themselves in relation to the traits of the types, such that there is a strong connection between their identities and these types. Members come to value themselves, others with whom they see themselves in solidarity, and the racial group as a name for their culture-type, all in a certain sort of way. It seems at least plausible that similarities in gene-expressions among members might emerge given a strong association between members and types.

Consider very basic culture-products such as food-preferences, cuisine, and eating habits. We know that these cause epigenetic adaptations, as methylation is affected by diet (Carey, 2012, 110-113). And we know that certain foods more attributable to certain cultural cuisines assist or inhibit methylation or acetylation (Moore, 2015). Further, we know that “human food preferences can be transmitted across generations via substances that an embryo, fetus, or infant detects in its mother’s womb or breast milk, or that an infant detects in either parent’s saliva or scent.” In fact: “This is how early experiences with particular flavors could contribute to the perpetuation across generations of different ethnic and cultural cuisine preferences” (Ibid). If there is both a sharp distinction separating races and similarity between racial group-members, then (given other environmental factors/stresses) it seems that distinct epigenetic adaptations along socially constructed racial lines is possible. This would be stronger if members begin to value certain aesthetic features that are considered attractive in potential mating partners who also prefer and perform from the same type. And because racial group-members view race as a value, preferring certain culture-traits of a type, it seems to follow that they would more likely create consistent environments that make inheritances more stable. All of this is to say that socially constructed races that create and demonstrate a preference for certain cultures might be thought to have the reflexive effect of fixing gene-expressions along racial lines that have been socially constructed.

Now culture is much more than cuisine, food-choice, and certain features that make persons more attractive as mating partners. I think that a stronger case can be made for similarities in racial group-members’ gene-expressions if we consider cultures’ effects on identities. Identities have psychological and social effects. They shape the ways people conceive of themselves and their projects. People begin to see and interact with the world in particular ways, construct and engage in language-practices in certain sorts of ways, take on goals in accordance with standards dictated by identities, and conceptualize good lives in the backdrop of them. As we construct cultural identities, they construct us. And these

have implications for neurological activity that controls processes of thought, which are known to result in epigenetic adaptations.

Consider an insight provided by Ian Hacking (2007), namely “making up people” and its effect on identities. “Making up people” refers to the “ways in which a new scientific classification may bring into being a new kind of person, conceived of and experienced as a way to be a person (285).” It can be cashed out with a five-step framework, according to which there is 1) classification of 2) individuals and peoples into kinds within, and supported by, 3) institutions where 4) knowledge about kinds of people is produced by 5) experts. Classification tends to invite stereotypes that need to be internalized by classified groups in order for them to be “made up.”

At least in the article from which this language was taken, Hacking does not apply these ideas directly to race. Hacking (2007) is “interested in classifications that are studied in the sciences, where knowledge is not simply instrumental” (290). Like many social constructionist ideas about race, Hacking takes race to have been constructed for a particular purpose, namely the suppression of certain groups. However, as Hacking himself suspects, his framework can be applied to race. So let’s apply this process to some socially constructed racial group “blacks,” and provide further specificity—“American”—that regards the nationality of this group, such that “black Americans” are a subset of “blacks” grouped together by some location and history. Here 1) “black” is attributed to 2) certain agents, American born, possessing presumed physiological and psychological traits, who are (at first glance) thought to derive some of their ancestry from those subjected to African chattel slavery and who have a particular social value within, and supported by, 3) American legal, medical, educational/academic, psychological, and various social institutions where 4) particular knowledge, such as susceptibility to poverty, criminal behavior, some range of intelligence, biological or genetic capacity, musical or sports-related ability, etc. about the social kind “black Americans” has been produced by 5) sociologists, medical practitioners, cognitive scientists, philosophers of biology, psychologists, etc. Classification, and thus what is “known” (falsely believed) about “black Americans,” invites stereotypes that are internalized and responded to by this group. If Hacking’s framework is both tenable and applicable to race, being a “black American” becomes a new kind of person, particularly given the production and internalization of knowledge produced about and by this group.

Production and internalization of knowledge causes “black Americans” to construct lives in the backdrop of certain traits; they take on or act out the traits, which direct possible futures for their lives. In so doing they craft a culture and thus cultural identities around certain traits. Under certain (perhaps rather austere) conditions, they find certain activities intellectually or physically

stimulating, certain pursuits suitable, praiseworthy, worthwhile, and authentic given both the value placed on the traits, and (if Locke is correct) their desired solidarity with others classified under the same term. Other activities and pursuits are found lacking worth or inauthentic. In the process of valuing certain pursuits and living certain lives, they cultivate certain traits. Others are neglected. By implication of cultivating certain traits they may cultivate certain expressions that control hormones and other biomolecules, along with neurological pathways.

So if some constructed group, say “black Americans,” has been created by new experiences of being raced in accordance with the above framework (where so much “knowledge” impacts them, their environment, and others with whom they engage), and epigenetic adaptations follow, then epigenetic adaptations may manifest in this racial group *qua* its being a racial group. And if different races are categorized in different ways, such that internalization (and treatment) are at least generally distinct, then one might expect general differences in epigenetic adaptations along racial lines. And finally, if epigenetic adaptations can be carved up along racial lines, then we have a biological notion of race.

Categorizing groups also shapes responses from automatic cognitive processes by and toward people who are represented as belonging to categories, and guides behaviors that shape and reshape environments wherein they live (Mallon, 2018). In so doing, it provides a basis for treating group-members in certain ways. So say that “knowledge” produced about members of some race is that they “lack talent in the area of mathematics,” or “have a proclivity toward criminal behavior.” Without doubt, this “knowledge” motivates automatic cognitive processes. Members of the race, along with their behaviors, appear *with* this “knowledge.” Consider Allport et al. (2014)’s claims that: “Nothing that strikes our eyes or ears conveys its message directly to us. We always *select* and *interpret* our impressions of the surrounding world. Some message is brought to us by the ‘light without’ but the meaning and significance we give to it are largely added by the ‘light within’” (165). In perceiving something—in this case the actions of some racialized agent—the perceiver supplies an interpretation of actions that can diverge given prejudices of the perceiver. The “light from without” may affect our perceptive faculties, providing us with content that allows an interpretation. However it is the “light from within” that gives meaning to the content.

Now insofar as members and their behaviors appear with “knowledge,” members and their behaviors confirm the “knowledge.” A seeming innocuous action like “running in the park,” for members who are “susceptible to criminal behavior” can be perceived as “running away from a crime committed.” Criminality is perceived with or belonging to the act of “running in the park.” Mistakes on a mathematics exam, for members who “lack talent in the

area of mathematics,” are perceived as “incapable of performing mathematical calculations.” In perceiving a world of racialized actors we very often perceive our own biases and act thereupon. This affects legal-, medical-, housing-, immigration-, and job-related fields, structuring social environments in ways thought to produce epigenetic adaptations. See: Stringhini and Vineis (2018); Kuzawa and Sweet (2009); Choi et al. (2009); and Parent et al. (2012) for healthy discussions of the ways in which these produce epigenetic adaptations.

There is an important potential objection that needs to be addressed. One might appeal to the complexity of identities within any particular racial identity, and accuse me of oversimplifying racial identities. The connection between race, culture, identity, and epigenetics seems to suggest that all members of racial groups act and experience the world in some one way. However when we factor in class, the range of members’ interests within constructed races, the overlap of members’ interests across constructed races, professions and other social roles influencing identities, etc., it seems hard to believe that there can ever be anything consistent about epigenetic adaptations along racial lines. So the question is whether the complexity of racial identities negates the possibility of stability and consistency in adaptations and inheritances along socially constructed racial lines.

There is evidence of epigenetic adaptations and inheritances that track along racial lines even given the multifariousness of individuals’ identities. For a good source of this evidence, see Sullivan (2015). While Sullivan focuses on a couple of cases that are helpful for race, namely the stories of Kim Anderson and Brittney, she also provides citations for a multiplicity of studies on race (and sex) and epigenetics. It cannot be discussed here, but will offer explanations for it. This evidence can be explained in at least three ways. First, certain identities within a web of identities have unequal weight. Second, certain identities pervade or exhaust other identities. Third, there is interconnectivity in performing particular identities from prescriptions for an overarching socially constructed type.

First, the uneven weight of identities within a complex web. It is undoubtedly true that every individual is a complex web of identities. However, in social networks, as in society at large, certain identities seem to carry more weight. Certain identities within the web are more meaningful more often, in a greater number of social settings and with greater regularity than others. So, I may be a philosophy professor. Yet more often in social settings and with greater regularity, the fact that I am a philosophy professor is either irrelevant or significantly less relevant than other identities within my web. There are times and settings wherein certain identities take precedence, and are ones that always seem relevant. There are identities within my web with which I always wake, of which I am constantly reminded, in light of which I am constantly approached and engaged, and are more

consequential in determining certain forms of treatment. I am unable to hide or downplay certain identities when they are disadvantageous or dangerous. Racial identities are “weightier” than others, both in terms of significance and regularity.

Secondly, the permeation or exhaustion of particular identities within a web. Beyond inequality in weight, certain identities seem to pervade and can exhaust others. It is true that I am an American, a professor, a man, of a certain age, etc. Still, something like race seems to pervade these. I am a *black* American, a *black* professor, a *black* man, of a certain age, etc. Kim Anderson (to use a case discussed by Sullivan (2015)) is a *black* lawyer, a *black* mother, a *black* woman, of a certain age, etc. And the addition of race as a qualifier for these identities is meaningful both psychologically and socially. Racial identities are “deeper” than other (though perhaps not all) identities, insofar as it pervades them. Insofar as racial identities pervade others, the others are experienced in light of race.

Lastly, the interconnectivity in performing particular identities from prescriptions for an overarching socially constructed type. Undoubtedly there are different ways to be within some identity, even “weightier” and “deeper” ones such as race. However, I think that there are overarching connections between the different members of a constructed type. Let’s see this with a non-racial example and then connect it with race.

There are many differences among students. However, there are certain prescribed conventions that structure: 1) how students understand the identity performed; 2) their identity’s relationship to others’ performed identities; and 3) the meaning of certain objects occupying spaces in contexts wherein they perform their student-identity. Given the student’s understanding of the objects in my office, certain conventions surrounding what it means to be a student, what their relationship is to me as a professor (and assuming that I open the door and enter after the student, thereby not limiting the student’s options) the student will not walk to the big chair that is behind the desk and in front of the computer. The student understands the meaning of objects in the context of the space that we occupy, what identity he/she is performing, the relationship between him/her as “student” and me as “professor,” and seats him/herself in one of the “guest” or “student” chairs. If he/she seated him/herself in my chair, I would question whether the student has misunderstood either “1,” “2,” or “3.” Why has this expectation of *all* students? Even though students are very different—having different personalities, proclivities, etc.—there are certain prescribed conventions that govern the behavior of those performing these socially constructed types. And thus there are higher-order similarities connecting diverse agents, even given the lower-level differences separating them.

Now race. again, there are many different ways to be a member of some race. However, my claim is that there

are higher-order connections between members who perform their specific racial identities because there are certain prescribed conventions for members performing racial identities. These conventions structure how members of races understand the identities that they perform, their racial identities’ relationship to other races, and the meaning of certain objects occupying social spaces in contexts wherein they perform racial identities. These allow for efficient coordination or navigation. And social penalties are the result of violating these conventions. Though not explicitly stated, in the case of students the strength of the connection between individual members of the types will depend on the austerity of penalties for breaking conventions surrounding performing the identity. And like students (and professors), there will be a very strong overarching connection between members of a race if there are austere penalties for disregarding conventions surrounding performing some racial identity. The degree of strength higher-order connections between members of socially constructed Identity₁ depends on the austerity of penalties for disregarding conventions prescribed for performing socially constructed Identity₁. And my suspicion is that these can be asymmetrical, either as they regard professor/students or Race₁/Race₂.

To use American race-relations throughout much of the 1900’s as an example, there are certain ways that blacks and whites understood themselves—that is, the identity that they performed. Further, there were certain ways that blacks and whites were expected to perform their racial identities in relation to each other, given this understanding. When a black and a white were both walking on the sidewalk, it was prescribed that the black step off of the sidewalk, and to walk with his/her head lowered. And when spoken to, the black must say “sir” or “ma’am,” but must never meet the gaze of the white. Moreover, “white-only” and “colored” water fountains and segregated buses, etc. served as objects occupying spaces in contexts wherein they perform their racial identity that structured their identity-performances.

Consider Du Bois (2003)’ claim that black Americans have a peculiar double-consciousness. For Du Bois, being black in America meant measuring one’s worth—aesthetically, culturally, artistically, morally, and even as a human being—like and in relation to those who doubted that there was any worth or value in black humanity (9). This double-consciousness was the product of living in America, where belief that one is a worthy human being with self-respect could neither develop nor flourish due to conventions surrounding acting as a “black.” It seems that Du Bois thought that being black in American required one conform to prescribed conventions to think and act in a self-hating way that validated ideals and standards that questioned or denied black humanity. Being “black” required internalizing many of the inferior stereotypes as “knowledge” produced by experts in the way that Hacking describes. Violation of these

conventions came at the cost of being penalized in very austere ways, particularly given slavery's recent end and the beginning of what has been termed black Americans' nadir (Logan, 1997). And for Du Bois, being black in this way pervaded the many individual differences separating black Americans. Double-consciousness was interwoven throughout black American history, and links the black artisan, minister, and savant.

Certainly Du Bois—having published this work in 1903—lived in a different world. However, one might think that there are still or could reemerge prescribed conventions surrounding performing the identity “black,” with rather austere penalties for violations. So one might think there are or could reemerge overarching connections between the black professor and comedian, ball-player and astronaut, singer and groundskeeper. So for example, when walking into a classroom as a “black” professor, one may be expected to be “comical,” “jovial,” or “cool,” or perhaps deliver a lecture in more of a “prophetic” “energetic” or “preacher-esque” tone.

To conclude this section, what the author has tried to provide so far are reasons why we might think that a biological notion of race could derive from socially constructed races given the truth of epigenetics, cultures, and racial identities. Still, culture and racial identities respond in part to social environments; social environments help to provide explanations for why certain cultures and racial identities are constructed and become rather “thick.” And thus a discussion of social environments is needed. The kind of environment would tend to affect distinct socially constructed racial groups in very specific ways, and would provide an explanation for the thickness of cultures and racial identities, prescribed conventions, and penalties for disregarding them. I will call this environment “institutionally racist.”

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM AND EPIGENETIC ADAPTATIONS

There are a number of accounts of racism, both individual and institutional (For an overall sketch of views, see Anderson (2015).) I construct “something of” an account that concerns institutions. What I propose is more of a name given to a particular environment than a definition or complete description of institutional racism. One may call it “institutionally racist” insofar as I construct it from considerations of institutional racism. This environment allows us to think that distinct cultures and racial identities, along with prescribed conventions and penalties, would consistently govern racial group-members' lives. And so it provides an environment wherein epigenetic adaptations and inheritances *thickly* occur along racial lines.

The term “institutional racism” was first used by Carmichael et al. (1992) to mean “the predication of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of *subordinating* a racial group and maintaining

control over that group” (3). It is thought to rely “on active and pervasive operation of anti-black attitudes and practices” (Carmichael et al., 1992). Here institutional racism requires *beliefs*—“whites are ‘better’ than blacks; and therefore blacks should be subordinated to whites,” attitudes—*ill-will* towards blacks by whites, *actions*—in terms of policies that both intend and actually do subordinate blacks, and *pervasiveness*—the permeation of beliefs and attitudes that (with institutionalized policies) structure society in a certain sort of way that systemically aims to work against, disenfranchise, and therefore subordinate blacks. Subordinative policies thereby form a “white power structure;” they take political, economic, and social decisions about the shape of both American life generally and black American life specifically out of black Americans' hands (Carmichael et al., 1992). So Carmichael et al. (1992) understand an institutionally racist environment as one wherein *there are certain beliefs about the superiority of certain races over others that, along with ill-will towards the perceived inferior race, motivate actions that affect the perceived inferior race in critical aspects of American life, thereby taking political, economic, and social decisions out of their hands.*

In this environment there are few political protections for black Americans and no ability to gain protections because of both individual acts and institutional policies/practices that support these acts, along with blacks' inability to affect their own lives through political decision-making. Lacking political decisions directly relates to and affects economic and social matters. Because of a lack of political protection and decision-making, black Americans suffer income inequality, pervasive unemployment, outright exploitation given exorbitant prices and excessive interest-rates charged on poor goods, failed promises for black veterans, and difficulty procuring FHA loans when black Americans do qualify for them. As a result of a number of policies that work together to oppress them, black Americans are forced to live in dilapidated neighborhoods, often without adequate food-sources and -qualities, and are “treated as a lowly animal, not to be housed properly, or given adequate medical services, and by no means a decent education” (Carmichael et al., 1992).

Given what has been argued about epigenetic adaptations, cultures, and identities (with conventions and penalties for violations), such an environment is certainly one that might lead to epigenetic adaptations and inheritances along racial lines. It would appear that different socially constructed races—at least whites and blacks—are treated in distinct and specific ways that leads to “something of” a racial hierarchy. Socially constructed races are segregated. Segregated races are exposed to different environments with diverging access to education, food-choices and -qualities, medical treatment, and environmental conditions such as exposure to pollutions. Further, mothers of different races would certainly have differing access to certain food

sources in key moments during pregnancy-which we know causes epigenetic adaptations and inheritances (Carey, 2012). These conditions alone are likely to lead to epigenetic adaptations along racial lines.

If Carmichael et al. (1992), are correct in their description of institutional racism, then this environment seems to be a kind that would produce diverging cultures and racial identities that are quite thick. Members are treated in certain ways because of their race. In fact entire groups of people are affected in very specific ways by policies and practices aimed either at disparaging or overvaluing them. Further policies, beliefs, and attitudes inform how members of different races perform their identities, particularly if they are tied to one's employment or social acceptability. In this environment we might expect there to be conventions around speech and action, with austere or at least very costly penalties that result if conventions are violated. Speaking in certain ways is both expected and required, not merely in terms of dialect but also in terms of content. Validating and aspiring to certain standards of beauty are normalized while others are taboo. These all inform internalization, automatic responses, and treatment of others in accordance with the stereotypes of socially constructed races.

So certainly this environment explains how distinct cultures and racial identities exist, why prescribed conventions are created and performed, and how/why penalties follow from breaking conventions. And further, this environment provides something of a social hierarchy wherein social status can cause adaptations and inheritances stratified along the social groups of the hierarchy. This can be found in cases involving animals. For example, Moore (2015) discusses experiments wherein rhesus monkeys were placed in socially stratified hierarchies, after which researchers recorded their DNA methylation patterns. It was found that there were differences in DNA methylation patterns of high versus low-ranking monkeys and similarities within the two groups. Moore concludes that "if this is true for monkeys, it is probably true for human beings as well" (pg. 97). The claim is uncertain because, as is obvious, certain kinds of experiments required for definitive proof cannot ethically be conducted on humans. The question is whether we want to endorse this account as the only or best type of environment that would satisfy this criteria for the emergence of biological races.

Though it is clear that Carmichael et al., are responding to race in America at a particular time in history, one need not think that "institutional racism" requires either the subordination of blacks or that whites be the subordinating group. So, let's represent Carmichael et al's conception with the following form:

Institutional racism requires both (1) beliefs(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) about the inferiority of some racial group_R and ill-will towards racial group_R, and (2) conscious unity with persons who endorse beliefs (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) and ill-will

towards racial group_R for the purpose of maintaining privilege that motivate policies(p_1, p_2, \dots, p_n) and other practices(m_1, m_2, \dots, m_n) as actions that, because they are endorsed pervasively, intentionally structure society in a certain sort of way that systemically work against, disenfranchise, and therefore subordinate racial group_R.

Seemingly, the environment need not be as thick as this account. If this form accurately represents Carmichael et al's institutionally racist environment, then it seems to rely on motivation by individual-actors, endorsement from explicit beliefs and ill-will, and actions in the form of policies being made in order to satisfy explicit beliefs and attitudes. However, why think that this type of environment requires beliefs and attitudes, that either beliefs, attitudes, and privilege be the motivation for commitment to certain policies, or that these policies be institutionalized or supported to maintain the superior/inferior relationships between racial groups? One might think that a failure to appropriately correct policies that were institutionalized to create or maintain superior/inferior relationships between socially constructed races is enough to be preserve or create an environment wherein epigenetic adaptations exist along racial lines.

Moreover, if our goal is to have a description of the type of environment wherein epigenetic adaptations and inheritances emerge along racial lines, then what seems necessary is an environment with a more defined hierarchy than Carmichael et al's conception provides. What is required are policies and practices that place some race at the top of the hierarchy, some race at the bottom, and other races more clearly rank-ordered between the two in order to capture a more complete range of biological races that matches socially constructed ones.

So while Carmichael et al's conception illustrates an environment wherein we might think epigenetic adaptations along socially constructed racial lines can occur, it might not be the only or best conception. I revise Carmichael et al's conception in the following way. An "institutionally racist" environment wherein epigenetic adaptations and inheritances along socially constructed racial lines can stably emerge, minimally requires pervasive conformity to policies(p_1, p_2, \dots, p_n) and other practices (m_1, m_2, \dots, m_n) as actions that structure society in a certain sort of way that systemically affect all socially constructed racial groups, but that work against, disenfranchise, and therefore subordinate racial groups(_{R, S, T, ...X}) in dissimilar and distinct ways that rank-order them under a racial group(_Q) because they are members of racial groups(_{R, S, T, ...X}).

This conception gives us the pervasive effects of policies and practices discussed by Carmichael et al without having them motivated by beliefs, attitudes, and benefit. Endorsement of policies and practices due to beliefs and attitudes may make an institutionally racist environment more consistent, and thus may be an

environment that produces epigenetic adaptations along racial lines more consistently. However, I do not take beliefs, attitudes, and benefits to be necessary for policies and practices that subordinate, and that ultimately cause people to live, experience the world, and be treated by others in distinct and dissimilar ways that produce epigenetic adaptations. And further, this conception provides a clearer rank-order amongst the socially constructed races. If we are concerned to have a biological conception of race that matches socially constructed ones, and this relies on a type of environment, then we would need policies and practices that would dissimilarly and distinctly affect all socially constructed races.

CONCLUSION

So, we seem able to infer the possible emergence of biological (though non-genetic) races, even if we accept that races have their origins as social constructs. The movement here is from epigenetic adaptations and inheritances to the rather obvious point that culture is implicated in the production of epigenetic adaptations and inheritances, to racial cultures and performative racial identities, to an “institutionally racist” environment that would thicken commitment to racial cultures and performative racial identities—all the while treating different socially constructed races in very particular ways that would *thicken* adaptations and inheritances along socially constructed racial lines.

Now to conclude, I would like to take a moment to clarify what is not being proposed in this article. I am not proposing that biological races exist. I have argued that given social constructionist claims and certain phenomena (epigenetics, culture and rather thick racial identities, and “institutional racism”) races *can* emerge—or perhaps reemerge—in a biological way. Further, I am not proposing that races, in an American sense, will or need exhibit the same adaptations or inheritances as races writ large. Moreover, I am not proposing that proclivities towards criminality, susceptibility to moral behavior, racist attitudes, lack of freewill, or intellectual differences would result if a biological notion of race emerged from socially constructed races. With intellectual differences I, like Kitcher (1999), take Block (1974a, b, 1995) to have produced a damaging refutation to intellectual differences in races. Additionally, I have doubts about our ability to define or measure intelligence, let alone capture it with some unbiased test. There seems to be many different ways to think or work through problems, organize or structure life in a beneficial way, act prudently, etc.

This leads me to the only normative statement that I am prepared to make at this point. A worthwhile normative proposal is that we work to eliminate social categorizations of race. Let us assume that what political racial constructionists tend to claim about race and

hierarchies are correct. Race seems to *require* treating groups in certain ways that benefit some and harm others comparatively. Let us say further that this does in fact cause adaptations and inheritances within all groups. My intuition—without any evidence to support the intuition—is that all groups would adapt in dehumanizing and destructive ways. And so as Boxill (2004) argues, racial categorizations are harmful. And it is based on this harm that one might recommend their elimination. Just as Douglass 1994, thought in his reflections on slavery (recall the epigraph), one might think that if biological races emerge, socially constructed races are dehumanizing and destructive because of the brutalizing biological effects that they would have on *all* humans involved, with its real harm being what it does to our posterity. A forthcoming article will address and defend normative eliminativism.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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Full Length Research

The African state today and the democracy ideal: A case for a critical return

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Undoubtedly, many modern nation-states seek to achieve a better form of democratic governance. The African nation-state is not an exception. However, the attempt by African nation-states to achieve the ideal form of democratic governance has been especially problematic. The real problem, as we see it, is that because of the forces of colonization and neo-colonization, Africa especially has scarcely had the opportunity to articulate and practice an uninterrupted democracy that accords with her indigenous political values and contemporary political experience. The upshot of this failure is the myriad of governance problems that plague contemporary African nation-states. Adopting both a descriptive and normative approach in this paper, we aim to uncover valuable aspects of traditional African politics which have been jettisoned in the politics of today. We further discuss why such worthwhile elements need to be refined and incorporated into contemporary African democracies. We analyze the traditional Fante governance system as a model of consensual democracy rooted in the African traditional concept of statehood that must be re-enacted to suit the practice of nation building in Africa today. Thus, we re-echo the largely held view that consensual democracy shows positive prospects for the issue of substantive representation in African politics today.

Key words: African democracy, consensual, multiparty, nation-state, colonial mentality, ethnic, tradition and modernity, Fante.

INTRODUCTION

One of the many problems African leaders have had to confront since the early days of the post-colonial era is the problem of conceptualizing and implementing an ideal system of governance for African states. This problem has been exacerbated because the very systems and structures that made possible the supposed final recession of colonial power were themselves of colonial origin and therefore not only fit awkwardly, in most instances, to local contexts, but were also hardly recognized or understood by the indigenous people they were bequeathed to (Abudu, 2012). The awkward fit created has undoubtedly contributed adversely to the dreary image of democratic governance in Africa today (Farah et al., 2011) and, to a large extent, it might not be

incorrect to say that the “contemporary state in Africa is a remnant of a colonially imposed system” (Wyk, 2007:3). In Ghana, for instance, the first president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, took charge of the reins of power by means of an electoral system put in place by the colonial powers of the day. Having assumed power however, Nkrumah thought it wise to re-map the political terrain and, in accordance with his metaphysical doctrine of materialistic monism, opted for a one-party state. He was of the view that, “on the philosophical level, too, it is materialism, not idealism that in one form or another will give the firmest conceptual basis to the restitution of Africa’s egalitarian and humanist principles. Idealism breeds an oligarchy, and its social implication, as drawn

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out in my second chapter, is obnoxious to African society. It is materialism, with its monistic and naturalistic account of nature, which will balk arbitrariness, inequality, and injustice (Nkrumah, 1969:76)".

Translating the ideal of egalitarianism into socio-political terms, according to Nkrumah, requires a one-party state because "a people's parliamentary democracy with a one-party system is better able to express and satisfy the common aspirations of a nation as a whole, than a multiple-party parliamentary system which is in fact only a ruse for perpetuating and covering up the inherent struggle between the 'haves' and 'have nots'" (Nkrumah, 1969:100-101). Nkrumah's proposal and practice of a one-party state has come under severe criticisms (Mazrui, 2004). According to Agomor (2019:67), for instance, although Nkrumah's implementation of a one-party state may have been well-intentioned, "the oppression of opposition parties undermined the evolution of Democratic Party politics in Ghana". Zimba (1984:129) also expresses a similar thought when he opines that "the one-party state after 1964 even worsened the position in Ghana, for it meant that the personal liberty of the subjects of Ghana was further eroded, since now the president had control over both parliament and judiciary". We agree with the posture adopted by the critics mentioned in the foregoing towards Nkrumah's one-party state ideology in spite of Nkrumah's incessant attempt to ground his one-party state politics in traditional African socialism. Indeed, the nationwide euphoria expressed in the wake of Nkrumah's ousting from the seat of government was indicative of the doubtful and precarious state of Nkrumah's one-party state. One may surmise that Nkrumah's idea and, indeed, those of the many early liberation fighters of Africa were not without fault. The above critical remarks notwithstanding, we are convinced that Nkrumah's intuition that any proposed system of governance for Africa must dialogue with Africa's past and history ought to be seen as fundamentally right. The same point being made here is stressed by the eminent American philosopher, John Rawls, when he justifies his proposed system for organizing the political institutions of western society thus:

what justifies a conception of justice is not its being true to an order antecedent to and given to us but its congruence with our deeper understanding of ourselves and our realization that *given our history and the traditions embedded in our public life*, [Emphasis added] it is the most reasonable doctrine for us (Rawls, 1980:519).

It would not be incorrect, therefore, to argue that in constructing and molding her political institutions today, Africa ought to be inspired by the prescription that the most legitimate and reasonable political system must be the one that is congruent with the Africans' understanding

of themselves as encapsulated in their history and traditions. However, the key historical traditions of socio-political thought that Africa may appeal to in constructing an ideal system of governance for herself remain a fundamental question whose response would not be devoid of specific and local coloration as they are brought to bear on her contemporary political scene (Busia, 1967).

Problem statement

Reflecting on the foregoing assertion is critical since the failure to envision and implement an 'African' system of democratic governance for Africa, we believe, has left the continent in a political turmoil with recurrent military and civil disturbances (Lessem et al., 2015:78-79). An instructive example in this regard is the post-election ethnic violence between the Luo and Gikuyu of Kenya after Mwai Kibaki, a Gikuyu, was declared winner in the 2002 presidential election (Kwatemba, 2008). Doubts about the 'cleanliness' of the electoral process fueled existing ethnic tensions and consequent violence. The recent military intervention in Guinea and Mali is a further testimony to the unstable nature of many African 'democracies' today (Adekoya, 2021).

We maintain that a wholesale adoption of the colonialist model is largely to blame for the consequent authoritarian, monopolized, exclusionary and corrupt African 'democracies' we are faced with today (Alemazung, 2010:79; Njoku, 2005:99-116). The point is, the very concept of multi-partism introduced in Africa by the colonial regime was from the start infested with its non-democratic ills (Salih, 2007:41) which gags, criminalizes or bans opposition parties and curtails the competition they bring (Gordon and Gordon, 2013:4) until governments reduce to one-party states or military dictatorships (Mazrui, 1994:61). It is our strong view that the historical foundation laid by colonialism cannot be sidestepped in any meaningful assessment and confrontation of Africa's sombre democracy today.

If left as it is, age-old ethnic or tribal tensions will be fueled by the unhealthy winner-takes-all competition and inherently divisive character of the adversarial, ballot-box focused and superficial 'democracy' bequeathed to Africa by colonialism, which has fomented and resulted in civil strife in many African states: Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, La Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, among several others. This is especially so in ethnically heterogenous post-colonial Africa (Abudu, 2012). The resources of post-colonial Africa have been extremely exploited by colonialism; whose peoples have suffered forcible divisions of their ethnic identities by colonial regimes in the infamous "scramble for Africa" (Mengisteab, 2011:15-16); and, whose populations' psyche in many ways have been deeply harmed by what Gyekye (1997: 27) has

called the 'colonial mentality'. We agree with Gyekye when he writes that, "It seems that the most enduring effect of the colonial experience on the African people relates to their self-perceptions, to skewed perceptions of their own values—some of which (values) can, on normative grounds, be said to be appropriate for life in the modern world". It is important to state here and now that the ruinous consequences of the colonial institutions bequeathed to Africa along with the 'colonial mentality' that has evolved after colonialism are very much pervasive in African politics and national life today than the simplistic dismissal it often meets in scholarly discourse in politics.

Besides deepening and perpetuating ethnic tensions, the fundamentally adversarial nature of the multi-party politics associated with the inherited liberal democracy is itself an enduring threat to any hope for sustaining political unity and social cohesion. For, its party-centered posturing poses a fundamental challenge to ensuring substantive 'decisional representation', not simply a nominal representation which merely meets the formal requirement of adequate representation (Wiredu, 1995). Today's democratic system of governance in Africa, generally speaking, scarcely considers the opinions of the non-ruling party, minority cultural groups and the poor and, hardly incorporates the views of those not associated with the ruling party in deciding issues of national interest (Katz, 1997). However, as Dahl (1998) has pointed out, it is not clear what is exactly democratic about a system of governance where stakeholders are not given a meaningful voice to their concerns and interests in decision-making. What to do, at least, to ameliorate if not extirpate these problems has been a matter of concern.

Conceptual framework

The eminent African philosophers, Wiredu (1995) and Gyekye (2010), reflecting on the issues enumerated above, have proposed 'consensual democracy' as a viable response to the problems engendered by post-colonial African politics in finding an ideal mode of political self-expression. The fundamental claim of these scholars is that an inquiry into the socio-political institutions of traditional Africa would uncover a mode of political existence where decisions about the polity are driven by the search for consensus itself inspired by a sense of community. We agree with this intuition, taking cognizance of the challenges to overcome in pursuing the 'traditional' in the modern life of today. We maintain that the challenges notwithstanding, the problems of state organization in modern Africa can best be confronted by deference to a reconceptualized notion of democracy that hinges, among others, on a genuine sense of nationhood and a consensual approach to decision-making in governance typical of most traditional African contexts

past and present. Thus, we argue neither for a wholesale glorification of Africa's traditional political past nor a wholesale condemnation of Africa's inherited post-colonial present. The view we defend here is that a value, practice, or institution of Africa's cultural past should be revived, revised and adapted by the present generations only if, on rational and normative grounds, it is determined to be useful. And, for today's post-colonial African politics, in order to make a modest political recovery, we make the case that Africans should defy colonial political systems being practiced on the continent and evolve a new one based upon the African traditional system of consensus search and a sense of nationhood.

METHODOLOGY AND GUIDED RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The paper straddles a descriptive and normative approach. The aim of such a dual-approach is two-fold: first, to uncover worthwhile aspects of traditional African politics which have been disregarded in the politics of today; second, to discuss why such elegant elements need to be refined and incorporated into contemporary African democracies as a matter of urgency. Thus, we are guided by the main research question: what does 'tradition' have to offer 'modernity' in African politics today?

Section one examines the traditional African conception of statehood. The aim of the section is to answer the question of what in traditional Africa, is conceived of as a 'state' (better rendered as nation – *ɔman*) and the features associated with it that inspire our proposed grounds of an African democracy. Section two follows from the arguments of section one and pursues the question of democracy as the people's rule of themselves for themselves and by themselves. Making the traditional Fante of Ghana our reference, we present a practical demonstration of traditional African consensual democracy at play. Section three looks at some prospects of pursuing a self-evolved democracy for the African context that meaningfully adopts a consensual approach to national governance. It engages some of the challenges to be encountered and proffers some responses to them.

UNDERSTANDING THE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN STATE AS NATION (ɔMAN)

The state as a nation

The attempt to characterize any subject matter as African must first confront the hurdle of justifying the basis of such a characterization. It seems rather unlikely that a continent as vast as Africa comprising of diverse peoples and languages can be said to share the same understanding of any notion in its particular detail. We recognize the legitimacy of this problem and consequently do not presume here to give an interpretation of a traditional African conception of statehood held universally by all Africans regardless of geographical, temporal, and other significant variations. Notwithstanding the above caveat, we do not think that attempts to show commonality of beliefs and conceptions among an internally diverse body of people are entirely hopeless. After all, the mere fact that a people occupy a common

geographical space makes it more likely that they will develop common ways of interpreting and coping with the world for the sake of their collective survival (Gyekye, 2004). Our attempt to formulate a traditional African conception of the state, in this section, will be based on the examination of the beliefs and practices of the traditional Fante of Ghana which is typical of the generality of several traditional African contexts. As already indicated above, this methodological limitation need not necessarily raise accusations of hasty generalization or conceptual imposition.

The term 'state' may have different connotations but the definition by Marume et al. (2016) is a good starting point: "The state is an association which acting through law as promulgated by a government endowed to this end with coercive powers, maintains within a community territorially demarcated, the universal external conditions of social order" (Marume et al., 2016:24). Krasner maps out four essential elements connoted by the term 'state': government; administrative apparatus and institutionalized legal order; ruling class; normative order (Krasner, 1984). It is not difficult to observe the convergence between Marume et al. and Krasner's understanding of the concept of a state. What emerges here generally is the notion of an organized community of people with an authority structure by means of which its affairs are coordinated and executed.

The Fante of Ghana conceive of the state as *Ɔman* which is better translated as 'nation' (Law, 2013:38). A more appropriate and accurate translation considering the current discussion will be the term 'nation-state'. The added term better reveals an underlying assumption that the Fante 'nation' (*Ɔman*) captures better the view that the organized body of people in question also identify as a collective with a sense of belonging together based on what they believe they share in common: language, ancestry (even if fictitious), territory, among others (Smith, 1991; Tamir, 1995). It is such a sense of belonging together and sharing a common identity that seems hard to assume in today's patched up post-colonial African states.¹

There is enough evidence to show that modern African states are typically composed of citizens who do not meaningfully identify primarily with the forged and imposed larger states like Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, but rather with their language or ethnic groups such as Fante, Ibo, Gikuyu, which they consider to be their actual nation. This is because they believe these are fraternal or biological and therefore worthy of their loyalty (Gyekye, 1997; Allman, 1993). Today's African state, then, for many, is not considered by its citizens to be a nation and therefore not worthy of their trust and allegiance, especially where such imposed authoritative entities, instituted by the colonial ruler's whip, are not committed to bridging the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual gaps of constituent national groups. This state of fragmentation poses a challenge for governing the state as a whole

(Bellucci, 2010). The foregoing is a fundamental phenomenon which Connor (1972:319) thinks should be overcome by adopting an approach of 'nation-destroying' rather than 'nation-building'. By this, Connor suggests that to be able to build the Ghanaian state, for instance, builders should rather aim at weakening the sense of identity-sense of nationhood-those members feel towards their ethnic or language groups such as Asante, Fante etc. which they consider primarily to be their nation (*Ɔman*), in the hope that the sense of attachment will be transferred to the larger multi-national state. But Gyekye (1997) argues rather that the focus should be on how to aid the transfer of such allegiances from constituent nation-groups to the larger state which is constituted by such multiple nation-groups. It is therefore imperative that the sense of identifying or belonging as a collective whole, which underlies traditional African conception of statehood as *Ɔman*, feature prominently in our conceptualization of the modern African state and its democracy. The path to fostering this much needed sense of nationhood in political governance is the task that must engage policy-makers. It is worth mentioning that while modern African polities take on the description of 'nation-state', this description barely reflects "the feeling or consciousness of belonging to a group that shares certain common socio-cultural elements" which, according to Gyekye (1997:79), is the most outstanding feature of a true nation. The problem he takes up is how this sense of belonging together is to be attained even in the face of the diverse constituent ethnicities of today's post-colonial African states. The proposal, as a starting point, is to dissociate the concept of ethnicity from the idea of shared or common ancestry. In his view, what binds members of an ethnic group together is less a question of common ancestry than a question of meaningfully sharing a way of life - culture - together. This is particularly so, Gyekye (1997) urges, because the free movement of people across the globe and the resultant increased rate of inter-ethnic marriages in modern times, cast doubt on any person's claim to a supposed pure line of ethnic descent.

The foregoing point is further elaborated by Myles (2013) who argues that a claim to an ethnic identity in contemporary times should be seen as a claim to cultural identity in the accidental sense of the term identity and not to cultural identity in the essential sense of the term identity where one cannot change their way of life – culture – regardless. Myles' contention is that a person can be identified culturally in the accidental sense but 'culture' does not have a fixed and unchanging identity, essentially speaking. The point of emphasis here is that if culture is properly understood as the way people live, and not erroneously as the way of life of 'a people', then it would be obvious that no existing way of life can be said to be impervious to change. Cultural forms have been, and will continue to be, incorporated from one shared context to the other territorially and temporally as people

seek alternative means of engendering human flourishing. Thus, it is fundamentally problematic to claim to be born into or belong to a culture as though 'culture' is a sealed world bounded, as it were, from other worlds (Ibid). The preceding statement only reinforces the false assumption that culture, which is simply peoples' way of life, is the same as ethnic, language or nation group. But culture, like ethnicity and nationhood, need not be defined necessarily in terms of blood-line and common descent or ancestry.²

Consequently, defining a nation strictly in terms of family or blood-line will fundamentally require conjuring a mythos "... 'natural' form of association, based on physical proximity and traditional ties" or "...unitary relationships..." (Miller, 1992:100). The trailing question here for the governance of the larger state, appreciated by Van der Burg in his examination of the notion of cultural community, is what the minimum size of a constituent national group would have to be, to be recognized as a separate or independent nation within the larger post-colonial African state (Van der Burg, 1995: 243). Our contention is that it would have to be the sense of belonging together which derives chiefly from an attachment to common values, aims, aspirations and goals, which makes nationhood desirable not the supposed biological links or the mere cohabitation within a specific territorial boundary, even if persistent cohabitation would foster a deeper sense of belonging together.

If the preceding discussions have any merit at all, then the presence of diverse ethnicities in any modern state need not hamper the achievement of the ideal of nationhood if conceived of as the quest for a shared national culture. The moral imperative here is to transfer loyalty and allegiance from a rather mythic identification with a particular ethnic group to the nation as the larger political community comprising of diverse nations or ethnic identities (Gyekye, 1997). We contend that such transfer of allegiances equally depends on a created mythic identification which members can look to and associate with as pertains in ethnic identities (Atuire, 2019). We are of the opinion that it is in this that Gyekye's notion of 'meta-nationality' of the modern nation-state, in which the collective is seen as constituted "primarily by individual human beings who happen to share certain cultural and historical experiences with some other human individuals in a given, well-defined territory" (1997:102), can be attained. While Gyekye (1997) makes no explicit claims about the cultural roots of his conception of the modern nation-state, the emphasis on the elements of solidarity and community feeling hints that his conception of the modern nation-state is rooted in traditional African political experience. Indeed, it is a telling fact that Gyekye distinguishes his concept of meta-nationality from Western individualist ideas of statehood which place priority on individual rights with little to no recognition of community and belonging. In tandem with

the conception of meta-nationality outlined, one can characterize our proposed African conception of the state as a community of persons who identify as sharing a collective life as a 'whole', but not necessarily as 'one'.

The problem with the pursuit of 'oneness', according to Allen (2004), is that it allows democracy to function on a false assumption of a fictitious, homogeneous and uniformed 'one' state, instead of an actual and real 'whole' state constituted by various aspects. Allen argues that pursuing 'wholeness' is a better approach unlike 'oneness' which fundamentally overlooks the various concessions by sub-groups and their reluctant acceptance of certain disadvantages for the sake of constituting a 'one' state. We agree that such oversimplified invention of sameness is likely going to lead to the creation of marginalized sub-groups and communities and a resultant distrust that arises from a sense of 'us' and 'them'. Such a posturing, we maintain, undermines national dialogue, deliberation and consensual decision towards national development and progress since it discourages the various members of the larger state from talking to the other who is considered a stranger. Besides pursuing 'oneness' feeds the perception that the needs and desires of members of the various constituent groups are not mutually dependent. However, like Allen, we believe that the model of oneness and its negative consequences of mistrust and distrust "can be overcome only when citizens manage to find methods of generating mutual benefit despite differences of position, experience, and perspective" (2004: xix). We are of the opinion that key to the pursuit of 'wholeness' are the principles of reciprocity, fellow-feeling and solidarity built on a politics of friendship, care and equitable self-interest. In this regard, the question of whether the state structure is centralized or not is inconsequential here. A "whole" state as described above can be attained either by means of a decentralized or centralized state structure. What matters here is that, whether centralized or decentralized, the state is marked by, and consciously forged on, a genuine sense of nationhood.

The democratic character of the traditional Fante state³

This section explores features of the traditional Fante State (Mfantseman) that can be characterized as democratic. We argue further that the traditional Fante democracy is not only largely consensual in approach in political decision-making but is also hinged on a sense of family and community-feeling typical of a genuine nation as argued in the previous section. It bears mentioning from the onset that our choice of the traditional Fante state as a model of democracy by no means suggests an endorsement of a particular ethnic group as the very locus of consensual democracy which should thus be given priority in the modern nation-state.

This would contradict the conception of African statehood espoused above which aims to curb the ills arising from the marginalization of specific ethnic identities. The traditional Fante state is here chosen to merely exemplify the democratic features of the traditional African state as characterized in the previous section. The traditional Fante State (Mfantseman), according to Nana Ayitey I, comprises of several sub-states such as Nkusukum, Abora, Ajumako, Gomoa, Ekumfi among others. Each state is headed by the Omanhene (head of state). Unlike the Asante of Ghana, the Fante political system, according to Nana does not possess a unified state structure where a single person or a particular group of people is vested with authority to oversee the affairs of the whole state. The absence of such a state structure, however, does not mean a disorganized or ineffective state (Wiredu, 1995). As would be evident from what follows, the Fante traditional system of political rule evinces a very effective approach to state organization that gives meaning to democracy as self-rule.

The study begins with a description of the procedures and processes by which the Omanhene is selected and installed. The selection of the Omanhene begins with the presentation of a potential candidate for the position by any of the qualified families in the state. It is important to note that the starting point of this process is the notion of family, which is crucial. The Fante state, like many other traditional African states, is considered by its people as constituted by families. Each of these families namely Asona, Aboradze, Kɔna, Dishena Anana, Tekyina, and Ɔyɔkɔ, according to Nana Esi Abrawa,⁴ constitute the base from which a chief candidate is nominated. This means even if there are conflicts, the starting point says a lot about how to address it; it is a 'family' issue. The respondents maintained that in respect of the selection of the candidate the consent of the abusupanyin (Family head), which only represents the consensual view of his family unit, is secured to forestall any future problems of objection or disqualification. Further, the approval of the state (Ɔman) as a whole is extremely necessary for the selection process. Very often, this approval is given in the form of a vote at each of the decision-making units from the family, through the clan to the State. It must be pointed out here that mere voting is never sufficient in confirming the candidature of a proposed person for the office of the Omanhene. Special attention is paid by the people of the state to the moral qualities of the would be Omanhene according to the traditions of the Fante. In cases where the selected candidate is found to fall short of certain desirable moral qualities, or found to exhibit questionable moral character, this constitutes sufficient grounds to disqualify him.

Should the selected candidate pass the above preliminary tests, he is placed in the charge of the tufohene (chief of the gunners) who then leads the way in the installation of the selected candidate. The tufohene is the head of the asafoma (Warrior Company) who,

according to the Fante tradition, must know the selected Omanhene before he is installed. It is said that no Omanhene is installed without the knowledge of the tufohene. The installation process involves confining the chosen candidate for a period and initiating him into the ways of conducting oneself appropriately as an Omanhene. A very critical part of the installation process is the oath the chosen candidate swears to the asafoma (warrior company). He promises to respond whenever they call upon him except in circumstances of dire health. The respondents further reiterated that the chosen candidate's swearing to the asafoma is seen as swearing to the whole Mfantseman since the asafoma themselves derive their authority and legitimacy from 'the people'. He is consequently answerable to 'the people' in the event of any failure to fulfill the promises made during the oath taking. The same phenomenon is recorded of the selection process of Asanteman (Asante state), also of Ghana (Rattray, 1929).

If successfully installed into office, the Omanhene dispenses his duties by means of consultation with his council of elders. The council of elders comprises of the heads of the towns that constitute the state as well as elderly members of the asafoma. When the Omanhene wants to promulgate any law in the state, he first conveys a meeting with the council of elders in his palace (Busia 1951). Whatever law is to be promulgated is thoroughly debated with adequate room given for the expression of diverse views and opinions. When a satisfactory conclusion to the debate is reached, the result is communicated through the family and clan heads to the general populace of the state. It is quite easy to observe here that the heads of the towns function as intermediaries between the general populace and the Omanhene, conveying the concerns of the people to the Omanhene and vice versa. Again, it is instructive to note that the whole process is guided by the sense of 'family'. For, even if war and conquest, intermarriage with other ethnic groups and migration as a result of economic factors have created mixed groups, the intuition is that of one people —Ɔman—working for our own good, by our own selves. This is the defining mark of democracy, and we argue that this is the very engine of an effective system that is labeled as a democracy which ought to be intentionally pursued institutionally.

The question that arises next is the legitimation of the laws of the Fante nation-state. One might think that in such a traditional setting, the legitimation of political authority is vested in the religious aura surrounding the office of the Omanhene. This is quite not the case. According to the respondents, although the Omanhene's authority emanates from a certain anuonyam (glory) that is attached to his office, this has less to do with his being vested with any religious powers which cannot be denied. One may surmise here, as Wiredu does in his account of the Asante, that the intrinsically persuasive nature of the Omanhene's propositions accounts for its appeal to his

council of elders and the people of the state⁵ (Wiredu 1995). How is the political authority of the Omanhene delegitimized? An Omanhene who has transgressed the laws of the state or defaulted in fulfilling his promises to the people faces the danger of being stripped of his office. The respondents indicated that the family of the Omanhene may bring a charge against him to the state or conversely the state may bring a charge against him to his family. In either case, proper investigations will be conducted to ascertain the basis of the charges leveled against him. If found guilty, he is appropriately dealt with. It was, however, related by our respondents that it is difficult to unjustly de-stool an Omanhene because there is a certain 'sunsum' in the stool of the Omanhene which provides him with the power and confidence to go about his regal duties. This position, then, throws into doubt the initial claim that the persuasive powers of the Omanhene does not rest on his possession of any religious or metaphysical power as is seen in Eze's criticism of Wiredu (Eze, 1997). Nonetheless, it may only influence decision making and not necessarily determine it. In the event that an incumbent Omanhene falls seriously ill, rendering him incapable of performing the duties of his office, certain rites and rituals are performed to successfully de-stool him.

Another salient democratic feature is revealed in the arbitration and adjudication process of the traditional Fante state structure. The Omanhene sits with his council in arbitration to ensure that justice is not compromised. All arbitration or adjudication, according to our respondents, are conducted in the spirit of bringing health to the whole community by the final decision even while ensuring that the offended finds redress for their issue. So, in dealing with a rape or divorce case, for instance, the concern is not only to seek redress for the offended party but to ensure that in punishing the offender, the entire family, children, and entire nation-state, are not unduly affected. A person who wishes to advance a case against another person has direct access to the ahenfie (palace) where he or she can directly present his or her case for fair hearing of both sides, deliberation, and delivery of final judgment. The arbitration process could be quite extensive. In specific instances, the Omanhene has the prerogative of making decisions when the urgency does not grant the opportunity of conferring with council. The norm however, as urged by the respondents, is to rule, arbitrate or adjudicate in consultation with council just as is seen in Asante and other African traditions (Gyekye, 2010).

Traditional African democracy as consensual

The point of the discussions in the preceding section is to show that the traditional Fante system exhibited important features of democratic governance hinged on a sense of nationhood. This is true if democracy is a

"government of the people, by the people and for the people" as Abraham Lincoln defined it (Gienapp 2002:184). Nonetheless, who are 'the people' and how do they govern? It is evident that if democracy is not to remain a merely abstract notion, it must be fleshed out in a particular form and structure of government. Modern nations, being states, wield powers of enforcement of laws and other executive instruments. If these powers of enforcement are not going to be deployed arbitrarily, then some account of how they are justified must be given. The question of the source of the legitimation of these powers must be taken into consideration. Thus, according to Dahl (1998), the primary focus of democratic ideas is the state. But what particular form of democracy is exhibited by the traditional African state that, in our view, ought to be resuscitated?

What emerges from the examination of the traditional African state exemplified by the Fante of Ghana is that its democratic character consists in the emphasis placed on the consensual approach to political-decision making at all levels. As one may note from the account of the Fante state given in the previous section, the people feature prominently in every decision taken in the state. Consider, for instance, the procedures for the selection and endorsement of the Omanhene. No candidate is selected and endorsed if the people and the relevant stakeholders involved do not, in the words of Wiredu, express decisional and not merely formal consent. Even if the selected candidate is successfully pushed through without securing consensus from the people and the relevant stakeholders, problems are bound to later occur. Indeed, according to Wiredu (1995), political decision making in traditional Africa was marked by consensus. It is important however to clearly characterize the notion of consensus under discussion here.

Consensus, as an approach to decision making in traditional African politics does not mean overlooking the existence of diverse points of view which will exist anyway. Indeed, the quest for consensus was motivated by what has been described as "an original position of diversity" (Wiredu, 1995:54). The same point of view is espoused by Gyekye (2010) who maintains that consensus in traditional African politics presupposed dissensus. The idea here is that unanimity of opinion is not presumed at the start of the decision-making process. Yet, this is precisely where consensus as a decision-making process is challenged, for if deliberation starts off on a note of diversity, how is it possible then to secure consensus at the end stage of deliberation? Wiredu makes the critical point that while undoubtedly political decision-making was by consensus in traditional Africa, one should not cherish the illusion that consensus was always attained. What matters, according to Wiredu, is that attention is given to the various proposals about what is to be done even if not all the proposed actions put forward may be carried out. It is important to note here that for Wiredu, decision-making by consensus in

traditional African politics was a question of deliberating about what is to be done rather than what ought to be done. In other words, the decision in question is pragmatic rather than moral or cognitive.⁶

However, this characterization of consensus decision-making in traditional African politics has invited critical responses from certain African philosophers. According to Ani (2014), given that values are such an important part of people's lives, it is not exactly clear how they can be excluded in any consensus decision-making procedure as Wiredu seems to require since people's values inadvertently influence their participation in deliberation. In Ani's estimation the positive prospects of consensus decision-making will be far improved if there is a conscious attempt to rather factor in such values which are already present subconsciously anyway, in the deliberation process. Ani's point seems to be that a conscious inclusion of values in the decision making process is more likely to ameliorate what Wiredu famously describes as the "willing suspension of disagreement" in as much as the failure to take into account the values of the deliberators throws into doubt the idealistic posture of the whole idea of willing suspension of disagreement". It seems Wiredu will reject Ani's call to include values in deliberations aimed at achieving consensus, since the inclusion of personal values is likely to impair and delay urgent decisions that must be taken by the group. We are of the view that, neither the uncritical inclusion of values in the deliberation process nor their wholesale exclusion is tenable. As Ani himself opines, "some value differences are adjustable" (Ani 2014:319). Ani's remark here strongly supports the recommendation that values should equally be "thrown into" the deliberative process with the positive expectation that some common grounds can be worked out by means of the very process of deliberation itself. In other words, the fact that values themselves are to be subjected to the process of deliberation should allay any fears that some particular value is going to win the day a priori. We think Wiredu should welcome this new gesture of admitting values in the deliberation process especially in view of his conviction that all human beings ultimately share some identical interests.

Tied to the foregoing discourse, is the case Wiredu makes for the use of rational dialogue as the means to reach consensus in traditional African political deliberations. Indeed, as Wiredu maintains, "the willing suspension of disbelief in the prevailing option on the part of the residual minority" is made possible by the use of rational dialogue as the means of persuasion. It is significant that the viewpoints of the residual minority are not dismissed by the sheer power of voting, at least not without being initially given some rational consideration. Of particular interest here is the question of the basis of the persuasive ideas of the chief in the traditional African political decision-making process. Might it not be the case that the chief is able to secure consent from the people

due to the mythico-religious aura surrounding his office rather than to the 'intrinsically' persuasive nature of his ideas? A counter view is expressed thus:

I think Wiredu might need further evidence to make a successful case that the king and the chiefs actually ruled and believed, along with their subjects, that authority could be legitimized only through the secular "virtue of persuasiveness of ideas" (rather than through religious and sometimes clearly superstitious-appeal to the sacred...)" (Eze, 1997:316)

Eze's point above has some merit particularly in view of the fact that our own field investigations revealed a certain ambiguity in the idea that the chief's persuasive powers were entirely based on the logical or rational nature of his ideas. This admission notwithstanding, we submit that it would be much more helpful to treat what Wiredu says about the persuasiveness of the chief's ideas as normative recommendations for effective governance in today's Africa rather than as mere factual claims about what occurred in the distant past. Wiredu, is after all engaged in the process of rationally reconstructing certain traditional African concepts in order to establish a connection between the past and the present. In this vein, Eze's concern with the need for "further evidence" in support of Wiredu's claims about the rational and logical basis of the chief's ideas need not impinge on Wiredu's claims if taken as normative recommendations for how governance in today's Africa ought to be practiced. Transposed into the context of modernity, it is quite easy to see the plausibility of Wiredu's claims given the religious pluralism that characterize many modern African nation-states. In such a context, the strategy of substantiating political decisions by appealing to religious and supernatural factors is unlikely to be very effective, if effective at all.

Consensual democracy and the question of substantive representation

According to Wiredu (1995), a consensual approach to political decision-making in traditional Africa implied the absence of a party system of governance at least as conceived in Western multiparty, liberal and majoritarian democracy as currently imposed on Africa and its traditions. This claim however requires some clarification. Wiredu's claim is not that there are no parties per se but rather that there were no majoritarian parties. That is, parties with the sole intent of securing power and who carried the day in decision-making not by seeking to include the minority concerns (not the same as "the view of the minority") through rational dialogue but by the sheer power of voting. There were parties, Wiredu (1995) claims, in the broad sense of the term in that diverse points of view were entertained in the decision-making

process but none of these were motivated by the desire to assume power at all cost and rarely, if ever, was a matter settled by formal voting. Indeed, in the author's estimation the bane of modern African politics is the majoritarian party system which ensures that a particular group of people—mostly a particular ethnic group—are always in the minority as far as governance of the state is concerned. This creates disaffection on the part of the ethnic group in question and accounts for the rather destructive politico-ethnic conflict which so often occurs in many modern African states. Wiredu's exclusion of majoritarian parties from consensus-based democracy in traditional African politics has sparked a number of reactions.

Gyekye (2013), for instance, agrees fundamentally with Wiredu's critique of the majoritarian party system practiced in modern African states. Nevertheless, he argues that decision-making by consensus can accommodate some form of majoritarian party system only that a supermajority rather than a simple majority is what should be aimed at. A supermajority, in his view, requires a two-thirds vote in order to carry the day when deciding upon vital national issues. Gyekye maintains that while a two-thirds majority still falls short of the ideal of consensus, it is nevertheless preferable to decision-making by a simple majority. Gyekye remarks that "Implicit in the two-thirds – which is a supermajority – method of reaching decisions is the notion that consensus (or something nearer that) is an ideal method: two-thirds majority is certainly nearer to consensus formation than the simple majority of fifty-one percent". Thus, for Gyekye, some form of majoritarian party system- a supermajority- can be accommodated in a democratic state based on decision-making by consensus.

Another important implication alluded to so far in our discussion which Wiredu draws from his analysis of the notion of consensus in traditional African political decision making is what he describes as "substantive or decisional representation" earlier mentioned. The point here is that even though in the traditional African political setting, the people may not be physically present in the chief's palace to argue out their points, representation is nevertheless given to them through the council of elders who act as mediators between the people and the chief. It must be recollected that the council of elders themselves derive their authority from consensus given by the people. Thus, unlike the majoritarian democracies which Wiredu criticizes, the question of representation in democracy based on consensus is not a question of simply being voted for as a representative but of being a representative of the viewpoints, opinions and ideas of those whom one represents. That includes their views being included in the final decision made which is what is crucial for Wiredu. This requires more than winning votes. It requires substantive engagement with the people by means of rational dialogue to acquaint oneself with their perspective

on matters. It is a species of what Gyekye (2013) has described as the politics of inclusion which requires an ever-widening of the net of deliberators in the political-decision making process.

Conclusion

This paper has focused on the prospects of a truly democratic form of governance in contemporary African nation-states. Some of the problems that call for a re-consideration of the question of democracy in relation to Africa today were enumerated. We have argued to agree with the view that practicing a meaningful consensual democracy is the way to go. To provide philosophical grounding for consensual democracy as the proposed path for the African state today, we undertook an investigation of the very notion of statehood as understood from a traditional African political perspective, taking the Fante of Ghana as a typical case study. The study has shown that the traditional African notion of statehood indeed does embody features such as fellow-feeling, solidarity and a sense of communality which very well capture the essence of what consensual democracy largely entails. Gyekye's notion of meta-nationality was found most conducive for translating the communal values embedded in the African notion of statehood into helpful suggestions that can address the fragmented condition of many African states today. The study further examined Wiredu's thoughts on consensual democracy to bring home the vital fact that at the root of many of Africa's political problems today is the absence of substantive and inclusive representation in decision-making at the different levels of governance. In this regard, we conclude this paper by reiterating our call for a critical return to these outlined values of governance embedded in the African conception of statehood espoused in this paper. A critical return to these values, we believe, will propel the African state today towards the realization of a truly ideal form of democracy as is the case elsewhere.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest

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ENDNOTE

¹ As Herder will use the term 'patched-up' (Herder 1965:324).

² Compare Appiah's analysis of the concept of race in his *In my father's house* (Appiah, 1992)

³ The account of the Fante state to be given here is based on an interview session with the following chiefs of Gomoa East district: Nana Ayitey I (*Nifahene* of Gomoa Kweikrom), Nana Asabre III (*Ankobeahene* of Gomoa Ojobi), Nana Esi Abrawa (*Adontehene* of Gomoa Jaman), Nana Kwao Kuse II (*Tufohene* Gomoa Milani)

⁴ See endnote 3

⁵ One of the chiefs cited an example of the passing of a law to the effect that no member of the town should pound fufu after 6pm. He held that the justification for such a law would lie not in any religious mystifications but rather in the rational fact that after eating heavy food at such a time, digestion becomes difficult which may lead to a condition of ill-health.

⁶ See Wiredu 1995:54. Wiredu's point here is that the question of *truth*, either of a moral opinion or any other opinion for that matter does not enter the fray of deliberation.

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