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Published online: December 2020

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Abstract

African American thought is encompassed by various *attempts to resist racialisation. If we agree with the Fanonaian argument that negritude is a logical antithesis of that insult, we can consider Afrocentricity arousal due to the same reason. Afrocentricity is considered one of the contemporary theories that emerged as a response to the devastating impact of 400 years of racialisation and oppression of African Americans. Besides, despite its negative consequences, racialisation can increase racial pride and knowledge of the self among the radicalised. Therefore, Afrocentricity could retrieve the traditional principles and values of ancient Africa and use them to reconstruct an Afrocentric cultural identity of African Americans. Molefi Kete Asante defined Afrocentricity as a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person rooted in the cultural image and interest of African people. For this reason, Asante believed that it could encourage African Americans to understand their cultural identity through revitalising black culture and consciousness. This study aims to analyse the evolution of Afrocentricity as a reaction to the racialisation process experienced by African Americans. Ultimately, the paper talks about the impact of promoting Afrocentric cultural identity on African Americans used to recover the negative effects of racialisation.*

Keywords: Afrocentricity, consciousness, cultural identity, Euro-centrism, racism

Introduction

While European colonialism and imperialism stretched across the globe, several aspects played a crucial role in establishing a racial world. Subsequently, racism evolved into a justification for the domination of inferior groups. Deterioration of the African people's identity, denouncement of their human status, and the denial of their political rights were the main consequences of colonialism (Land, 2005). Furthermore, enslavement and racism in American society have contributed heavily to the emergence of the African tendency to assure their identity and revitalise African values, ideals, and epistemology (Bay, 2000). Such a tendency created the need to study 'blackness', which focuses on the accomplishments and the experience of the African descendants, as well as their political, social and economic

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conditions. This field of inquiry was designed to deconstruct the racist regimes and ideologies, bringing the marginalised to the centre and helping them in the struggle for the liberation of the African minds (Land, 2005).

Since its evolution, the black studies movements have aimed at combating the disastrous effects of white hegemony and racism and generated a sense of identity among Africans as a way to their liberation (Land, 2005). Many scholars argue that Afrocentricity is considered as a core idea in which Black or Africana studies should revolve around. Clovis Semmes argues that Afrocentricity is the fundamental base for the development of the idea of African studies (Conyers, 2004). In addition, Russell Adams pursued that the chief purpose of Africana studies is to change individual conceptions about the social world, particularly the aspects of race and African experience. Adams also added that Africana studies are the core basis behind Afrocentricity (Conyers, 2004). Similarly, Maulana Karenga described Afrocentricity as a "fundamental building bloc in the conceptual edifice of the Black Studies paradigm, that is, its Afrocentricity." (Karenga, 1988: 403)

It is undeniable that racialisation has had negative—and often harmful— impacts on the racialised group. This paper explores how racialisation has contributed to creating a sense of dignity and a unifying cultural identity among African Americans.

While Afrocentricity emerged to ignite the sense of identity and particularity among the people of African descent, it could develop an Afrocentric worldview and cultural identity model in the face of Eurocentric domination and racialism. In this sense, the paper will give answers to the following questions: how Afrocentricity emerged as a response to the racialisation process suffered by African Americans? How Afrocentricity developed the Afrocentric cultural identity model? To what extent are Afrocentricity and Afrocentric cultural identity influenced African Americans in theory and practice?

This study is divided into four parts. The first analyses the notion of Afrocentricity and the context in which it emerged, its definition, nature, objectives, and explaining the Afrocentric transformation model. The second part addresses the Afrocentric cultural identity, illustrating the stages of the model and the transformation process. The third part exhibits the criticisms and

attacks on Afrocentricity and Afrocentric cultural identity. The final part of the paper provides a conclusive remark.

The development of the Afrocentric idea

Afrocentricity has developed as an essential intellectual project that calls for liberating the African minds from European domination by introducing a new paradigm locating the Africans at the centre of the analysis. It refers to the study of African people from an Africa-centred perspective. Although the theoretical foundations have been laid in the works of contemporary scholars in the United States, Afrocentricity is not an entirely new paradigm in the African American intellectual thought (Oyebade, 1990). It can be dated back to the 1800s in the United States when the first black newspaper *Freedom's Journal* alleged an ancestry between Africans and ancient Egyptians (Chawane, 2016).

This aspect owes a lot to nineteenth-century black intellectuals who underwent many efforts to challenge white racism and establish an African American historiography celebrating African achievements (Bay, 2000). Afrocentricity represents the logical continuation of the works done by great thinkers such as; Martin Delany, David Walker, and W.E.B. DuBois. They wrote to save African history from ambiguity and used the evidence from African history to ensure humanity to Africans as contributors to civilisation (Adeleke, 2015). Their ideas represented a new manifestation of promoting the African identity as a reaction to racist practices against the African peoples. Nineteenth-century intellectuals concluded that rehabilitation of African history, the revival of African Culture, and relocating the African person as an agent in human history are the only ways of empowering Africans as active actors in human history (Subhi Qunsowah, 1998).

However, Afrocentricity took its adjacent origins from the black studies movement of the 1960s, which was influenced by Pan Africanism, negritude and other African intellectual streams in the various forms they have taken since the nineteenth century (Bay, 2000). To put it differently, Afrocentricity is considered as a synthesis of the traditional African intellectual movements. Pan Africanism, Black Nationalism, and Africanism are crucial components of the Afrocentric paradigm. Hence, Afrocentricity builds on the works of many scholars of the twentieth century such as George James, Drusilla Houston, Chinua Achebe, John

Henrik Clarke, Yosef ben Jochannan, Melville Herskovits, Walter Rodney, Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore, C.L.R. James, and many others (Bekerie, 1994).

By the mid-twentieth century, an African American consciousness began to arise. The Civil Rights Movement broke out and sought to put an end to racialisation, discrimination, and segregation (Khokholkova, 2016). During this time, large numbers of black students participated in strikes and demonstration designed to denounce the western domination and racialisation of blacks (Harris Jr, 2004). Subsequently, Asante's influence by the civil rights movement, often paralleling the black power movement, has led him to develop the early formulations of Afrocentricity (Khokholkova, 2016).

Throughout history, African Americans became more powerful and motivated in identifying their image and identity as viewed by the larger society. The new conceptualisation of the African American cultural identity reflected this sense of cultural awareness and power. While cultural identity was initially conceptualised as a way to illustrate a deficiency in the African Americans' psyche resulting from their notoriety, African American scholars of the 1970s redefined this cultural identity as an example of African Americans' flexibility and defence in the face of oppression. Most of the African American thinkers concentrated intensively on the process through which a healthy African identity could be developed from a psychologically enslaved Negro identity (Khokholkova, 2016).

Asante's notion of Afrocentricity is a direct product of a black cultural nationalist ideology that prevailed in the 1970s. African Americans had been damaged by the psychology of oppression and needed an Afrocentric epistemological system to replace the racist one (Bay, 2000). Afrocentricity was developed as a theory in response to racism and racialisation against African Americans in the USA and also as a reflection of African American identity crisis. It has appeared as a combative ideological response to Ronald Regan era policies towards race. Afrocentric identity, as a product of Afrocentricity, is claimed to be a counter-hegemonic resistance to oppression and racism, as well as a basis for self-definition and survival for Africans, particularly the diaspora (Adeleke, 2015).

This section has demonstrated how racialisation could create a sense of cohesion between the racialised groups, leading to the formation of a common,

shared identity between its members through Afrocentricity. It is now necessary to clarify what is meant by Afrocentricity.

Part 1: Afrocentricity: An Overview

Defining the concept of Afrocentricity

The Afrocentric theory began to develop when Asante published his book *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* in the 1980s. He was the first to coin the term "Afrocentricity" in an attempt to reconstruct the cultural identity of Africans and African-Americans (Khokholkova, 2016). The concept of Afrocentricity is composed of Africa and the centre. While Africa represents a collective term embracing various experiences and culture, the centre refers to the place; the free land of the African people, the source of their culture, beliefs, values, ideals, and knowledge of themselves and the world. It evokes their sense of identity and distinctiveness in different manifestations (Bekerie, 1994).

Generally, Afrocentricity is defined as a frame of reference or a paradigm in which phenomena are viewed from the African perspective. It places Africa at the centre of African lives and experiences (Mazama, 2001). However, several definitions of Afrocentricity have been proposed. According to Asante, Afrocentricity is:

> A mode of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values, and perspectives predominate. In regard to theory, it is the placing of African people in the centre of any analysis of African phenomena. Thus, it is possible for anyone to master the discipline of seeking the location of Africans in a given phenomenon. In terms of action and behaviour, it is a devotion to the idea that what is in the best interest of African consciousness is at the heart of ethical behaviour. Finally, Afrocentricity seeks to enshrine the idea that blackness itself is a troupe of ethics. Thus, to be black is to be against all forms of oppression, racism, classism, homophobia, patriarchy, child abuse, paedophilia, and white racial domination. (Pellebon, 2007: 172)

In another context, he argues that Afrocentricity establishes:

> A frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person... It centres on placing people of African origin in control of their lives and attitudes about the world. This means that we examine every aspect of the dislocation of African people;

Culture, economics, psychology, health, and religion... As an intellectual theory, Afrocentricity is the study of the ideas and events from the standpoint of Africans as the key players rather than victims. This theory becomes, by virtue of an authentic relationship to the centrality of our own reality, a fundamentally empirical project... it is Africa asserting itself intellectually and psychologically, breaking the bonds of Western domination in the mind as an analogue for breaking those bonds in every other field. (Mazama, 2001: 389)

In addition to Asante's definitions, many scholars have presented several other definitions of Afrocentricity. Bekerie refers to Afrocentricity as a strategy that seeks African's agency away from the periphery. In other words, it is the realisation of one's history and culture (Mazama, 2001). Mazama writes that the Afrocentric idea asserts the primacy of the African experience for African people, aiming at retrieving the African victorious consciousness. Karenga broadly defined it as "essentially a quality of perspective or approach rooted in the cultural image and human interest of African people" (Mazama, 2001: 395). Tshelone Keto has shown that African centred perspective of history is based on the premise that Africa could be the starting point in the study of the African people. Likewise, Oyebade argues that Afrocentric perspective attempts to liberate African studies from Eurocentric hegemony through the assertion of a valid world in which Africa could be studied objectively (Oyebade, 1990). Hunter contends that Afrocentricity can be a theory of social change calling for self-identification and consciousness among Africans in the continent and the diaspora. Further, it provides a new way of analysis and interpretation from the perspective of Africans as subjects, not objects. Accordingly, Afrocentricity could create a valid form of knowledge challenging the Eurocentric hegemonic discourse (George and Dei, 1994).

Despite the various definitions which have been proposed, they all share the same concern to introduce an alternative way of viewing and interpreting the world. Additionally, they share the necessity to move all African people from the periphery to the centre of the history and adopting Africa as a starting point in the discussion of African civilisation (George and Dei, 1994). An objective analysis of the definitions mentioned above reveals two important facts about the Afrocentric idea. Firstly, the unique African culture, history, ideals have shaped the African world view. Second, the Afrocentric theory emerged to face

western hegemony and provide an alternative to the marginalisation and racialisation of African knowledge systems (Kumah-Abiwu, 2016).

Hence, Afrocentricity encourages Africans to understand themselves, redefine their identity, through an African lens according to their authentic cultural values and traditions. As a result, it is considered as a source of reclaiming the African American cultural identity from European cultural dominance.

The nature of Afrocentricity

Asante's writing demonstrates that Afrocentricity is a multidimensional notion. Firstly, it is a kind of philosophy that tends to turn into an ideology. Secondly, it comprises a specific method of research that involves the interpretation of Africans as subjects rather than objects. Thirdly, Afrocentricity could be considered as a sociocultural movement as well as a lifestyle. Most important, it is a paradigm that encompasses several elements which Asante defined as follows:

> Afrocentricity is a paradigmatic intellectual perspective that privileges African agency within the context of African history and Culture trans-continentally and trans-generationally. This means that the quality of location is essential to any analysis that involves African Culture and behaviour whether literary or economic, whether political or cultural. In this regard, it is the crystallisation of a critical perspective on facts (Khokholkova, 2016: 115).

On the academic level, Afrocentricity is identified in terms of the methodology, the theory and the ideology that could be applied to achieve its aims towards the proposed change. Regarding methodology, Afrocentricity is proposed as an answer to intellectual colonialism that seeks to legitimise political and economic colonialism. As a theory, it posits African people at the centre of the analysis of African phenomena. Moreover, it suggests that what is in the best interest of African people is considered as the ethical behaviour that should be attained. Ideologically, Afrocentricity refers to the eagerness among Africans to ideas that would relink them together against Eurocentric domination. Thus, Afrocentricity takes over the task of binding together the various elements of African and African-American studies, converting them into

a unified discipline with intellectual and ideological objectives, political goals and a comprehensive set of theories and methods (Chawane, 2016).

Throughout this paper, Afrocentricity, Afrocentric idea, Afrocentric model and Afrocentric paradigm are going to be used interchangeably as both, a conceptual framework of an applied theory to describe human phenomena, as well as a movement to liberate Africans from racism and oppression.

Objectives of Afrocentricity

Afrocentricity has a wide range of goals, including moving Africans towards their cultural centre, providing a basis for analysing the African phenomena from an African perspective and liberating African minds from Western domination. Nevertheless, the most important one is that it seeks to encounter is white racial domination. Abbary states that the primary goal of Afrocentricity is to liberate the study of Africans from the Eurocentric hegemonic power. Academia has been racialised through a European lens, and most academic approaches are based on the ideologies of racial superiority and racial privilege (Asante, 2006). Current methods of research oppress Africans as they impose racist interpretation to knowledge. Therefore, Afrocentricity calls for encountering racialisation in academia by presenting an Afrocentric paradigm through which Africans should be studied. In addition, it calls for developing knowledge that exemplifies the African American experience for self-identification and self-determination (Pellebon, 2007).

As an emancipatory movement, Asante, in his book *The Afrocentric Idea*, emphasised that "the ultimate goal of Afrocentricity is our liberation, our freedom from oppression". "Then", he added "we are on a pilgrimage to regain our freedom (Mazama, 2002: 221).

Five basic characteristics or pillars have distinguished the Afrocentric project. The first characteristic is the interest in the psychological location. This could be determined through the use of symbols, languages, rituals, and motifs that African people could create. The second characteristic is the commitment to finding the subject-place of Africans in any social, political, economic, or religious phenomenon. The third characteristic is the defence of African cultural elements. This entails that African values, customs, habits, religions, and traditions must be protected against any kind of un-African interpretation. The fourth characteristic is the commitment to lexical refinement. This implies that

all terms and definitions used to define Africana people must be derived from African historical experience and languages. The fifth characteristic is the commitment to a new African narrative. This means introducing a new corrected history of the African people all over the world. It is pivotal to note that this new narrative will not falsify African history; however, it seeks to promote Afrocentric historiographies, religious perspectives, and economic development (Pellerin, 2012).

The following part of the paper moves on to describe in a greater deal the Afrocentric cultural identity as a product of the Afrocentric idea.

According to Mazama, African identity is disappearing due to the unconscious adoption of Eurocentric ideals and values by the African peoples, which is an undeniable part of the racialisation process imposed on the people of the African descent. African American identity needs to be reclaimed through cognitive self-determination of the African people from an Afrocentric perspective. Therefore, it illustrates why the Afrocentric paradigm insists on the centrality of the African people as active agents in human civilisation (Kumah-Abiwu, 2016). In other words, Afrocentricity rests upon the assurance of the primacy of the African experience for the African people where they can revive their African identity and victorious consciousness. This identity is pivotal for the liberation of African people who are oppressed owing to their race and cultural heritage (George & Dei, 1994).

Afrocentricity attempts to tackle the question of African identity from the view of African people as centred, grounded and located (Chawane, 2016). African Americans have suffered severe dislocation for the past 500 years under the Eurocentric hegemony. Such dislocation was evident in various aspects; for example, in the adoption of Eurocentric theories, ideals, and values of individualism and materialism. Dislocation resulted in confusion, disorientation, and self-destruction. The dislocated Africans detach themselves from their history and culture and may engage in some actions that are against the best interests of the African community. Besides, dislocation may promote self-hatred of the Africans and their need to be separated from the African community to achieve social and economic advancement (Mazama, 2005).

Consequently, location is considered one of the most crucial concepts of Afrocentricity. In addition, the main argument behind Afrocentricity is that Africans have been dislocated and decentred due to Eurocentric hegemony over

all aspects of their lives. As a result, they see the world from a Eurocentric perspective which has misguided their lives, stripped them of their historical and cultural identity, and viewed them as objects in the human civilisation (Asante, 2006). For Asante, location is defined as the "groundedness" in African culture and history. This means the deep understanding of African history and culture and averting Eurocentric conceptions of African American lives, attitudes, and achievements (Banks, 2012). This entails examining the data from the perspective of the African person as the centred agent rather than an object from the standpoint of the European paradigm (Davies, 2008).

According to the Afrocentric theory, every ethnic group constitutes a definite space based on its history, biology, and culture. This particular space represents the groups centre or location. However, any group could develop a sense of location that is not compatible with its history and culture. Only when this group identifies itself with another dominant group and loses the view of itself, it will give rise to dislocation. So, a group may be dislocated when it either adopts the dominant group's attitudes or culture (Mazama, 2005). Hence, Afrocentricity endeavours to discover ways to relocate and re-centre the African person as an active agent or actor in human history (Chawane, 2016).

In essence, the Afrocentric idea gives great concern to African agency which has been defined by Asante as "an attitude towards an action originating in African experiences" (Asante, 2006: 650). An agent is the one who is capable of acting independently in his or her own best interest. Likewise, the agency represents the ability to provide the cultural and psychological resources indispensable for the development of human freedom (Mazama, 2014). Moreover, it refers to a human being's ability to make choices and change the structure of the community. While African agency cannot be separated from the general understanding of the concept of agency, it is important to refer to its uniqueness. African agency constitutes the ability of people, who believe in their African identity, to make conscious choices to change their structure. Asante's definition of Afrocentricity reveals what he meant by African agency as:

> …a consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis and an actionable perspective where Africans seek, from agency, to assert subject place within the context of African history…' (Asante, 2006: 653)

According to Afrocentricity, an agency can be comprehended as a manifestation of consciousness. In addition to being measurable and quantifiable, consciousness can be typified. For Asante, there are two types of consciousness: a consciousness of oppression which reflects a low level of the sense of agency; and consciousness of victory that qualifies as Afrocentric consciousness. Thus, Asante clarifies that there is no place for a consciousness of pain, oppression and suffering in the mind of the Afrocentric person since the present and the future must be lived victoriously (Mazama, 2014).

As previously mentioned, Afrocentric identity is considered as the output of Afrocentric consciousness. Therefore, there is a real necessity to define Afrocentric consciousness. Asante stated that Afrocentric consciousness expresses a state of awareness in which one understands the need to assess symbolic reality as a social product that is not neutral. So, the African person must struggle to define social reality while keeping Africa at the centre of his consciousness. Afrocentric consciousness helps Africans to recognise discrepancies in their conception of reality and to analyse the phenomena and situations inconsistent with the collective interests of African people (Edwards, McMillon & Turner, 2015). Also, Adeleke defines it as a consciousness of affinity to Africa, promoted by a commitment to African values and ideals and realising the existential realities within an African frame of reference (Adeleke, 2005).

Having defined what is meant by Afrocentric consciousness, this paper will now move on to discuss the Afrocentric cultural identity model or Asante's Afrocentric transformation model.

The Afrocentric transformation model (Cultural Identity Model)

Typically, racial group identification refers to a psychological attachment to one of the various categories in which the category is selected based on race, culture, history, language, skin colour and so on. The importance of cultural identity lies in its impact on the manners that individuals conduct their lives and socialise with others. It has been noted that healthy African American identity formation must deal with the development of accepting and understanding of the group to confront inferiority, stereotypes and racial oppression (Jackson, 2006).

Various cultural identity models have been introduced to address racial minorities. Indeed, Afrocentric models focus on the developmental progression in cultural identity from a more Afrocentric perspective (Jackson, 2006).

Asante's model is considered one of the recent models, which is known as the "Afrocentric Transformation Model" (Asante, 2006: 651). It has gained its publicity and importance in the academy due to two main reasons. First, it depends on a theory that defines social change as a process of individual transformation. Second, it approves with and emanates from African American historical and cultural experience (Shujaa, 1992).

Asante also argues that Afrocentric transformation is a process in which African Americans become Afrocentric by being engaged in individual reflection and social interaction. This model proposed several levels of awareness before attaining Afrocentricity (Shujaa, 1992). There are five levels outlined as follows: skin recognition, environmental recognition, personality awareness, interest-concern, and Afrocentricity. These levels reflect developmental progress from physical approval of blackness to the socio-political and psychological commitment to an Afrocentric framework, described in detail below. (Jackson, 2006).

(1) Skin recognition

This level occurs when the individual starts to recognise that his skin and heritage are black, and he has to accept this reality. It implies that the person must realise the environment that he has been discriminated against and abused due to his blackness (Sekayi, 1997). It represents a sense of consciousness borne from otherness or being discriminated against in a racist society (Shujaa, 1992).

(2) Personality awareness

This level indicates the necessity to like things which are related to the African Culture and heritage. Asante states that individuals must reveal a specific level of awareness of personal traits and preferences related to their cultural identity. Personality awareness promotes a sense of uniqueness of the cultural self that is not derived from the others. However, attribution of personality qualities to one's Culture does not indicate that this person is Afrocentric. It does demonstrate that the individual is aware that some things in his environment have a special appeal since he is an African American (Sekayi, 1997).

(3) *Interest-concern*

The interest-concern level occurs when the individuals accept the previous levels and show an interest in the issues and problems faced by Africans (Sekayi, 1997). Moreover, they may display their concern by speaking on blacks or writing about them, or by demonstrating against racism and oppression, organising activities in support of African liberation and collecting funds for the African community (Mazama, 2018).

(4) Afrocentricity

This final level can be achieved, according to Asante, when the individual becomes totally changed to a conscious level of engagement in the struggle for the liberation of his mind (Sekayi, 2013). This happens when one successfully defines his relationship with Africa by placing Africans at the centre of the narratives (Mazama, 2018).

Overall, once these transformation processes are achieved, the person becomes capable of developing his African centred worldview, which is invincible in the face of the dominant Eurocentric ideology (Barnett, 2014). As previously discussed, Afrocentric consciousness motivates African agency. Indeed, the person who has reached Afrocentric consciousness will start to assert Africa's cultural project through the deliberate activation of his agency. Asante describes this status of exercising one's agency on behalf of Africa as an imperative of will and firm steps to destroy every trace of powerlessness. Afrocentricity is like rhythm as it dictates the beat of your life. Because Afrocentricity is a process of construction, it necessarily implies constructive action reflecting the personal and collective determination and transformation (Mazama, 2018).

It is apparent that the Afrocentric cultural identity model focuses more on the collective consciousness and identity of Africans; particularly African Americans, as a way of their empowerment. This model conceptualises self-identity as a collective construct. Others are seen as an expression of the self rather than a mirror of the self. This Afrocentric tenet finds its origins in the African philosophical foundation "I am because we are and because we are, I am" (Sherr, 2006: 9). This model places great emphasis on collective identity. It does not dismiss the notion of uniqueness, but it rejects the idea that the person could be understood separated from others in his social group. Hence, the emphasis on collectivism encourages focusing on the commonalities of people

rather than searching for the differences. Likewise, Afrocentric models concentrate on inclusiveness and similarities. According to Schiele, Afrocentricity gives priority to the welfare of the group over the welfare of the individuals. Besides, it encourages promoting cooperation and social responsibility (Schiele, 1994).

So far, this part has focused on illustrating the model in detail, showing its components and formulation. The following section will discuss the importance and implications of Afrocentricity and Afrocentric cultural identity for African Americans in theory and practice.

Part 2: Impacts of Afrocentricity and Afrocentric cultural identity

The importance of the Afrocentric transformation for the people of African descent lies behind being an attainable opportunity to free themselves from the dehumanising constraints of the Eurocentric paradigm and take action to reclaim their African identity through the adoption of an Afrocentric worldview (Beverly, 1998). The Afrocentric identity model helps African Americans to redefine themselves to heal the damage they suffered after the exposure to the Eurocentric values (Oliver, 1989). Besides, it implies a socio-political commitment to an African centred identification that leads to a positive self-image and strong racial identification (Grant, Martinez & White, 1998).

Nonetheless, there are some questions which will always be posted, how does one know that he had successfully made the transformation from the Eurocentric paradigm to the Afrocentric world view? In essence, what is the impact of Afrocentricity on African Americans to recover the negative impacts of racialisation and oppression? Furthermore, how Afrocentricity could be implemented as theory and practice; in the academy and the real lives of Africans?

Concerning the academy, the broad impact of Asante's model is noticed in the growing body of scholarship that adopts Afrocentricity. Moreover, Afrocentric methodologies have been employed in various disciplines as; anthropology, education, organisational theory, linguistics, jazz theory, and physical education (Gayles, 2008).

Further, Asante argues that the Afrocentric model could have a considerable influence on the way African researchers view their identity, specifically in regards to African people as centred, located, grounded and

oriented. That is how Afrocentricity, as a theoretical perspective, could be applied to research and form the fundamental core of the idea (Mkabela, 2005). Afrocentric scholars who are studying African people must be well grounded in African history and culture to tell the story of African's life experiences from their perspective. Afrocentricity is about centring the question in the African people's life experience. Asante stated previously that the Afrocentric perspective is the orientation to data that posits Africans as agents and participants in shaping their lives. Similarly, Karenga wrote that it is an intellectual inquiry and production centred on the interest and image of people of African descent. By way of illustration, Schiele argued that when Afrocentric theory is applied in social work research, this perspective will help provide information and implications of human behaviour and social incidents in the lives of African peoples (Davis, Williams & Akinyela, 2010).

Practically, it has been argued that the impact of the Afrocentric idea has been phenomenal. As Asante wrote:

> We have seen the explosion of Afrocentricity in every walk of life affecting African people…The arts, education, architecture, psychology, science, informational technology, symbolism, and religion are just a few of the areas where Afrocentric consciousness has invaded our spaces as measures of recovery. (Kumah-Abiwu, 2016: 7)

As mentioned above, one of the fundamental ideas to transcend the identity crisis of African Americans and emphasise an Afrocentric cultural identity is to incorporate Afrocentric worldview in the lives of African people. A practical example of this incorporation is: Afrocentric socialisation. It refers to an interactive process through which African parents and adults construct their behaviour and institutions, such as family, media and educational system, to promote the internalisation of values, among African youth, that assures love of the self, personal commitment to the economic-political development of people of African descent and self-consciousness of their cultural heritage (Oliver, 1989).

According to Mazama, despite its profound theoretical construct, Afrocentricity should not be reduced to an intellectual exercise. Afrocentricity is a true paradigm that seeks to liberate Africans and has real implications for one's life and choices. These implications could be detected in 3 main areas: First, the exhibition of cultural phenomena informed by Afrocentric consciousness.

Second, the development of a new political discourse and praxis, where leaders realised the need for Afrocentric policies. Third, the building of institutions such as schools and spiritual centres to spread Afrocentric consciousness and encourage the Afrocentric transformation (Mazama, 2001). Concerning education, various studies have been conducted to analyse how Afrocentric models could be operated in different educational institutions. In addition, the Afrocentric curriculum has been proposed as a strategy to introduce multi-centred and antiracist education.

Implementation of the Afrocentric conceptualisation is of crucial concern for the Afrocentric researchers. It is pivotal since it entails a redirection of the African frame of reference from an oppressive one to a frame that is closely related to the African culture and history. Thus, it applies the terminology that is not only culturally appropriate but also liberating and non-oppressive. Hence, the successful implementation of an Afrocentric methodology should create research that is not contradictory to African people's conscious struggle for liberation (Pellerin, 2012).

The field of black studies has been witnessing numerous intellectual contributions that address the Afrocentric theory following Asante's extensive works on Afrocentricity. Although the Afrocentric paradigm has revolutionised the area of black studies for the past several decades and produced many studies and researches interpreting, analysing and critiquing this model, the existing literature appears not to have many scholars examined the policy side of the theory (Kumah-Abiwu, 2016).

For Felix Kumah-Abiwu, the Afrocentric paradigm has the capacity, through its conceptual ideas, to positively reclaim the African identity and transform the distorted image of African people, as well as the ability to shape policies in order to generate solutions facing the African communities inside the continent and in the diaspora. Thus, this paper supports Kumah-Abiwu's position, concerning the necessity of moving Afrocentricity beyond the intellectual constructs to the policy perspective. In other words, scholars should incorporate Afrocentric theory in policy ideas and real-world applications. Also, the work that integrates the Afrocentric concept should be guided by two main questions. Firstly, how can the core principles of the theory be utilised to shape policy solutions to solve issues facing African societies? Secondly, how could ideas of theory be applied

in teaching and the interpretation of concepts in the general sciences, technology, mathematics, and other fields? (Kumah-Abiwu, 2016).

Although these questions will represent critical issues, Afrocentric scholars, answering it will contribute significantly in achieving the idealistic purpose of Afrocentricity which is the liberation of African people from the Eurocentric hegemony that constituted all aspects of African lives and culture (Kumah-Abiwu, 2016).

In the same way, Asante mentioned similar ideas about the future of Afrocentricity when he was interviewed a few years ago. He emphasised that future ideas about Afrocentric ideology should concentrate more on location, centeredness, and agency. In addition, he posed further questions that he believed would be asked by emerging generations of Afrocentric scholars. These questions could be like: How economics could be interpreted from an African perspective? To what extent could we view an African culture as the key to economics or relationships? What are the implications of African agency for inter-African relationships? How can we reconstruct African history according to the narrative told by Africans themselves? Moreover, when he was asked how Afrocentric researcher can balance their training in the social and other sciences with their interest in Afrocentric-inspired research, he answered that Afrocentric researchers do not have to lose interest in their fields of work. However, they must employ the African-centred perspective in demonstrating their research activities, especially on topics relating to African people (Kumah-Abiwu, 2016).

Despite its importance and grave implications, Afrocentricity has been criticised by many scholars. Let us now consider, in the third section, the primary attacks on Afrocentricity and its cultural identity model.

Part 3: Critiques and responses to the Afrocentric idea

Afrocentricity has been charged with many assaults. The most important one that has been criticised for is essentialism. The term "Afrocentric Essentialism" has been defined, according to Adeleke, as using Africa to develop a monolithic and symmetric culture, history and identity of all blacks regardless of their geographical location. According to Afrocentric essentialism, all Africans share one identity regardless of their historical experiences. Moreover, Afrocentricity

was accused of believing that African American experience never influenced the consciousness and identity of the African person (Adeleke, 2011).

Other opponents argued that the Afrocentric cultural identity model deals with race as an astatic phenomenon and apply it to African Americans as a monolithic group. This, from their point of view, leads to the ignorance of the historical fact of social stratification among the diaspora community and consider falsely that the African interests were culturally, philosophically and racially the same (Ginwright, 2004). In his book *The Case against Afrocentrism* Adeleke attempts to provide a critique of the cultural, historical and social implications of the essentialist tradition in black cultural thought known as Afrocentricity. However, his claim that Afrocentricity develops a monolithic unified identity for all Africans is far reached. Many leading Afrocentric thinkers have discussed how to avoid what Adeleke called "a monolithic trap" in their works. Further, Asante claims that there is an African cultural system that has manifested in various ways on the continent of African and in other places where Africans are spread around the world (Kumah-Abiwu, 2016).

In response to the accusation of essentialism, Asante argues that his extensive study of history led him to the fact that cultures do exist and persist with several main characteristics hardly changed. He contends that this is the nature of human societies, and African American society is no different in this situation. It is supposed that there are particularly basic characteristics that identify the African American community. These characteristics are immutable in the sense of being innate (Tillotson, 2011). Besides, Asante declared that he is an essentialist but not immutability in the sense that he accepts some particular core experiences and histories substantial to his being but does not believe in the immutability of the human condition (Gayles, 2008).

Some opponents misunderstood Afrocentricity as the African version of the oppressive hegemonic Eurocentric paradigm. In his article *Europe Upside Down: Fallacies of the New Afrocentrism,* Appiah attacked Afrocentricity as a reactive structure based on glorifying Kemet civilisation. Simply, Eurocentrism turned upside down. Appiah justified his argument when he wrote that Afrocentricity represents a challenge to the old priority of Greeks (whites) replacing them with Egyptians (blacks). He also assumed Afrocentricity to be a race matter (Grinker, Lubkemann & Steiner, 2010).

In defending Afrocentricity, Asante asserted that the idea of analysing phenomena from the perspective of African peoples as subjects is not a retroactive idea, but it is the only valid and correct way to engage information. Unlike Eurocentricity, Afrocentricity does not seek superiority at the expense of demeaning other groups (Houessou-Adin, 1995). Moreover, Afrocentricity is not an ethnocentric or anti-white intellectual paradigm because it recognises the interconnectedness between African subjectivity and the identities of Africans in postmodern African history (M'Baye, 2013).

In this regard, race consciousness is a positive expression to defend the race without seeking its supremacy over other races. That is because when this happens, it loses its positive meaning and transforms into racialism. Based on this idea, Afrocentricity is not a racialist ideology. According to Thomas Houessou-Adin, Afrocentricity is a non-hegemonic perspective that claims African superiority over other races. Instead, it is a pluralistic approach without hierarchy; it appreciates the multiplicity and contributions of other cultures in human civilisation. However, it claims an anteriority of African civilisation which, in essence, does not mean its superiority (Houessou-Adin, 1995).

In sum, Asante claimed that Afrocentricity is not an ethnocentric view for two reasons. First, it does not validate itself and downgrades the others;it is unlike ethnocentric Eurocentrism that valorises itself as a universal. Second, as a method, it is not a naive theory; it is a systematic approach to introducing Africans as subjects, not objects (Houessou-Adin, 1995).

Conclusion

The main goal of this article was to analyse the notion of Afrocentricity and how it evolved as a response to racialisation in the United States against African American societies. Furthermore, this study sought to determine the effects of the Afrocentric cultural identity model developed by Afrocentricity in theory and practice. One of the most significant findings to emerge from this study is that racialisation can urge the self-consciousness of the group members and increase their racial and cultural pride. Indeed, Afrocentricity seeks to resurrect the true African identity, which was distorted as a result of Eurocentric domination.

However, this study has shown that Afrocentricity has not emerged as a reactionary philosophy to the Eurocentric paradigm. Here, it could not be considered as a "reaction" by its negative conceptualisation. In other words;

Afrocentricity is not the black version of Eurocentrism. Still, racialisation and domination of the Eurocentric ideology could have aroused the consciousness of African people to the necessity of reclaiming their African identity. On the other hand, Afrocentricity is neither hegemonic nor claims its superiority over other cultures as Eurocentrism does. Additionally, Afrocentricity acknowledges the contributions of all various cultures to human civilisation. It believes in pluralism without hierarchy. This may raise an important point concerning the evolution of Afrocentricity that is; the significance of the "context" in which Afrocentricity developed. It was a context of European hegemony and racism that evokes the need for African's liberation through a new Afrocentric paradigm.

This research has also shown that Afrocentricity has had a significant influence on African American lives. On the intellectual level, African phenomena could be investigated to demonstrate the social and historical realities of African people from their point of views. Besides, Afrocentric research methodology could provide the researchers with tools to generate valid research questions and objectives relevant to the study of African realities. Concerning the practice, Afrocentricity has taken steps forward to be applied in different areas, especially education. However, there is still a need to broaden the theoretical construct of the Afrocentric paradigm to engage with policy researches.

Ultimately, concerning the Afrocentric identity model or transformation model, despite its significant role in reclaiming an Afrocentric collective consciousness, it seems that it is rarely used in empirical research to investigate its effectiveness. Unfortunately, this research does not include a case study to investigate how the transformation to the Afrocentric paradigm happens. Therefore, this study suggests that future research should focus on how to apply the Afrocentric cultural identity model in empirical research.

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