ON MODERN AFRO-COMMUNITARIANISM AND MATOLINO'S COMMITMENT

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Abstract

As human behaviour, practices, and needs evolve in Africa, there is doubt regarding the continued application of Afro-communitarianism as an explanatory model. This doubt could be resolved by classifying Afro-communitarianism into dissimilar kinds to capture the divergent interests of traditional and modern African societies. In this article, I argue for a more nuanced distinction between traditional and modern Afro-communitarianism and locate Bernand Matolino's limited communitarianism in the latter. I show that by establishing this more nuanced distinction between traditional and modern Afro-communitarianism, we come to a better understanding of how Afro-communitarianism might be useful to African societies, in so far as it is contextualised. So, while traditional Afro-communitarianism might explain the realities of small monolithic African societies, modern Afro-communitarianism, such as Matolino's limited communitarianism, reflects and fits into the realities of modern Africa and also reflect the thoughts required to capture those current realities about persons and society. Also, with this nuanced distinction, I demonstrate that traditional Afro-communitarianism poses the problem of humiliation, in which an individual's selfhood and agency are delimited by communal ways of life. To overcome this problem, I draw from Matolino's limited communitarianism to propose the de-essentialisation of African thought to accommodate plural conceptions of personhood.

Keywords: Afro-communitarianism, Bernard Matolino, Limited communitarianism, Personhood, Community, Humiliation.

Introduction

The remaking and evolving of thought systems and landscapes in Africa are not fully acknowledged as essentials for African social development— a result of the assumed threat such remaking has on traditional cultural interests and demands. Matolino's works draw attention to both the details and recognition of these changes as well as the need to come to terms with them (MATOLINO 2008, 2014, 2018a, 2018b). His works demonstrate why the evidence of those changes should inform theorising about Africa. Recognising the new and emerging concerns and interests of modern African societies, Matolino's theory of limited communitarianism presents itself as a model of Afro-communitarianism that reflects the thoughts required to capture those current realities, interests and human experiences. In doing so, limited communitarianism makes the interests of the individual a priority by redefining the nature of community in African thought and emphasising the metaphysical aspects of the self in its conception of personhood. While limited communitarianism shows the significance of reconceptualising Afro-communitarianism in the modern context for its continued relevance, it exposes the weakness of traditional Afro-communitarian thoughts about persons and society and the logic of the insistence of those thoughts for the conception of beings and social system in a modern African polity.

Because of the difference in the experience and realities of traditional and modern African societies, appreciating Afro-communitarianism as an explanatory model lies in classifying its theories into forms – traditional and modern – as well as identifying the kind of society those forms can capture. Identifying modern Afro-communitarianism as the form of Afro-communitarianism that reflects the realities and experiences of modern African societies is essential to advising the continued application of Afro-communitarianism in their affairs. As such, Matolino's commitment and theory of limited communitarianism can best be described as a contribution to the advancement of modern Afro-communitarianism, which has further influenced ideas that identify and combat the implications of humiliation on Afro-communitarian personhood.

To make my point, I will start with the distinction between traditional and modern forms of Afro-communitarianism. I point out that each model of Afro-communitarianism is informed by what the theorists consider to be the desirable pattern of arranging human

society or social structure. This pattern and standard define the roles of persons and benefits that accrue to individuals, such as honour, rights, autonomy, and freedom. Thereafter, I discuss the idea of limited communitarianism as a theory of modern Afro-communitarianism. I then proceed to the importance of the theory on the development of communitarianism in Africa through a discussion of the issues the traditional form of Afro-communitarianism generates for modern African societies, thereby suggesting the need for forms of Afro-communitarianism that fits African experience in the modern context. I show that the distinction between traditional and modern Afro-communitarianism must be taken seriously for a fair assessment of Afro-communitarianism and the identification of its current significance. Lastly, I show the significance of not essentialising thought and practices for the development of African philosophy – an agenda that is at the centre of Matolino's commitment to African philosophy.

Conceptualising Forms of Communitarianism in Africa: The Traditional and Modern

As communitarianism continues to inform African thought and practice, it is essential to recognise the deliberate intention to rework the concept by social theorists to make it fit the contemporary African experience (GYEKYE 1997, EZE 2008, MATOLINO 2008, 2014, 2018). This reworking of Afro-communitarianism is, for me, a commitment to the development of modern Afro-communitarianism. The classification of Afro-communitarianism and the distinction between theories of modern Afro-communitarianism and traditional Afro-communitarianism is justified if we acknowledge that differences exist in the interests, facts and experiences of traditional and modern African societies. Thus, communitarianism as an explanatory model in Africa must be classified into different kinds for its continued significance in explaining those realities.

What is paramount to thinking about the development of Afro-communitarianism is our interrogation of the notion of community in African thought. Indeed, varieties of communitarianism are informed by the view of 'community' they subscribe to. Part of the interests of traditional African societies, which traditional Afro-communitarian theories capture, is that community and communal good are seen as having priority over the individual and the individual good, and, in

terms of attaining personhood, emphasis is strongly placed on the duties individuals owe to the community. The primacy of the community might be the result of the monolithic nature of the community that shapes the human experience in traditional African societies. As Matolino also rightly points out, "the facts of human existence in traditional communities necessitated tightly knit relations that ultimately gave rise to notions of communitarianism with an emphasis on collectivist understandings of life that prioritise communal reality over individual reality" (MATOLINO 2018a, 115). As such, the communitarian theories that only accord primary status to communal duties and obligations in pursuing personhood align with the sort of communitarian framework that characterises traditional African society.

For modern African societies characterised as multicultural, the interests and concerns that shape human experience and realities differ. These interests are managed by a different interpretation of community in Afro-communitarianism. This understanding of community sees personhood and the relationship between the community and the individual as one defined by equal status (in terms of primacy) for the individual and the community. Some of the Afro-communitarian theories that capture the sense of community in modern African societies take the shape of moderate communitarianism, as propounded by Gyekye (1997, also see ADEATE 2023a), or limited communitarianism, as propounded by Matolino (2018a, 2022). As such, I point to the status or placement of community in the relation between community and individual and the formation of personhood as a valid identifier for the distinction between traditional and modern Afro-communitarianism.

An idea of personhood appeals to the traditional understanding of communitarianism if it essentially prescribes some forms of relationship with the community and makes duties and responsibilities to others and communal obligations primary for personhood (MENKITI 1984, 2004, IKUENOBE 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2021, MOLEFE & MARAGANEDZHA 2017, MOLEFE 2018a, 2018b, OYOWE 2021, 2022). This view of personhood holds that moral excellence and achievement are derived from an individual's investment in social and cultural norms, defined by the community, which are essential in defining who a *person* is, one that qualifies for the social benefits that accrue to such status. Following this,

personhood, in this context, entails recognition by the community for adhering or conforming to norms, values and practices laid down by the community (MENKITI 1984, 2004, IKUENOBE 2018b, 2018c, MOLEFE 2018a, 2018b, OYOWE 2022). This affirms why the traditional forms of Afro-communitarianism subscribe to the view that there is no conception of persons without the community.

From the above, it is clear that the traditional Afro-communitarian view sees a person as one guided by the cultural values of the community. Consequently, a non-person is any community member whose mode of living contradicts the principles of the community or does not fully or perfectly mirror them (see ADEATE 2023b).

Furthermore, an Afro-communitarian theory is of a traditional kind because of the emphasis it places on traditional norms of culture and thought in the development of what constitutes the ideal mode of being and social relations and order in contemporary African societies. The classification of theories of Afro-communitarianism into traditional and modern is not a result of the period of the existence of the different theorists/theories, but that these theories/theorists offer a description of traditional African thought about persons and society. Their writings reflect a historical exposition of ancient African monolithic social arrangement and structure, which is mainly guided by communal social ideals.

To further the distinction between traditional and modern Afro-communitarianism, it is important that we examine some of the important concerns/features that are prominent in Modern African societies since these features eventually shape modern versions of communitarianism. In modern African societies, issues of difference, identity, sexuality and rights, and the narratives of inclusion and exclusions, are part of the many characteristic concerns. These features define the multicultural reality in the 21st century and the variety of demands that come with it. Also, issues related to governance in modern African societies cover interests of diversity as the polity is multicultural rather than monocultural.

From the foregoing, one can see that central to the realities/concerns of modern African societies is the fact of the individual and the attention that the individual receives in contemporary Africa. Concerns about self, individual rights and the analysis of the dignity of persons are all important concerns in this

regard. While the attention to the reality of the individual does not disregard the relevance of the community, this realisation calls for thought systems that best explain the social dynamics and the current experience of individuals in Africa.

Modern Afro-communitarianism expresses the view that we can no longer continue with the framework set by the traditional Afro-communitarian views. Matolino's critical assessment of Afro-communitarianism, located in some of his works (MATOLINO 2008, 2011, 2014, 2018a), shows doubt about the viability of traditional Afro-communitarian viewpoints in fostering a viable and inclusive social and political arrangement that is relevant to the existential concerns of individuals living in Africa. There is thus a need for a new 'modern' account of Afro-communitarianism, and this is what Matolino attempts to do in his work. Indeed, Matolino's view of communitarianism (which I now characterise as a 'modern'[1] form of communitarianism) has been directed at examining how the traditional norms of typical African societies define individual identity, occlude differences, and hinder the expression of rights. This version of communitarianism is what he calls 'limited communitarianism', and we shall examine its tenets in the next chapter.

The Concerns of Limited Communitarianism
Matolino sets out to argue against the idea of a single explanatory model of African thought by arguing against essentialising African thought and arguing for the inclusion of multiple perspectives. Furthermore, he argues that the insufficiencies of the classic radical Afro-communitarian views (TEMPELS 1959, MENKITI 1984, 2004) and the moderate views (GYEKYE 1997) require a new vision of personhood – one that takes cognisance of the social realities of contemporary Africa. Limited communitarianism as a socio-political theory aims to capture the modern African experience, realities and

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[1] The modern form of Afro-communitarianism is characterised by its reconstruction of the notion of community entrenched in the traditional Afro-communitarian view and the relationship between the self and its community (GYEKYE 1997, EZE 2008, MATOLINO 2008, 2014, 2018a). It offers a new interpretation of persons that fits the modern context of community and can help the individual actualize the self and their claims.

interests. It also shows why traditional Afro-communitarianism cannot explain those experiences. Matolino believes limited communitarianism, unlike traditional Afro-communitarianism, best captures the notion of self in the modern context and grounds the realisation of individual rights in modern African political thinking.

With limited communitarianism, Matolino offers a model of thinking about the individual not encumbered by the dictates of the community. Limited communitarianism argues for a conception of personhood in African thought in which the community's role in the attainment of that personhood is limited. The norms and standards of the community are restricted in the limited communitarian conception of personhood. Communal judgment of personhood through the evaluative framework that tests individual adherence to the virtues of community is withdrawn from the process leading to personhood. Matolino queries the notion of virtues, the key ideal communitarians subscribe to, as the standard for personhood. According to him, ideal moral conduct and virtues are usually heavily contested, and there exists a variance in what counts as virtue in all societies. Even within the same society, argues Matolino, there is the plausibility of contention of what is morally worthy of doing in certain situations (MATOLINO 2008). The role of community, Matolino notes, must be limited to how we conceive social relations between individual members' inter-relations. However, ordering social relations, argues Matolino, must not be taken as the definition of the constitutive characteristics of persons the way communitarians like Tempels and Mbiti have taken it to be (MATOLINO 2018). The metaphysical notion sidesteps the questions of value in the final determination of personhood and avoids the complications value brings.

Limited communitarianism flows from a non-moral conception of selfhood. This conception of persons he labels the 'metaphysical account'. The metaphysical account of persons prioritises the metaphysical features and capacities of the self and also emphasises the constitutive features of the self (MATOLINO 2014, 2018a). For instance, in the Akan tradition, features such as *okra* (a life-giving entity), and *sunsum* (that which gives a person's personality its force), the *nipadua* (body), among others, are the essential reference points for defining personhood (see WIREDU 1995). These features, which also include the *mogya* (the mother's blood) and the *ntoro* (the father's semen) that both tie the individual

to the specific relatedness of both her mother and father's side, are not derivative of communal reality (Matolino 2018).

Oritsegbubemi Oyowe (2015), defending the traditional Afro-communitarian view, argues that the metaphysical account of personhood does not offer limited communitarianism an edge over traditional Afro-communitarianism. As such, it does not provide distinct reasons to reject traditional Afro-communitarianism. Like limited communitarianism, Oyowe notes that traditional Afro-communitarianism acknowledges the descriptive, metaphysical, and ontological notions of the self, which account for what Matolino refers to as constitutive features of persons. Oyowe sees metaphysical reference as a necessary criterion for personhood. The significance of limited communitarianism over traditional Afro-communitarianism does not lie in referring to the metaphysical properties of persons. What is important is the value and status the metaphysical properties hold in the requirements of personhood. In the traditional Afro-communitarian view, the metaphysical requirement is less important than the communal requirements for personhood. Personhood is primarily communal/normative. For limited communitarianism, what a person is is primarily metaphysical. The metaphysical features are more than mere accompanies.

Because the metaphysical features are responsible for the constitution of a person, they take priority in defining what a person is. The commitment of the Akan account of personhood to the primacy of the sociality of the self and the place of value in the final determination of personhood clouds any form of relevance the metaphysical aspect may offer. The metaphysical features identified in Akan philosophical traditions are, unlike in Matolino's account, engulfed in the normative claim. As a result, even if every human possesses the constitutive features of personhood, those lacking in the normative communal criteria would not qualify as persons. This seems to be one of the foundations for Matolino's insistence on the constitutive features of personhood. To avoid concealing the significance of the metaphysical features, Matolino steers clear of prioritising the community and communal norms over the metaphysical component (ADEATE 2023c).

Matolino argues through his idea of limited communitarianism that understanding what constitutes a person, whose rights as an individual would not be secondary but primary, involves reducing the

influence of the community in African social and political experience and realities. As such, the metaphysical approach to personhood, unlike the moral-communitarian view, places community and its norms as secondary to what makes a person (MATOLINO 2014, 2018a, 2022).

Matolino's idea of personhood, where the individual is not burdened by the dictates of the community provides a more precise direction to resolving the conundrum of individual rights in communitarian philosophy. This is because a conception of personhood where individuals live a meaningful life only when they prioritise the demands of community norms and values, such as sharing their religious beliefs, being married, having the potential for progeny, and contributing to the family and community, will always create tension for the recognition of self-expression and identities that are outside of the scheme of the community standard (ADEATE 2023d). Since the essential and primary features of personhood are derived from the individual and not acquired through the community, it makes sense that there are no norms of community or communal obligations that should obstruct agency and an individual's self-expression. The level to which the individual needs the community for their selfhood is only at the level of compulsory responsibility or obligatory reciprocity to the community. Every other obligation is merely an extension of care and free will.

Part of the worry with prioritising community when thinking about personhood in relation to dignity and human rights, within the moral-communitarian perspective, is the inability to defend the dignity and rights of those who lack the capacity for community or communal relations. As an accompaniment of personhood, dignity in traditional Afro-communitarian thought is guaranteed by individuals' fulfilment of approved obligations to the community. The tension with dignity and individual rights would be reduced if the traditional forms of Afro-communitarianism do not underplay the importance of the biological-cognitive features of the self and the metaphysical capacities for dignity and personhood. By underplaying these ontological features, traditional Afro-communitarianism only sees community and communal duties as primary.

It needs to be pointed out, however, that while the challenge of ascribing primary status to the community in discussions about personhood in traditional Afro-communitarianism needs to be

addressed, one does not need to relocate the community to a secondary status as a way of addressing the problem. The reality of the community and the reality of the individual could both hold primary status. Gyekye's (1997) thesis of the equal worth of duties and rights as an outcome of the equal worth of the sociality of self and the individuality of self grounded on communal structure/relations and the metaphysical capacities, respectively, is an essential reference in this regard. It is also a viable proposition and solution to the challenge of individual rights implicated in traditional Afro-communitarian thought because it offers an appreciation of individuality (see ADEATE 2023a).

Gyekye's emphasis on the individuality of the self as essential for personhood in moderate communitarianism is to ascertain the place of individual rights in Afro-communitarianism and to drive home the need for the appropriate recognition of the emerging demands of individual rights in the communitarian modern African societies (ADEATE 2023a). In order to safeguard individual rights, moderate communitarianism pursues the need to limit the influence of the community on human personhood by emphasising the physio-psychological components of the individuals that do not require normative principles for their value validation (GYEKYE 1997).

Like moderate communitarianism, limited communitarianism, as a form of modern Afro-communitarianism, gives recognition to those non-moral metaphysical properties that ground personhood as the foundations from which one can promote and restore the worth and values of the human being beyond communal contributions. Hence, limited communitarianism does a better job of taking care of specific modern demands and interests that have to deal with the individual, such as rights and freedom of expression, since there is no overwhelming reliance on the community as the source of personhood/dignity.

Capturing the Influence of Limited Communitarianism on Modern Afro-communitarianism
The concern and arguments of limited communitarianism about the individual and the difficulties involved in accommodating individual rights in traditional Afro-communitarian thought serve as a nudge for thinking deeply about the normative theory of personhood in African

thought. In thinking about the moral theory of personhood, I observe the extra problem that the view reflects humiliation.

Drawing on Matolino's assessment of selfhood and agency in Afro-communitarianism, my diagnosis of the tension between the community and individual shows the problem of humiliation. To understand my reference to humiliation, I cite Avishai Margalit. Margalit (1996, 9) notes that humiliation is "any behaviour or condition that constitutes a sound reason for a person to consider his or her self-respect injured". While humiliation is to have one's self-respect injured, self-respect is the honour or respect individuals accord themselves without needing the opinions of others. A society causes humiliation if it has regulations or provisions of the law that delimit its citizens' self-expression. In the same vein, if a group or community has standards, values or norms that delimit their members' self-expression, such a group sets the stage for humiliation. Humiliation could be interpreted as when an individual's engagement with society is confronted with events by individuals, institutions or social norms that reduce the self-confidence needed to approach the world and make the most of existence.

First, the problem associated with the traditional Afro-communitarian view of persons is that it has norms and principles of identities that harm the self-respect of certain members of society, thereby humiliating them. This is so because the notion of personhood in traditional Afro-communitarian thought has become the popular recommended mode for ideal social ordering and social relations in contemporary Africa. Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò (2016) faults ideological preferences for communalism by African scholars by considering this tendency as unpromising. According to him, there is a distinct disjuncture between the appeal for communal framing of being a person and the reality of everyday living for contemporary Africans. The evidence of the rise of the reality of individualism on the African continent is overwhelming.[2] It seems to me that the

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[2] Táíwò also alludes to how, as individuals on the African continent, we now prefer spatial arrangements that show the desire for values of individualism rather than communalism. He says, "the single-family residence is now the dominant, often preferred, definitely much sought after, context in which we lead our lives in both urban and rural areas" Táíwò, (2016, 95). It is clear, however, that most people do not recognise the depth of individuality they

communitarianism that Táíwò doubts (in terms of its compatibility with the growing individualistic values in contemporary African societies) is the traditional form that is popularly canvassed in literature. I argue that there are non-dominant models of communitarianism that escape the challenges that traditional Afro-communitarianism poses. Also, I note that the idea of individualism that Táíwò draws our attention to does not appear deeply rooted in the social fibre of contemporary African spaces as the choice ideology for social ordering. The reality of Táíwò's observation is just the obvious, non-avoidable facts of individuality that are growing on the continent. This growing expression of individuality calls for a notion of community or communitarianism that is capable of making sense of this obvious fact of modern African life. As a popular, often recommended form of ordering and being, traditional Afro-communitarianism fails to recognise the various socio-economic factors that have shaped the growth of individuality and only pays attention to the fact of the collective. The essentialising of the traditional mode of Afro-communitarianism is responsible for the implicit denial or silence of modern facts of life in contemporary African societies in traditional Afro-communitarian viewpoints and the struggle for a rightful place for models that explain the realities of modern African society and the ordering of its social system. This ideological preference and obsession for some pristine ideal of being and politics ignore the evolving thought systems and landscapes in Africa with their insistence on cultural interests and demands that are of a traditional sort.

Being a mode of social relation, the traditional Afro-communitarian framework of ordering easily sets aside/apart certain non-conforming individuals and creates tension between the self and these non-conforming others. The danger of adopting such a humiliating framework of personhood for social ordering is how it has informed legislation around the notion of being in African thought. This humiliation is captured in the ways many African states today do not have legislation that allows certain sexual identifications. This is

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have come to value and express than they see others express. Hence, I contend that the dominant preference and romance for traditional mode ignores the realities of their everyday living and that of others.

because state benefits are now informed by the guiding socio-cultural ideas that define the state or the nation-state (ADEATE 2023b).

Secondly, the Afro-communitarian framework of personhood becomes humiliating since the individual does not consciously participate in setting up and developing the principles that inform their personhood but the community. Norms and values of personhood in the traditional mode are handed down and do not emanate from the opinion of the individual who is pursuing said personhood. Some of the principles that ought to guide personhood formation should be individual subjective values or ideals that contribute to their self-respect. Every human should possess, among other biological and metaphysical elements, a sense of self-respect not handed over or inherited from either society or culture. Even if some of the principles informing individual self-respect are gotten from society, it must be such that the individual has accepted those principles on the basis of his/her autonomy. These values would vary from person to person. As I noted elsewhere, in the determination of personhood, "individual input is essential since personhood is understood solely as a defining feature of the individual, not a characteristic of the community or a means of classifying communities" (ADEATE 2023a, 10).

My proposed solution to the danger of humiliation has de-essentialism (as proposed by the likes of Matolino) as its foundation. The proposal is to expand the frameworks of personhood in African thought by having multiple (plural) conceptions of personhood forming our ideal of social ordering rather than the traditional Afro-communitarian model alone. As a result, there would no longer exist a single framework for defining individuals recognised by the system of community. While the traditional idea of community in the African context tends to regard only the traditional communitarian framework of personhood as an ideal, 'community' in the modern Afro-communitarian context or a modern communitarian society would recognise multiple frameworks of personhood. By allowing individuals to subjectively derive the parameters of personhood, as much as possible, the modern communitarian community avoids injuring the self-respect of its members in their conceptions of self-identity and removes othering. Also, the communitarian standards that hitherto benefit certain individuals and inform their personhood and identity will no longer harm the self-respect of others not guided by such a framework. The understanding of plural realities and plural

conceptions of being and selfhood will inform how to set up an ideal socio-political order and social relations in modern African societies. Social relations will be guided by principles that affirm respect for all.

Matolino's solution to the question of rights and personhood called limited communitarianism, is also another way of addressing the problem of humiliation in Afro-communitarianism. It does this by rescuing the individual from the dictates of the community, which translates community norms as the only principle that guides the emergence of personhood. Matolino's interrogation of traditional Afro-communitarianism and the formation of a different kind of communitarianism is meant to ensure that African communitarian thought remains relevant to contemporary African societies and continues to have a positive, non-humiliating effect on them. The relevance of Afro-communitarianism is enhanced by emphasising the need for communitarianism to be understood in the context of the growing demand for difference, individuality, and expression of rights and freedom in contemporary African societies. Limited communitarianism, as a recognition of this context, deals with the challenges that traditional Afro-communitarianism encounters with the individual. Limited communitarianism enhances the reception of communitarianism by demonstrating that it is a system that Africans have shaped in response to the situatedness and realities of their time. With Matolino's views about why communitarianism should be understood in context, the struggles that the traditional Afro-communitarian framework encounters when juxtaposed with modern facts of African life will not translate to a rejection of the entire project of communitarianism as an explanatory model for persons and society since limited communitarianism exists as a framework that does a better job of accounting for these realities.

Deconstructing essence is an important reference to capturing Matolino's influence on our ideas about modern Afro-communitarianism and, by extension, modern African thought. De-essentialising African thought and practices is vital to recognising the number of theoretical and practical changes and advancements that have taken place in Africa. De-essentialising will allow for the full acknowledgement and recognition of non-communitarian views that exist within African thought and African modes of being, and it would enhance the bold creation and development of ideas and ideologies from Africa, which do not pay allegiance to traditional Afro-

communitarian thought. It will make African thought accommodate plural conceptions of beings and deal with the danger of continued marginalisation of specific individuals in the African political space that do not conform to the essentialist view of persons. In my view, defining and achieving selfhood in African thought should not be unilateral. De-essentialising will also boost the appreciation of the norms of traditional thought by identifying and acknowledging the extent of its influence on modern African development.

With the theme of humiliation and personhood, a modern Afro-communitarian principle must ensure that its notion of community is non-humiliating and inclusive, thereby making communitarianism valuable to a more significant percentage of the society's population. Members of society, in this case, African societies, must be guided by principles and norms of social ordering that they can relate to for personhood and identity. An individual relates with norms to the extent that such norms shape their selfhood. This is why such guiding norms and principles of the society must not harm the self-respect of its members – an essential component of personhood. Also, norms and principles of social ordering and relations must accommodate plural conceptions of selfhood that are required for ordering a multicultural modern society. African philosophers must, thus, allow and be respectful of other frameworks of personhood that are different from those of the traditional variants of Afro-communitarianism, for instance, ideas of personhood described in this work as modern Afro-communitarian theories of personhood (such as limited communitarianism).

Conclusion

Matolino's limited communitarianism makes a bold claim on why contemporary norms and values, with contemporary realities of life in Africa, are sufficient in managing current African conditions, a view that suggests that traditional standards and interests be done away with while modern means and values should be left alone to determine its course as well as to dictate current African life. However, one can put the commitment more nicely to minimise contention by saying that while Matolino may consider theories of traditional Afro-communitarianism capable of explaining a monolithic society, modern Afro-communitarianism, such as limited communitarianism, is a better explanatory model for multicultural modern societies,

which the current African societies have become. I note that attempts to theoretically and practically ground solutions to socio-political issues in postcolonial Africa on Afro-communitarianism must recognise the various forms of the view and seek a model capable of interpreting and shaping the experiences and needs of a modern multicultural society. The classification of Afro-communitarianism resolves the doubt about the continued relevance of Afro-communitarianism in modern African societies.

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