Afro Caribbean Identity

Name

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Course

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**Abstract**

The Afro-Caribbean community has a unique colonial history that includes the Europeans, Spanish, French, and Dutch (Bailey, 2019). This combination makes the readjustment of the community to compete in the modern world problematic (Bailey, 2019). To this end, there is a need to look at the successful development of the Afro-Caribbean student in the education system. With the progress of higher education in an increasingly global environment, there is a need to have increased reflection of diverse backgrounds in society. The Afro-Caribbean students realize the need to separate the development of their identity as a key dimension that allows them to maintain their ethnic identity in the new learning environment. The study takes a qualitative research approach. This approach is aimed at determining the attitudes, ideas, and opinions of Afro-Caribbean students in understanding their successful identity development within the education system.

**Statement of the Problem**

Afro-Caribbean international students often face a unique set of difficult challenges when navigating the education system. Often, they have to deal with the minority group issues that are attached to the wider minority group especially African Americans, and deal with unique Afro-Caribbean issues (Malcolm & Mendoza, 2014). The problems surrounding the Afro-Caribbean group have often been generalized to fit into the larger African American group. Based on the sociological theory on conflict, society is often in a state of conflict due to competition for resources. As such, social order is maintained by domination and power which sees the Afro-Caribbean group being dominated by the African American culture. To this end, there is a need to qualify the effects of domination, especially in the education system.

**Literature Review**

**Theoretical perspectives**

Race and identity from a sociological perspective can be examined from three different perspectives of functionalism, social conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

**Functionalism**

This theory posits that racial and ethnic inequalities have existed as long as they have because they serve an important function. Sociologists who follow this theory argues that racism and discrimination have a positively contribution only to the dominant group. It argues that racism contributes positively to society by strengthening the bonds of members of a particular group. The closer group ties enhance cohesion which can be used as leverage to negotiate political concessions.

**Social conflict theory**

The perspectives of the conflict theory is often applied to the inequalities of gender, social class, education, race, and ethnicity. It examines the struggle between the dominant group perceived as a threat by the minority group. The dominant group establishes control over all others by maintaining segregation among the minority groups which enable geographical identification of people based on race and ethnicity.

**Symbolic Interactionalism**

For this theory race and ethnicity provide symbols for identity. The proponents of this theory argue that symbols of race and not race per se are what lead to racism. At its core, it suggests that racial prejudice is formed by interactions between members of a dominant group and that without these interactions, people in the majority would not hold racist views. These interactions contribute to a certain image that offers credence to its view of the sub group, thus maintaining the status quo. An example of this is a person who holds a certain view about a particular group based on images portrayed in mass and social media.

Social scientists view black identity as a product of an assignment. There has been little to no study of what blackness means for various segments of the black population. Emerging studies have shown that the experiences of black people in the US especially as regards racial injustice have served to reduce the tension and the cleavages that exist between the various facets of the African American identity. Ethnic diversity within Black America complicates what blackness and race mean. These diversities lead to the creation of other forms of identification with the potential to confuse the existing social hierarchies. Black immigrants in the US move to the country with a strong sense of self and of ethnicity. However, while for some race becomes an identity, for others, they retain an ethnic identity (Perez, & Hirschman, 2009).

Reverend Jesse Jackson popularized the term African American to refer to Americans who had an African origin. The term had been gaining currency in intellectual circles as it signified that the Blacks had come to terms with their difficult past and resolved a long ambivalence towards Africa (Wilkerson, 1989). The term was widely adopted but some pockets of resistance to the name change remained. Those who opposed the name change especially the older generation of Blacks were of the opinion that they could not identify with Africa while others feared the name change would divert attention from the real problems of unemployment and drug abuse. While this was an important move in the recognition of African American identity, the name change clustered every black person in America no matter their origin or association, to a group that derived its identity partly from the continent of Africa.

In American society, there has been a tendency to forget and vagueness in identifying distinguishing the historic preservations that establish the legacy and heritage of the Afro-Caribbean people. Afro American people have a distinct culture, heritage, and tradition. They have a unique colonial history that includes the Europeans, Spanish, French, and Dutch (Bailey, 2019). This combination makes the readjustment of the community to compete in the modern world problematic (Bailey, 2019). There is a core aspect that leads to homogenize Afro Caribbean experiences and development which leads to the creation of invisibility among administrations and the identity of student development. This is an issue that also affects higher education stakeholders who often do not look into the unique needs of Afro-Caribbean students (Malcom & Mendoza, 2014). Moreover, Afro-Caribbean students have fewer chances of attaining or accessing quality education and have a social network that impacts their development (Anderson et al., 2009). On arrival for education in the US, Afro-Caribbean students are seen to have difficulties by being forced to align with the Black community as they are homogenized to the group (Campbell, 2017). This is in consideration that there are basic structures in the society that relate to each other and this contributes to the maintenance and survival of the whole (Lalludin, 2016). The intersection of identities and meaning-making capacity has an effect on the conceptualization of students and eventual defining of self in society (Abes et al., 2009). To this end, there is a need to look at the successful development of the Afro-Caribbean student in the education system.

**Research Question**

Based on the realization that there is a core fundamental conflict that Afro-Caribbean students face in the development of their identity in the US, there is a need to identify the key factors that play into the understanding of the student's development. If the American Educational System reflects the fixed racial classifications of American society, then how does the diasporas Afro-Caribbean identity successfully develop within this educational system?

**Methodology**

**Sample**

A sample of 20 students of Afro Caribbean origin defined here as people who trace their ancestry to the Caribbean countries as opposed to African nations but are now residents of the United States and are classified as African Americans and who speak English regardless of whether as a first language or not. Another sample of 20 students who are residents of the US and identify as black and can trace their ancestry to the continent of Africa.

The study takes a qualitative research approach. This approach is aimed at determining the attitudes, ideas, and opinions of Afro-Caribbean students in understanding their successful identity development within the education system. The use of the qualitative method is important in developing and answering questions that relate to the experience, meaning, and perspective which is a key standpoint of the participants (Hammarberg et al., 2016). This is important as it does not lead to being attached to measuring and counting. Through the use of small focus groups, there is adequate development of discussions that look into investigating the attitudes, beliefs, and concepts of dealing with normative behavior (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Additionally, semi-structured interviews can be used to allow for open-ended discussions and the development of an understanding of key issues.

**Analysis of Findings**

The Afro-Caribbean students realize the need to separate the development of their identity as a key dimension that allows them to maintain their ethnic identity in the new learning environment. As such, there is a change in the perception of various aspects of Afro-Caribbean students’ identity, especially during interactions. The development of Afro-Caribbean identity is a key aspect that has aspects of having a fluid, contingent, and negotiated aspect that is seen to constantly change as an adaptation strategy. The school is seen to have a key role to play in ensuring that the increasing global connections in its environment are able to reflect in the pedagogy of the coursework, discussions, and the classroom climate. In developing an embracing of the core values of the international education and institutions, there is a need to look into the programmatic strategies which look into pairing the senior Afro-Caribbean students or staff to the incoming students in an orientation program.

**Implications for Public Policy**

With the progress of higher education in an increasingly global environment, there is a need to have increased reflection of diverse backgrounds in society. There is a need to maximize the level of engagement of international students and develop a larger realization of the missions for increased learning and discovery of the participants in the experience of international education. On the administrative level, there is a wider scale of appreciation which looks at the appreciation of the global perspective at all levels through a look into institutional cultures that are reflected through the educational policies in the community. The process of learning, engagement, development of discovery of the valued persons in the international education experience looks at developing a crucial consideration of the development and execution of curricula. To this end, there is also a need to have better ways through a policy of dealing with documentation challenges of international students who look at determining the expectations of the students from their socio-cultural perspective.

**Conclusions**

Education is the best platform through which students from diverse ethnic groups such as Afro-Caribbean can nurture their talents and advance their identities. As Campbell (2017) suggest, Afro Caribbean students go through a number of challenges trying to navigate blackness in American education system. This shows that the system has not yet achieved the goal of multiculturalism. The goals of multicultural education can be summarized in three points. First, they serve to provide students from ethnic minorities with the right and opportunities to choose their own ethnic and group cultures in multiple cultures, to cultivate their national pride and a sense of group cultural identity, and to provide them with a sense of identity for ethnic minorities. Students provide equal educational opportunities as culturally dominant ethnic groups, especially providing equal opportunities for academic success, so that they can obtain equal opportunities with culturally dominant ethnic groups in their future work and life. Second, they serve to cultivate students' cross-cultural adaptability and understanding ability in a pluralistic society, so as to guide students to learn to recognize the culture of their own ethnic group and the culture of other ethnic groups from the perspective of pluralistic society. Third, at the entire school level, eliminate discrimination against ethnic minority groups, as well as discrimination against groups that are disadvantaged due to social class, gender, disability and other factors.

The reason why many Afro-Caribbean go through a number of challenges is that the modern American education system still have some traces of traditional system. American Education systems used to gather for the needs of White majority. The awakening of racism and the rise of cultural pluralism have certain benefits to American society and culture. The American education system finally gave up Eurocentrism and American (ie Anglo-Saxon white) centrism, recognized the existence of the rest of the world except Europe, and recognized the existence of African Americans (Afro-Americans). The federal government has also embarked on educational reforms, and made provisions on teaching methods and curriculum content that are conducive to the development of multiculturalism. Among them, bilingual education is an important part of the American multicultural education policy. For a long time after the founding of the United States, English was the only legal language. However, with the rapid growth of the minority population, the voices of the minorities, represented by Hispanics and Asians, for the rights of their mother tongue continued to rise. As a result, the United States is no longer a nation composed of free individuals, but a nation composed of associations that have preserved racial characteristics and traditions.

Even with such input, the Afro-Caribbean student has a key unique challenge in developing personal identity as part of the larger minority group in America especially the African American group. The characteristic of the environment has a key influence on the development of various aspects of the individual in the setting. To this end, there is a key realization that the homogeneity of African American identity on Afro-Caribbean students has a key effect on the development of their identity in the education system (Malcolm & Mendoza, 2014). As such, they often have to deal with issues of effectively navigating the system by developing different identity to conform to the resulting identities.

Looking at the background and policy evolution of American multiculturalism , as well as its educational goals and curriculum content, the development of multicultural education in the United States can be said to have been difficult, but it is in this continuous evolutionary process of "forward" and "return". In the "tug-of-war" of people's recognition of multicultural values, the development of multicultural education in the United States has achieved gratifying results. The repeated ups and downs and changes of policies will inevitably confuse the public, and it is difficult to establish a firm, good and correct concept of multicultural value identity in the public's ideas. First of all, how to find a suitable and appropriate balance between cultural diversity and cultural integration, cultural diversity and cultural unity, mainstream culture and subculture, and how to deal with cultural precipitation, cultural modernization and cultural localization. This is the main issue that everyone should be concerned about.

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