Perceptions of a Durban Africanist Parents` Peer Group on Marriage and Divorce

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Abstract

This paper argues that Afro-centric thought indicts Eurocentrism for the high rate of divorce in the contemporary African community. A qualitative research design exploiting informal discussions was used. Participants were male community peers who informally met to discuss wide-ranging issues in their contemporary society. They attested to being inspired by Afrocentrism and were willing to participate of their own volition. Africanist parents agree that Eurocentric thinking is a primary cause of the African family's demise, leading to high divorce rates in their communities. By doing so, the paper contributes to a body of knowledge on the causes of divorce as viewed by Africanist parents. The originality and value of the paper are in its description of emerging Afro-centric perceptions of the institution of the family and the causes of divorce bedeviling the contemporary African community. Africanist parents advanced their views of the Africanist parent and the prejudices that go with it. They described their conceptualisation of the family and the leading causes of divorce in the contemporary African community. They present rich pantheistic views on family and divorce, articulating what they understand about other races. For them, radical ideological refutation of the continued domination of Eurocentrism is the primary strategy for reducing divorce.

Keywords: *Afrocentrism, Afrocentrist, Desertion, Divorce, Feminists, Lobola, Separation*

Introduction/Background

The issue of divorce is no longer isolated or local, but a global concern. Feinberg and Feinberg (2000) opine that divorce is one of the most troublesome trends in our world today. They argue that in the U.S. alone, the statistics show that the divorce rate is up to 50 per cent or more. In predominantly Catholic countries in Central and South America, marriages far exceeded divorces. In 2001, there were 5.3 marriages per 1000, but only 18 divorces per 1000. In 2002, the U.S. recorded 1,175,000 for that year. Syria had 8.8 marriages per 1000 and only 73 divorces per 1000 (Feinberg, 2000). In Africa today, there are 8.1 marriages per 1000 and 1.21 divorces per 1000. There is evidence that the divorce rate in the African continent has been increasing since 2015, posing a challenge for the contemporary African society (Mwansisya & Mwampagatwa, 2022; Uroko & Enobong, 2022).

Before 1996, in South Africa, it was not easy for women to initiate divorce. The Bill of Rights has made it easier for married people to divorce than it was in the past. The rate of recorded divorce cases in South Africa has been increasing since 2000. Among 3,467 customary marriages registered in 2016, it was observed that 1,311 couples signed divorce papers after marrying (Sportel, 2016). Couples from white groups dominated the number of divorces from 2003 to 2007. Thereafter, African groups had the highest rate of divorce until 2016. By 2016, 42.0% of the divorcees were from the Black African population group and 24.8% from the white population group (Sportel, 2016). The growing divorce rate among African populations reflects broader shifts in socio-cultural norms and economic stressors contributing to marital instability (Neswiswa& Jacobs, 2024).

Moreover, the majority (85.7%) of bridegrooms were older than their brides, with the gap in median ages at customary marriage wider than in other types of marriages (Cherlin, 2009). The number of registered civil unions in South Africa in 2016 was 1,331, most of which were registered in Gauteng (494) and Western Cape (358), and the lowest in Limpopo (17) and Northern Cape (15) (Cherlin, 2009). Divorce rates in South Africa were 0.81 per 1000 people, indicating an 8.1% rate per 100 marriages, implying that one marriage out of 13 marriages will collapse (Du Plessis, 2006). This trend is not unique to South Africa; similar concerns have been reported in other African contexts where religious and social institutions struggle to contain rising divorce rates (Uroko & Enobong, 2022; Tirivangasi & Nyahunda, 2024).

Moreover, these figures indicate that divorce not only affects people involved in marriage but also affects the community in terms of social relationship issues. Increasing marital dissatisfaction and dissolution have been linked to cultural dynamics, gender roles, and changing expectations within marriage (Mudimeli & Khosa-Nkatini, 2024; Mwansisya & Mwampagatwa, 2022). Undoubtedly, the high divorce rate is a matter of concern locally and universally.

Having demonstrated that the rate of divorce is generally on the increase in Africa, this study sought to generate knowledge on Africanist parents` views on the causes of divorce and possible strategies for reducing it. To achieve this aim, the study is guided by two objectives, namely;

i) *To describe Africanists`/Afro-centric parents` perceptions of marriage and the causes of divorce.*
ii) *To critique Afro-centric parents` strategies for reducing the divorce rate in contemporary African society.*

Research Methodology

A qualitative approach exploiting the use of informal discussions grounded on the interpretive/social constructivism paradigm was preferred for the study. Data was collected from six personal community acquaintances who had proven in our previous discussions that they had a flair for Africanism and had projected their Africanist views on an array of socio-economic and political challenges bedeviling the continent. Having noticed that my friends in the community are an arsenal of purely African sentiments, as a researcher, I decided to systematise our informal discussions on the causes of Africa`s ever-rising divorce rate. The participants are elite individuals, pantheistic in their reasoning, capable of comparing African phenomena with those of other races. These have moved beyond the confines of mono-ethnic/mono-racial perceptions of the international institution of family/marriage and the universal occurrences of divorce.

The researcher had the consent of the peer group to code them as A, B, C, D, E and F for anonymity purposes. As a member of the peer group and researcher, the researcher acknowledged the potential of bias on his part. This was likely to affect the data collection and analysis. The researcher employed a few strategies, such as the strict use of a reflexive journal to ensure close examination of any assumptions the researcher had

that could influence the interpretation of field data. Participants frequently reviewed the write-up and had a say in interpreting the data through member checking. The researcher observed the systematic coding and remained alert to group power dynamics. All these enabled the write-up to reflect the peer group's views, not his own. These ensured the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

For this study, ethical principles such as informed consent, privacy, protection from harm, and confidentiality were applied. The views expressed were very interwoven as participants` perceptions supported each one`s points, and all converged at a philosophical level such that the researcher cum-participant felt that it was no longer possible to accord expressions to individuals but to the whole group. This tended to violate the conventional way of reporting on qualitative data, explicitly coding participants for anonymity, as themes overrode the identification and matching of participants with specific expressions. The researcher then analysed the discussion themes to develop a scholarly paper. Ethical clearance was deemed unnecessary because the study was based on an intra-peer, information-rich discussion that was turned into a scholarly study. This challenges the traditional formalities followed in the prerequisites of getting into the field. However, it partially rejects the research value of neutrality, particularly the researcher–participant distance and compulsory epistemological values such as objectivity and subjectivity. The researcher acknowledges that he was both a participant and a critical analyst of the data in this research.

Conceptual Discussion

Marriage and Divorce

The concept of marriage has not been easily defined in literature. However, it has remained a long-term or semi-exclusive sexual relationship often expected to result in reproduction and inclusive of high-level economic cooperation, blurring legal and non-legal unions between a man and a woman forming a family (Winking & Koster, 2021). It includes any blend of the following: some form of sexual preference and restriction, economic cooperation, social acknowledgement of the relationship, and the social acknowledgement that children within the marriage differ somehow from those produced outside it (Winking & Koster, 2021). In Africa, marriage is also considered a significant rite of passage and a stabilising societal institution (Mwansisya & Mwampagatwa,

2022). Marriage remains one of the ways of forming a family. This institution provides safety, psychological support, economic support, socialising children, regulating sexual activity and reproduction, and providing identity (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). Marriage is universally accepted as the backbone of socio-economic and political development. Its sustainability is a signal of harmony, and when it is characterised by crisis and divorce in the family, it points to dangers and insecurity in society (Olaniyi, 2015). Culturally embedded challenges such as patriarchy, polygamy, and lobola negotiations often add complexity to marital stability in African families (Mudimeli & Khosa-Nkatini, 2024). The family, as a product of marriage, is the foundation of the nation and is crucial to every society. An African family is a social unit with norms and beliefs, and an economic unit for the survival of its members. Families include many members, including brothers, sisters, unborn children, and departed relatives. Households are the smallest family unit, including parents and children (Ocholla-Ayayo, 1997). This extended kinship network significantly influences marital dynamics, expectations, and conflict resolution (Neswiswa & Jacobs, 2024).

On the other hand, divorce is the legal dissolution of a marriage relationship (Olaniyi, 2015). Engelbrecht et al. (1999) define divorce as a choice that two people make not to live together as husband and wife. Thus, it is viewed as a voluntary and permanent separation of a married couple (Treas, Scott & Richards, 2013). This means that legally, they sign the documents declaring the marriage over, though the other partner might sign against his or her will. Legally, divorce is a process that ends a marriage and allows spouses to remarry. Mnookin (1998) views divorce as a marriage dissolution within the confines of divorce law inclusive of distributional laws, namely, marital property law (the sharing of the couple`s stock of wealth), alimony law (ongoing claims each spouse can have over the earnings of the other), child support law (recurrent claims each child has from the earnings of each parent), and child custody and visitation law (dividing the responsibilities and opportunities of child care between the estranged parents). Studies show that economic instability, lack of communication, and shifting gender roles are among the key triggers of divorce in African societies (Mwansisya & Mwampagatwa, 2022; Uroko & Enobong, 2022).

In South Africa, one person can process and end a divorce without the other's knowledge. Some people divorce their spouses by desertion. In this study, the term will refer to any act nullifying a constitutionally recognised union of husband and wife. Additionally, certain cultural

traditions often marginalise the voices of women in marriage, contributing to silent suffering and eventual breakdowns (Mudimeli & Khosa-Nkatini, 2024; Ndiyah, 2021). Researchers have also noted that societal tolerance of domestic abuse, often rooted in cultural norms, perpetuates long-term marital dissatisfaction and eventual separation (Tirivangasi & Nyahunda, 2024).

Literature Review

Causes of Divorce

Several causes of divorce, covering socioeconomic and psychological factors, have been advanced in the literature. Some argue that divorce is mainly caused by unfaithfulness, both through premarital sex and extramarital affairs (Previti & Amato, 2004). Another major cause of divorce is that people lack an understanding of marriage (Luther, 2006). Research by Heaton (2002) revealed that demographic factors such as a wide age gap between spouses can lead to a divorce. Parkman (2002) found that legal factors such as delays in court proceedings, high legal fees, and unequal access to legal representation also contribute to divorce. These barriers often prolong marital disputes and increase emotional and financial strain, especially in low-income households (Uroko & Enobong, 2022). Amato and Irving (2006) argue that cultural and attitude differences account for several divorces because of differences that emerge over time. More recent research confirms that factors such as infidelity, poor communication, and economic strain remain major contributors to marital breakdown, especially in African settings (Mwansisya & Mwampagatwa, 2022).

Writing on causes of divorce in the African context, Olaniyi (2015) opines that divorce has increased due to westernisation, urbanisation, globalisation, industrialisation characterised by a money economy, the shift towards the nuclear family, and a weakened role of the extended family in marital conflict resolution. Society has gradually become tolerant of divorce. Western-influenced religion has withdrawn negative attitudes towards divorce as more denominations condone it as not sinful, although most judge it as unfortunate. This view is reinforced by Afrocentric scholars who argue that global modernity disrupts traditional African social structures and marital norms (Smith, 2020; Amaefula, 2021).

Several theoretical structures have been developed to explain the causes and justifications for divorce across cultural and legal frameworks. The

Indissolubility of Marriage Theory, also known as the *Shastri Hindu Law*, posits that marriage is sacred, eternal, and indissoluble, allowing for separation only through death. This approach views marriage as a lifelong commitment with profound religious and moral implications, where divorce is culturally and spiritually condemned (Gowda & Shridhar, 2020).

The irretrievable breakdown theory holds that divorce should be granted when a marriage has collapsed to a point where no reasonable prospect of restoration exists, regardless of blame or fault. This theory underlies the legal framework of many modern divorce laws, prioritising functionality over culpability (Schoeman, 2023). The fault or guilt-based Theory, which was common in historical English law, maintains that one spouse must be proven to have caused the marital breakdown through specific wrongful acts, such as adultery or cruelty. Divorce may be denied if the accused spouse successfully proves mutual misconduct, rendering the process adversarial and often unjust (Mutangadura, 2021).

The Divorce at Will Theory argues that marriage should be dissolvable by either party at any time, purely by personal desire, without justification. This approach aligns with liberal interpretations of personal autonomy and contractual freedom (Parsons et al., 2021). The consent theory of divorce is based on the mutual agreement of both spouses to end their union, reflecting principles of cooperative dissolution and avoiding blame allocation (Mwansisya & Mwampagatwa, 2022). The Frustration Theory of Marriage posits that a spouse should have the right to initiate a divorce if they find the marriage intolerably frustrating, even if the other party disagrees. This theory emphasises subjective well-being and individual psychological thresholds as legitimate grounds for separation (Tirivangasi & Nyahunda, 2024). The breakdown theory of divorce states that marriages can be terminated due to a total breakdown of relations between the two due to character, incompatibility, and living away from each other for a year to seven years (Uroko & Enobong, 2022). Afrocentric interpretations, however, point to the breakdown of communal values and reciprocal expectations within extended families as core causes of divorce, particularly in rapidly urbanising African societies (Rapanyane, 2021; Tirivangasi & Nyahunda, 2024).

Theorising divorce has been advanced; among them, the Afrocentric views on divorce are still missing. Gottman`s (1993) Cascade Theory presents a trajectory of divorce, positing that the behaviour of the spouses predicts happiness in marriage, a higher quantity of positive traits such as reciprocity, tolerance of each other, agreement, validation, enjoyment, and satisfaction with each other, and preserving a marriage together. Contrary

to such "regulated" couples, the "unregulated" couple in a marriage littered with conflict, belittling, and dismissal behaviours will likely break up shortly after the union (Gottman & Levenson). These psychological models remain applicable but must be contextualised through an Afrocentric lens, considering extended kinship roles, societal expectations, and ancestral identity (Sikanku, 2023; Aju & Beddewela, 2019).

Becker's (1993) Social Exchange Theory posits that couples constantly evaluate marriage and relationships regarding reward cost ratios for profit or to reduce perceived losses. If more losses occur, one may opt to end the marriage. Another theory that attempts to illuminate the causes of divorce is the Economic or Rational Theory, which posits that spouses attempt to maximise utility by comparing benefits and costs, thus divorcing if there are more benefits in doing so (Becker, 1993). Given this theory, hard-working couples that, for example, accrue wealth are more likely to divorce if sharing their properties is again against the other party. Contemporary African contexts challenge this model by emphasising shared communal responsibility and collective identity instead of individual rationality (Asante, 2020; Sakala, 2024).

Bradbury (1995) advanced the Vulnerability, Stress and Adaptation Theory, concluding that combining these three factors can influence a divorce. First, vulnerability in this context means that both spouses` backgrounds and attributes (personalities) determine the fragility of the marriage, increasing or lessening the possibility of divorce. Second, the nature, complexity and frequency of stressful events experienced in the marriage and how the couple copes determine the longevity of a marriage. In this case, the adaptation process through coping with distress breaks or preserves the marriage (Bradbury, 1995). Modern Afrocentric research calls for theories that account for African resilience, Ubuntu values, and collective healing mechanisms in interpreting marital dissolution (Rotzinger et al., 2025). There is a scholarly gap in the inclusion of Afro-decolonial voices on the enunciation of divorce issues in contemporary society. This paper tackles it from an informal perspective, allowing participants to articulate their perceptions freely.

Theoretical Framework

Afrocentrism

In contrast to Eurocentrism, Afrocentrism is described as a frame of reference for viewing phenomena from an African perspective. It is a

radical shift in studying ideas and events centred on African opinions as key role players, as opposed to being victims. It can be argued that Afrocentrism is Africa's declaration to challenge Western dominance in the minds of African people in all intellectual spheres (Hoskins, 1992). This paradigm continues to evolve as African scholars advocate for centring Indigenous perspectives in knowledge production (Amaefula, 2021; Emelianenko, 2022). This theory is a Social Transformation Theory suitable for analysing African concerns about power, domination, racism, and discrimination, and Africa's quest for total freedom from global oppression (Asante, 2003). The ideology is a critical resistance to global hegemonies that marginalise African identities and experiences (Smith, 2020).

Afrocentrism is used as a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person, and in every situation, seeking the centrality of the African people (Asante, 1990). As such, it is a tool for reclaiming agency and authenticity in African socio-political discourses (Sikanku, 2023). Afrocentrism can be conceptualised as a theory or paradigm placing Africa at the centre globally whilst emphasising the entitlement of the African people to practise and celebrate their own culture without interference in their cultural well-being (Mazama, 2001). Notably, it encourages Africa to regain a sense of agency toward stability. It calls for a radical transformation in thought, especially that which results in Black disorientation, dissent readiness, and lack of agency (Asante, 2009). Afrocentricity as a liberatory framework encourages dismantling colonial ideologies and revalidates African cultural norms (Vasser, 2019; Azouz, 2020).

It views phenomena through the African perspective, which is consciously rooted in the heritage of Africa and the communal value system. It promotes Africanism in people by studying ideas, concepts, events, personalities, and political and economic practices(Asante, 2009). The emphasis of Afrocentrism is on promoting the cause of Africans as subjects rather than objects, centralising knowledge on accurate examination of location (Asante, 2009). This shift in perspective is mighty in educational, political, and media discourses (Wynter-Hoyte & Smith, 2020).

Within the same realm is the concept of Afrocentricity, briefly understood as the critical analysis and interpretation of culture, economy, history, language, philosophy, politics, and society from a conceptual, methodological, and theoretical framework that centres on Africa and privileges the agency of Africans and persons of African descent.

Afrocentricity is a critical response to the production of knowledge that privileges European peoples, cultures, thoughts, and experiences. Recent applications of Afrocentricity demonstrate its relevance in solving community-level issues related to identity, environment, and spirituality (Tirivangasi & Nyahunda, 2024). Arguably, this consciousness is pertinent to understanding why, ever since the Europeans encountered African people, their preoccupation has been to dominate African people in every sphere of life. As anthropologist Marimba Ani (1994) warns, the European is essentially driven by a pathological "will-power". As a counter-philosophy to Eurocentrism, it indicts Eurocentrism as destroying African culture, de-Africanising the consciousness of Blacks, and stagnating their development in all respects (Asante, 1990). Afrocentrism thus offers a profound cultural and epistemological recovery strategy for African societies (Amaefula, 2021; Emelianenko, 2022; Smith, 2020).

Findings And Discussion

To achieve the two objectives of the study, I posed the following four questions in informal interviews with my community peer group (participants) on different days to avoid data mix-up and conveniently analyse the views that emerged from each:

1) *How do we conceptualise an Africanist parent (one inspired by Afro-centric thought)?*
2) *How can we describe the institution of the family from an Afrocentric perspective?*
3) *How can we describe the causes of divorce in the contemporary African community?*
4) *What could be our strategies for reducing divorce in the contemporary African community?*

I present the findings and discuss them in terms of the following themes: conceptualisation of an Africanist parent, the institution of the family, causes of divorce in the contemporary African community, and strategies for reducing divorce in the contemporary African community.

Conceptualisation of an Africanist parent

The participants argued that first, an African parent is acutely aware that the world today is European-dominated, and that European/White supremacy is predicated on a value system that is opposed to African socio-cultural, economic, political, and psychological well-being. One participant stated:

> We are not raising our children to fit into the system that broke us. We are raising them to remember who we are, who we were, and what was stolen. (Participant C)

This view aligns with Afrocentric critiques of Eurocentrism that emphasise how European knowledge systems have historically marginalised African agency and identity (Asante, 2020; Smith, 2020).

Second, an Africanist parent recognises that he must pick up the African liberation struggle button stick from those before him and bequeath that legacy to the next generation of African descendants. This generational commitment is a moral obligation to challenge colonial legacies and restore cultural sovereignty (Amaefula, 2021; Rapanyane, 2021). As another participant shared:

> If we do not continue the liberation struggle in our homes, then we are simply surrendering to what colonisation wanted in the first place, our silence. (Participant B)

Thirdly, an Africanist parent is not only a biological offspring of Black African parents (in Africa or the diaspora), but also unapologetically identifies themselves as an African. To that end, he marries within the African race because, to him, miscegenation represents racial disloyalty – a psychosis of self-hatred which induces mentally colonised Africans to collude with their oppressors in perpetuating their ultimate genetic annihilation. This aligns with the Afrocentric emphasis on cultural authenticity and rejecting identity dilution (Azouz, 2020; Parsons et al., 2021).

Fourthly, an Africanist parent is committed to developing a profound knowledge of African history (particularly vis-à-vis European history) and invests in raising their children on an Afro-centred value system (socio-cultural, economic, educational, political, etc). This worldview is based on the recognition that European progress is contingent on the domination of African people in all aspects of life. Afrocentric theorists assert that educational, economic, and legal institutions have long functioned as tools

of epistemic violence against African knowledge and values (Tirivangasi & Nyahunda, 2024; Aju &Beddewela, 2019).

An Africanist parent, therefore, endeavours to conscientise his children of the insidious nexus between global White supremacy and European-generated discourses, e.g., individual freedom, democracy, property rights, freedom of expression, rule of law, gender neutrality, toxic masculinity, patriarchy, feminism, a strong, independent Black woman, non-racialism, academic objectivity, enlightenment, post-modernism, liberalism, the entertainment industry, and the free market. A participant echoed his views:

> Given White supremacy's tendency to use such discourses to delude Africans into collaborating in maintaining European domination, an Africanist parent consequently strives to radicalise their children with the understanding that the purpose of learning Eurocentric discourses is not to seek assimilation to European/White society. (Participant C)

One participant expressed,

> These ideas are not neutral. They are sugar-coated chains, dressed in the language of progress but built on our destruction. (Participant A)

The noblest legacy an Africanist parent could bequeath to his offspring is the awareness that the often vaunted European "progress" is contingent upon what Europeans looted (and continue to loot) from non-White people, particularly Africans. Therefore, self-respecting Africanist children need to appreciate that identifying with a "civilisation" inaugurated by genocidal plunderers amounts to racial treachery. Afrocentric education aims to decolonise consciousness by exposing the historical role of European systems in perpetuating inequality and mental colonisation (Rotzinger et al., 2025; Sakala, 2024).

Therefore, it is imperative that an Africanist parent teaches their children that as an African, one learns Eurocentric discourses for the sole purpose of subverting (and perverting) them into weapons with which to overthrow White supremacy, thereby creating an Afrocentric value system. Consequently, in any relationship they seek with the African, their ulterior motive is to dominate the latter. Eminent Africanist scholars like Amos Wilson and John Henrik Clarke have repeatedly demonstrated that European power thrives on African disunity and mental colonisation (Sesanti, 2019; Asante, 2020). Therefore, an Africanist parent regards every European institution as bait calculated to trap Africans so that they become accomplices to their domination by the Europeans.

Pejorative interpretations of Africanist parents

I probed my peers for what could be pejorative interpretations of the term "Africanist" in our discussions. Most argued that the term "Africanist" tends to attract pejorative interpretations/prejudices such as "narrow-minded", "unscholarly", "irrational/emotional", "anti-intellectual", "subjective", etc. One participant stated:

> Whenever I call myself an Africanist, they think I am rejecting education. However, the truth is, I am rejecting their version of it. (Participant D)

However, an informed Africanist recognises that such negative connotations are grounded in the European obsession with global socio-cultural, political, and economic hegemony (Asante, 2020; Amaefula, 2021). Indeed, the pejorative interpretation of the term Africanist" is a Eurocentric/White supremacist mask designed to disguise the ideological pushback against African people's determination to coordinate a global programme to reassert their socio-cultural, political, and economic value system that is free from globally coordinated European domination (Smith, 2020; Rapanyane, 2021). Another participant noted:

> They call us angry and emotional, but our emotions come from being silenced for centuries. That is not irrational, it is resistance. (Participant F)

Given that the world has been under pan-Europeanist ideological hegemony for centuries, pejorative interpretations akin to the ones cited above are intellectually disingenuous attempts by Eurocentric apologists to guilt-and-shame revolutionary African people from solidifying global African solidarity. This solidarity poses a real threat to the fragile edifice of White supremacy (Aju & Beddewela, 2019; Azouz, 2020).

In other words, the tendency to disparage and denigrate the term "Africanist" betrays the type of paranoia that grips those who have been indoctrinated to view the world only through the prejudiced Eurocentric prism. As one parent explained:

> Being Africanist means we are dangerous to the order that thrives on our confusion. That is why they mock it, it isa defence mechanism. (Participant E)

In consequence, the prospect of a European-dominated world being brought down by an Africanist paradigm is an unfathomable nightmare. At this point, it became clear that the Africanist peer group understood what an Africanist parent is and the possible prejudices associated with being one (Sakala, 2024).

Africanist parents 'conceptualisation of the institution of the family

Their perceptions of the institution of the family were sought on another day to avoid data fatigue, considering that lengthy peer group discussions demand that the researcher present and analyse the data as soon as possible to avoid forgetting some details.

From an Afro-centric perspective, the participants upheld that the family is an institution that comprises parents and children, and it is regarded as a microcosm of a macrocosm called a nation (Tirivangasi & Nyahunda, 2024). Unlike a typical Eurocentric family, however, Afrocentric family relationships are not confined to biological connections. For example, one can incorporate one's biological brother's child into one's 'nuclear' family, but that child will not be addressed as a cousin; he or she is their brother or sister. Likewise, he/she address their 'adoptive parents' as their biological parents (Rotzinger et al., 2025). One parent explained:

> In our homes, your uncle's son is your brother. That is not adoption, it is kinship. That is Ubuntu. (Participant B)

Marriage in an Afrocentric family is a collaborative relationship built on gender complementarity. In other words, physiological, biological, psychological, and emotional differences between men and women are celebrated for the unique energy they contribute to the smooth functioning of the family. This view contrasts sharply with Eurocentric constructions of gender as battlegrounds of power and control (Sesanti, 2019; Aju & Beddewela, 2019). One father remarked:

> My wife is not my rival. She completes me. That is the kind of strength they do not have. That is the kind of strength they do not teach in their textbooks. (Participant C)

Indeed, masculine and feminine energies positively counterbalance each other. As such, the notion of marriage being a battleground for the chronic so-called gender warfare is anathema to the Afrocentric family. Similarly, concepts like patriarchal or matriarchal tyranny, as well as toxic masculinity and femininity, are viewed as absurd, odious imports from European/Western value systems. That is one of the reasons why feminism (as defined by the European Academy) tends to be perceived as a European weapon of African family destruction.

In an Afrocentric family, both parents reject European 'culture' for its tendency to glorify narcissistic individualism and the selfish pursuit of instant gratification, regardless of the consequences to the individual or the collective. Instead, they raise their children to develop compassionate consideration for others, hence the *'ubuntu/hunhu'* philosophy, which anchors the individual's sense of being to that of family and, by extension, to their nation (Rotzinger et al., 2025). One participant emphasised:

> Our children must not grow up believing they are alone. They are part of a long line and a larger family. (Participant E)

Considering the above recognitions, the Afro-centric family is an institution that endeavours to nurture its members, especially the children, into proud heirs to African people's socio-cultural, political, and economic legacy. From early on, the Afro-centric family instils in its children a deep appreciation of their history, along with an African centred education that psychologically capacitates them to reject the Euro-induced mental sickness which persuades Africans to perceive themselves as inferior versions of Europeans (Asante, 2020; Amaefula, 2021). I decided to inject a comparative element between their view of the African family and how they understand the Eurocentric and Asian conceptualisations of family.

Eurocentric vs Afrocentric conceptualisation of the institution of the family

The Eurocentric family is a nuclear entity comprising a father, mother, and their biological children. In some cases, however, parents legally adopt children, a process that usually insists on keeping the adoptive child unaware of their true parentage. Even where the parents are known, they may be required to permanently forswear all connections (and communication) with their child. This structure emphasises individualism and legal detachment, prioritising contractual relationships over communal obligations (Nicolaides & Steyn, 2023).

Unlike the Afrocentric notion of family as a microcosm of the society/nation, the Eurocentric family does not see itself as having any obligations to the collective. On the contrary, it glorifies the culture of unapologetic individualism, hence the arguably commonplace argument that it is no wonder that Europe was the natural birthplace of capitalism. This ideology dignifies selfish greed and ruthless competition for resources. Participants observed that "the Euro-centric home teaches you to look out for yourself. Our families teach us to care for each other."

This aligns with the critique that Western ideologies dismember the African communal psyche (Asante, 2020).

In her heyday, the former British Prime Minister, the late Margaret Thatcher, once proudly declared: "There is no such thing as society; there is only the individual". Thatcher received accolades such as the "Iron Lady" for propounding a view of life. From an Afrocentric perspective, Thatcher's exaltation of selfish individualism negates the family's societal obligation to raise children who value compassion (*ubuntu/hunhu*). Eurocentric discourse deliberately undermines values like ubuntu, which centralised the community in moral reasoning (Rotzinger et al., 2025).

From an Afrocentric viewpoint, the Eurocentric value system tends to see family members as economic liabilities rather than humans deserving of compassion, especially during difficult times. Institutions such as people's or adults' homes are an affront to the dignity of mentally uncolonised (or decolonised) African people. The participants agreed, as one gentleman said:

In our homes, elders are a blessing. In theirs, they are a burden" (Participant B)

Whilst Europeans readily dispatch their aged parents to people's or adult care homes, Africans take it as their obligation to take care of their aged parents. It is indeed a badge of shame for Africans to institutionalise their parents. Whilst the Euro-centric family regards aged members of the family as a burden or inconvenience, the Afro-centric family cherishes its elders as a fountain of wisdom deserving of respect and devoted care. It is no wonder that whilst the Eurocentric value system is characterised by a rabid fear of ageing, in the Afrocentric family, old age is embraced with grace. This reverence for age reflects ancestral knowledge as a moral compass (Tirivangasi & Nyahunda, 2024). Asian versus Afrocentric conceptualisation of the institution of the family

Probed on how they would compare the Asian and Afrocentric conceptualisation of the family, participants echoed that the Asian family (Arab and Indian) shares many similarities and differences with their Afrocentric counterparts. Firstly, like in the Afrocentric family, marriage is a collective project; prospective couples are rigorously vetted by wise elders whose verdict may not be disregarded. Divorces are not exclusive to married couples. Issues are addressed and resolved collectively because the notion of the European-style individual doing whatever they see fit has no place in the Asian family dynamic. As a result, their divorce rates are incredibly low. One participant noted:

They (Asian families) do not let love blind them; they let wisdom guide them. That is why their homes last. (Participant E)

This shared respect for elder-led decision-making mirrors Afrocentric family structures rooted in collective responsibility and ancestral wisdom (Rotzinger et al., 2025).

Secondly, Asian family life is infused with spirituality – Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. Asian families revere their elders as sources of wisdom. It is considered taboo to talk back to elders, even when you feel they are wrong. Like their Afrocentric counterparts, from early on, Asian families use religion to inculcate a sense of humaneness (ubuntu) in children, and women play a very crucial role in this regard. One participant remarked:

> Religion in their homes teaches service and sacrifice. It is not about rules; it is about responsibility, just like ours used to be. (Participant A)

This emphasis on spiritual cohesion and intergenerational respect aligns with Afrocentric ideologies that promote collective moral grounding and ancestral continuity (Amaefula, 2021). Such is the idea of a non-religious person. This spiritual-social framework deeply intertwines moral discipline with family belonging, which has been shown to support emotional stability and reduce fragmentation in Asian and Afrocentric communities (Parsons et al., 2021).

Thirdly, like in the African family structure, Asian families recognise gender differences in all respects. In contrast to the Eurocentric paradigm, marriage is seen as a synergistic institution for men and women, not an ideological battleground between husband and wife. Muslims adhere to Sharia law, whose principles are based on the Quran. Quranic principles are evident in terms of gender roles, and as a result, phenomena like women's liberation have minimal traction in those societies. A participant reflected:

> They (Asians) still value the balance between man and woman. We used to, until feminism told us to fight each other. (Participant A)

The most noteworthy difference between the Asian family and the Afrocentric one is that the former generally marry their cousins, while the latter marry from unrelated families. One father shared:

> They marry cousins to keep bloodlines strong; we marry outside to build bonds with other clans. Both ways show respect for lineage. (Participant E)

While the African family has arguably succumbed more significantly to Eurocentric socio-cultural hegemony, the Asian family institution has proved to be more tenacious in resisting the persistent onslaught of European cultural imperialism. Asian traditions have retained structural and spiritual integrity against Western influence, a resilience that Afrocentric scholars urge African societies to recover (Asante, 2020; Sakala, 2024).

Causes of divorce in the contemporary African community

The Africanist peer group articulated that arguably the leading cause of divorce in the contemporary African community is the fact that as a people, Africans have generally failed to withstand Eurocentric socio-cultural, political, and economic imperialism (Asante, 2020; Amaefula, 2021). After suffering military defeat at the hands of European colonisers, Africans were forced (directly and indirectly) to abandon their value systems and adopt those of their colonial masters. Directly in the sense that to fend for one's family in a colonised nation, one had to acquire some form of skill that made one employable in a colonially structured economy. Indirectly, colonial education was designed to alienate one from one's value systems (Nicolaides & Steyn, 2023).

> Our education system was never about learning—it was about forgetting who we are. (Participant A)

As more people (primarily men) moved to urban places to work (or in search of work), the African family was disrupted, thereby inaugurating multiple social problems, e.g., challenges with children's discipline and creating de facto single-mother households. Marital infidelity also kicked in menfolk in towns and womenfolk back in the villages. All these factors tore the African family's social fabric (Rapanyane, 2021; Tirivangasi & Nyahunda, 2024). Another participant shared,

> The mines and the cities took our men and gave us broken homes. (Participant D)

The advent of Euro-modernity, characterised by a culture of glitz and conspicuous consumption, significantly upended African values, particularly Ubuntu. The colonisers ensured that capitalism became the de facto religion. With time, the generality of the colonised African population embraced the vicious Eurocentric ideology that exalts and rewards selfish individualism (Rotzinger et al., 2025).

Africanist parents lambasted feminism for being one of the causes of divorce and degeneration of the African family. With the African society having generally succumbed to the colonial value systems and, by implication, embraced the White supremacy ideology, the dominant Eurocentric society cultivated a devastating weapon of African cultural demolition: feminism (Sesanti, 2019). Suddenly, the African woman "discovered" that she had always been a victim of patriarchal tyranny, and the dominant White society readily offered her the necessary tools for her liberation. One father argued

> Feminism told our women they were oppressed, but never explained who did the oppressing. (Participant F)

From then on, the African women's sisterhood started flaunting tropes such as 'strong, independent Black woman', 'educated and sexually liberated Black woman', who 'needs no man', etc. In the wake of the Euro-engineered gender warfare, the divorce rate in African communities began soaring exponentially (Parsons et al., 2021). In the African woman, the Eurocentric education curricula and the Roman-Dutch Law, among many weapons of White supremacy, had found an enthusiastic ally against the African social structure. In consequence, contemporary African society has the dubious honour of having the highest divorce rate of all the racial demographics. It is for that reason that Africanist scholars tend to dismiss African/Black feminists as the right hand of White supremacy (Azouz, 2020).

Strategies for reducing divorce in the contemporary African community.

To reduce the divorce rate in the contemporary, it is imperative to appreciate the late Pan-African historian Dr John Clarke's advice (paraphrase): "To reclaim our Africanness, we first have to understand that nothing brought to Africa by the European or any other foreigners, was ever meant to do Africa any good" (Asante, 2020). This remark encapsulates all the issues articulated earlier in terms of Afrocentric consciousness. Because once Africans (including feminists) understand the ideological motivations underlying Eurocentric discourses, they will realise that subscribing to these ideologies only serves to bolster White supremacy via the age-long 'divide-and-rule' strategy. One participant insisted,

> Before we fix our marriages, we must fix our minds. (Participant D)

In other words, Africans need to de-programme their minds; to undergo psychological detoxification (what Ngugi wa Thiongo calls 'mental decolonisation') so that they reclaim their value systems (Nicolaides & Steyn, 2023; Sakala, 2024). Like Malcolm X, Steve Biko famously noted that the White man's most potent weapon of Black oppression is the Black man's mind; once the African understands that whatever the European brings to the table, his ultimate agenda is to maintain White domination, the African will disavow Eurocentric value systems and restore the dignity of his value systems. The late Dr Amos Wilson famously opined:

> For the African to live, it is an absolute necessity that the White man in his head first dies. (Participant A)

Conclusion

This article has illuminated the perspectives of Africanist parents on marriage and divorce in contemporary African society and presented a robust counter-narrative to Eurocentric philosophies that have reshaped African family institutions. From informal yet philosophically charged peer discussions, it was evident that Africanist parents blame the root causes of rising divorce rates on cultural dislocation wrought by colonial conquest, capitalist individualism, and ideological formations such as feminism. These events exist as external abstractions but as deliberate instruments for social engineering meant to destabilise Afrocentric ideologies and communal solidarity.

Unlike Eurocentric models that prioritise the individual over the collective, the Afrocentric family is a miniature of the nation, interdependent, spiritually centred, and regulated by ancestors' guidance. The paper captured that most African families today are trapped between the remnants of their culture and the allure of Euro-modernity and are consequently afflicted by identity confusion, intergenerational strife, and rising marital breakdown.

Finally, this study encourages a deep cultural revival, centred on Afrocentric ideals like Ubuntu, gender complementarity, deference to elders, and collective responsibility. In this regard, Africanist parents are key custodians in the revival of culture. By rejecting Euro-centric scripts and affirming African knowledge systems, they significantly contribute to the healing of the African family structure. Thus, the fight against divorce is not just social or legal; it is ideological, historical, and deeply spiritual.

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