



## **GENDER RATIONALITY AND SOCIAL DISINTEGRATION: A DISCOURSE ON FAMILY ONTOLOGY**

**Unah, J.I.**

*Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos, Akoka-Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria.*  
*jimunahlive@gmail.com;*  
*junah@unilag.edu.ng;*

### **ABSTRACT**

*A tsunami of social disintegration has inundated many societies today. Spiritual ambition, unending abstractions and the doctrines of “end time” propagated and promoted by the evangelizing and conquering religions now threaten collective suicide. The incipient relegation of matriarchal rationality by patriarchal creeds promoted by the scriptures has produced incremental aggressiveness which manifest in wanton destruction of lives and the abuse and rape of the womenfolk. Unfortunately, and contrary to what modern day feminism and affirmative action principle propagate, a return to matriarchal rationality with its simple, sentimental life-ways and its lack of capacity for rigorous thinking; largely preoccupying itself with caring and loving, is not even an option. Luckily, there is now a re-awakening and a call for a return to pristine African orientation of family ontology—a path not taken which should be taken-- to save humanity from the embarrassing Western sociology that pitches children against parents in the guise of child right; thus envisaging a radical philosophical sociology of filial rationality that unites children with parents in bonded human community.*

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, matriarchy, family ontology, filial rationality, bonded community

### **INTRODUCTION**

The distressing observation that a huge flood of social disintegration is sweeping across the globe is confirmed by the crises that riddled parts of North Africa and the Middle East in the last one decade, and the current Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. All these are logical consequences of unrelenting patriarchal creeds embedded in the scriptures; which in turn, have produced incremental aggressiveness and warlike dispositions, not only against women but also against everything including the male gender—the promoter of patriarchal doctrines and ambition. Sadly, it does not appear that a return to matriarchal life-ways, which some modern day feminists propose, would mellow down humanity’s war-mongering attitude and save the earth from possible annihilation.

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



This paper argues that neither matriarchy nor patriarchy has absolutely secure foundation. A preoccupation with one to the exclusion to the other leads to a dead end. Thinking out of the box, as signaled by Anyiam-Osigwe's theory of family ontology, I propose a radical philosophical sociology called "filial rationality" that bonds children, parents and communities together. The concept of filial rationality is expressed in the idea of corporate child upbringing where both parents play a pivotal role in parenting supported by community care and concern for the well-being of the child.

Consequently, the paper is in three parts. Part one is a background analysis of the source of the problem which I identify with disagreements between the spouses or what I call gender rationality exemplified in matriarchal and patriarchal creeds with the attendant social upheavals. Part two explores the circumstances that put children at risk; highlights attempts by the proposed family ontology of Osigwe-Anyiam-Osigwe to chart a path for a return to pristine African culture of proper corporate child upbringing, and my criticism of such a proposal. Part three evaluates the conversation on corporate child upbringing and anchors it on care and concern of parents, community, and the state for the child; with emphasis on the cooperation of both husband and wife, and social policy in advancing the cause of children to assure human flourishing.

## **PART I: THE RISE OF MATRIARCHAL AND PATRIARCHAL RATIONALITY**

What has been presented in literature as the battle of the sexes or gender crisis in modern times is the expression of a more fundamental and primordial contest of matriarchal and patriarchal rationality in the evolution of societies. From time immemorial, gender relations or male-female interaction has often resulted in procreation—the bringing into being of offspring. But populations, according to Malthus (1803), are unprincipled. Procreation does not follow any known rational pattern. It does not adhere to the rules of logic. With chemistry and opportunity, sex happens even between couples who may eventually dislike each other, and may not cooperate in the nurturing of the offspring—the outcome of the sexual act.

Consequently, according to Kieninger (1963), mothers naturally took charge of their offspring, minding and nurturing them, caring and fending for them; accepting whatever the male was ready to provide as supplementary, often in return for more sexual gratification. For the most part, the need of the male was essentially the satisfaction of sexual hunger without obligation, if he can have his way. Each mother became the head of her family. Human society was peaceful, with emphasis on love and caring, but without rational thought and spiritual ambition, social relation was promiscuous, procreation was without restraint and life was undisciplined. It is thus that human societies were presumed to have evolved from matriarchies-- a form of social organization in which mothers are the heads of families.

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



Furthermore, Kieninger (1963) informs that the Brotherhoods had watched the development with disdain. Being mathematicians and given to rigorous thought and the urge for precision and purity of mind, the Brotherhoods worked out a providential plan prophesied in the Scriptures. This, according to Kieninger, they handed down to the Cretan Minoans and the Jews in the form of a philosophy, a distinct religion and identity.

Not long after this inauguration of patriarchal program by the Brotherhoods (Kieninger, 1963), a seismic accident occurred in the north of Crete, dispersing the Cretan Minoans all over the neighbouring Mediterranean islands; bringing them in contact with the Phoenicians and the Greeks and a host of other colonies, whereupon they introduced and propagated their inherited patriarchal culture of aggressiveness and spiritual and intellectual advancement.

According to Kieninger (1963), while the Greeks produced a patriarchal philosophy of rational inquiry in quest of objectivity, the Jews produced a patriarchal religion of ascetic discipline and devotion to a monotheistic deity called Yahweh. This deity decreed the female to a pitiable afterthought of which the male should be wary if he must overcome spiritual and intellectual contamination. In Judaism, sexual intercourse was deemed to be a female conspiracy to entangle the male and bring him into sin and trouble with his creator. A sanction against adultery was visited only on the female as she was the conduit of Satan to lure men into temptation and damnation.

Christianity and Islam are developments out of Judaism. The Judeo-Christian tradition and lately the spread of Islam as well as the Hellenic culture resulted in the deification of patriarchy and the disempowerment of the female; creating the lopsidedness in social relations that has affected the collective destiny of humanity dangerously negatively; a danger now well articulated and hotly being contested by cerebral feminist epistemology.

The question that arises from all of this is: what are the consequences when there is either total male or female dominance of the human family since children—the future of the human race—are at the epicenter of this long drawn contest of matriarchy and patriarchy in the evolution of societies? This brings us to Anyiam-Osigwe, Ozurumba, & Anyiam-Fiberesima (2000) who pontificated on the over-arching need for the re-ordering of family values which he has so well articulated in his development philosophy.

The major proposal for consideration in the Anyiam-Osigwe theory of family values, in my view, is that there is a step embedded in ancient African family ontology which ought to be followed in corporate child upbringing to rescue Africa and indeed the world from the unquantifiable risks to which the family has been put over the centuries, but which was not followed and developed for the benefit of the human race.



First, I identify and articulate these risks, and also demonstrate how these risks have been at the root of social upheaval and rebellion throughout the ages. Secondly, I also identify the obstacles to a full-fledged return to the pristine steps in corporate child upbringing not taken. Thirdly, and finally, I propose a new form of rationality which anticipates and modifies the Anyiam-Osigwe thesis in the light of the cosmopolitan outlook of modern societies.

## **PART II: CRISIS IN THE FAMILY AND THE CONSEQUENCES FOR SOCIETY**

The sociological truism that the family is the basic unit or bedrock of society illustrates what happens to the society if the family is disoriented or at risk. In communities where people are uneducated and uninformed, procreation and the nurturing and upkeep of children are accomplished haphazardly. This situation is not only possible in primitive societies, it can be re-enacted in any stage of society if thought and attention are not focused on the human family. Besides, populations without knowledge of how to get things done rationally, scientifically, are also prone to diseases and disasters. In the past, for instance, large populations have been ravaged and wiped out by pestilences, or plagues like leprosy, and epidemics like cholera; some of which were thought to be a manifestation of the anger of the gods. The scriptures say that people perish for lack of knowledge.

Usually, uneducated and uninformed people are generally unruly, greedy and unprincipled; and they can act as they please, oblivious of the consequences of their conduct. They can breed without restraint and without provision for the survival of the offspring. A situation of this sort puts the human family at the risk of extinction; for being ignorant and uninformed, people were incapable of counting their blessings, like Tyre (Ezekiel 26:1-4 NIV).

On many fronts today the human family is in crises; arising from ignorance, illiteracy, poverty and disease; from the nonchalance and planlessness of social regimes; the breakdown of family values due to economic recession, loss of jobs by heads of families and loss of the father figure supported by social regulation in some modern western societies, and risk arising from embarrassing sociology that misconstrues child right for excessive liberty or licentiousness (Kieninger, 1963). These risks should now engage the attention of this paper.

### **Risk arising from ignorance, illiteracy, poverty and Disease**

A fundamental source of the risk to which the family is put arose from ignorance as to means and how to ensure adequate provision for the upkeep of members of the family, as people in pre-literate communities procreated without plan for the future of the offspring. And with little or no knowledge as to causes and effects, human life was nasty; and prone to afflictions from plagues and diseases, it was also brutish, solitary and poor (Hobbes & Macpherson, 1968). Illiteracy, ignorance, poverty and disease are quintuplets from the same origin. Plagued by illiteracy and ignorance, the families procreated without restraint and were then saddled with the number of

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



children they could not possibly cater for; procreation was believed to be an act of God. Children were thought to be deliverances of providence which those who bred them could do nothing about.

With the passage of time, however, education brought its own enlightenment and liberation from ignorance. With knowledge of science and technology, family planning made it possible for people to be disciplined, apply restraint to their sexual appetite and plan the number of children they could have. In time, knowledge of diseases, causes and cure drastically reduced infant mortality and increased life expectancy. But only communities that received the enlightenment brought about by education and increased knowledge about causes and effects could benefit from family planning and the reduction of the burden of parenthood that comes with it. Illiterate communities continued to be plagued by diseases and ravaged by poverty as well as unplanned and unrestrained procreative propensity.

It follows from this that one way to arrest the risk to which the human family is exposed, would be to tackle the problems of illiteracy, ignorance and poverty which breed diseases. From this, it should be feasible to eliminate this form of risk to the family. Education liberates the family from illiteracy, ignorance, poverty and disease. Unrestrained procreation could not be an act of God; as the accompanying consequences could not be reasonably attributed to God either. For anyone who authors undisciplined procreation should have to take responsibility for all the consequences that flows from it.

### **Risk arising from callousness of social regimes**

Perhaps, one of the sources of the greatest risk to which the family is exposed is the callousness, planlessness, and nonchalance of those who happen to be in control of human affairs, especially in the developing societies. Leadership confers on those who wield power the authority to act for the common good. Unfortunately, in many backward societies, leaders do not seem to understand the mandate of their office. Rather than create adequate opportunities for human advancements of all sorts, and thereby empower individuals who seek to raise families; the state transforms, in the hand of incompetent leaders, into a brutalizing factor; making it virtually impossible for families to thrive and fulfill their mandate as the bastion of the moral fibre of society.

In many developing, backward, and failing states, state actors charged with the responsibility to regulate motives and ensure the proper functioning of society, often compromise the integrity and the calling of their office and woefully fail to conduct themselves magisterially to achieve the purpose of the modern state, namely to act as the guarantor of the security and welfare of the people, as well as the promoter of civilized and orderly progress of society. From ministers of state through executive governors that perpetrate official graft down to the heads of state who lack the capacity to discipline the political class, and legislators who demand bribes from agencies of state to pass laws or perform their oversight functions, and the judges of the courts

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



who hand out raw litigation deals and injustice rather than justice to ensure orderly and civilized progress in society; monumental economic recessions are unnecessarily provoked resulting in failure of corporations, loss of jobs and the attendant disintegration of family life and integrated labour relationships formed over the years.

When enterprises collapse for lack of management science discipline, analysts do not often look beyond statistics to confront the brutal facts and trace it down to the collapse of family values associated with the rise of modernity, industrialism, information communication technology and the spread of urban squalor. Industry watch and science do not associate failure of corporations and institutions to moral turpitude incidental to the debasing of primordial family ontology and values. When failure occurs it is often blamed on wrong data, inaccurate economic indices, and enemies of the state—spiritual or temporal. No one is willing to forage into the moral tapestry of society to unravel the ethical source of social, economic, political and spiritual malaise afflicting modern societies.

Unfortunately, the fundamental source of this mode of leadership failure at the level of the state has not been sufficiently canvassed and addressed in literature. The state, in many developing societies, is often nonchalant about the fate of the family; preferring to look away and leave the problem to fester from the individual, the family to the larger society. Not bearing in mind that the collapse of family values will, in time, take its toll on the social structure and even occasion the dissolution of society. The collapse of family values is as viral and as devastating of the social fabric as the scourge of terrorism currently tormenting the world. Yet, no serious attention is paid to the issue of how to re-invent the family by problematizing PARENTING and making it a mandatory subject of study in the school curriculum and as a requirement for being pronounced a fit and proper person and member of society.

It may be necessary to state, at this juncture, that advanced societies have been striving to transcend the circumstances that impose limitations on the family which predispose it to risk. A discussion of what has been done and continually being done to lessen the burden of parenthood and improve the task of child caring in modern societies shall be undertaken hereafter when we highlight the critical points of Anyiam-Osigwe's strident call for the re-invention of the "primordial community" and a return to the concept and culture of corporate child-upbringing characteristic of pristine African societies.

Some advanced societies have, needless to say, created safety valves and insurance against abject poverty; and have social regulations and surrogacy in place to provide and cater for vulnerable children and orphans. Advanced civilizations have even gone as far as using social legislations to support nursing mothers, by providing for maternity leave, care-giving centres and child bay in work places. But this does not and cannot replace proper care giving and love from natural parents in the peaceful ambience of the home; which makes the reinvention of the family in the context of the community an imperative in the emerging world order. This is the point, I

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



suppose, where Anyiam-Osigwe joined the hurly-burly and the advocacy for the resuscitation of family ethics and the re-invention of the primordial community and its integration into the global family (Anyiam-Osigwe, et al., 2000).

### **Risk arising from economic turbulence and recessions**

Economic recessions happen because of leadership and institutional failures. When recessions set in, citizens of the world suffer untold hardships with the severest backlash foisted on the family. In recessions, enterprises not built to last or businesses that are run as the spirit directs the chief executives, usually go under; with heads of families and bread winners losing their jobs, and society thrown asunder. In Syria, for instance, the banks directed depositors to go for only 10 percent of their total deposit within a short spell of time, as they have no money to pay their customers. A few months later, the country was plunged into a civil war, in which they are still embroiled.

Many European countries like Greece and Portugal including banks in America and Great Britain are asking for a bail out from insolvency occasioned by recessions that are largely the bye-products of fiscal indiscretion of chief executives whether of business corporations or of government institutions. Incremental misbehavior of people in enterprise and public corporations is at the root of all forms of recessions. And when recessions occur and people are thrown out of jobs as it often happens, families are the hardest hit—some lose their spouses to inability to cater for the family; inability to pay bills and fees; some lose their spouses to untimely deaths arising from ailments that did not receive medical attention for lack of means, and some fathers lose the respect of their wives and children for allowing themselves to be intricately wound up with failing states and corporations.

This is how modern cosmopolitan societies create their own squalor to breed miscreants, destitute, brigands and hooligans who inevitably become willing recruits, foot soldiers and canon folders in civil rebellion; to wreak even greater havoc to the already dislocated families, by killing and maiming; and by looting, pillaging, and raping. Unarguably, therefore, without disciplined people bred by disciplined families to build society as community and community as a global family, corporations cannot be sustained and jobs can neither be created nor be kept; and with a large population of youths and dislocated adults milling around aimlessly, society itself that failed to work out the destiny of families is even at greater risk of disintegration.

The moral fibre of society resides within the family. It is from the family that children are first taught the values and norms of society. If society must make progress in the positive direction, remain cohesive and advance the cause of human civilization, it stands to reason that its most fundamental unit—the family-- must be energized, empowered and re-invigorated to reconstruct the architecture of the global family and the world community. Unfortunately, efforts by the



modern state to restore the dignity of the family are vitiated by its own social, educational, economic, political agenda and strategies that often contradict and sabotage its intentions.

The agenda of the modern democratic state is the propagation of the concept of freedom and its wholesale concretization even in societies that have not yet developed the thought habits to embrace and manage the ambivalence, and the distortions and contradictions inherent in the sociology of freedom; thus putting the family to even greater risk of total annihilation.

### **The risk arising from the sociology of freedom**

Western education, with its concept of man and society, while unarguably creating enlightenment and liberation from bondage, paradoxically enthrone its own bondage and obstacles to true freedom. Man may be free, but the consequences of unenlightened choices are severe. Education need not create insatiable taste for members of society, for if it does it merely dismantles one form of bondage to create yet another more subtle and virulent bondage—the hopeless surrender to endless desires; a form of enslaving necessity.

In the analysis of the structure of modern society, western sociology teaches that whereas man is born free, he is everywhere in chains (Rousseau 1998). The task of education is to culture the individual to break loose from the chains and fetters that bind him and dismantle all obstacles to freedom. Freedom comes from the full realization of the human potentials, and the task of modern state and its educational curriculum is to enable each and everyone to liquidate ignorance, dispel illusions and cultivate the intellect and flourish in any direction that he deems fit unencumbered by the trammels of orthodoxies, traditions and conventions. This requirement of freedom applies to all mortals irrespective of creed, colour, geographical origin and age. By this pronouncement of the western sociology of freedom, everyone is eligible—underage children, infants, civilized men and barbarians including all homo sapiens whether educated or uneducated, enlightened or unenlightened, capable of wise or foolish decisions.

By this sociology of freedom, the child has as much right as his parents; and the rustic young woman brought in from the country-side by a gentleman of means and cosmopolitan outlook has as much right as her mentor. For everyone is free and freedom is license; or equality of all mortals of all ages and of all sexes. But should freedom not be less muddle-headed; should it not be structurally interconnected with independence of action, a sufficiency of means; a competency? Should one who considers himself free not fully independent and fully accountable for his or her actions? Should a person who cannot foresee the consequences of his or her action be truly deemed to be free? This is where sociology should seek the counsel of moral values. For, a conception of freedom independent of a capacity for authentic choices and moral responsibility will not only disrupt, as it has done, the vitality and vibrancy of the family—the acclaimed fundament of society; it will definitely tear society asunder, as it has done already.

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher





## **Caring and Community As The New Social Harmony**

Before we dwell extensively on caring and community as the new social harmony, it is appropriate at this juncture to highlight some of the critical points made by Anyiam Osigwe's conception of family ontology (Anyiam-Osigwe, et al., 2000). He thinks that a path has been charted by the forebears and pathfinders of Africa on how to execute corporate child upbringing. Since the family, in what Anyiam Osigwe described as the "primordial community" extended beyond man and wife and immediate children to an ever-growing; ever-extending, relatives from both sides, to the entire community, he conceived the family in the fashion of conventional sociology as the elementary building block of society. The family is not the atomized nuclear family. The family extends beyond the nuclear to relatives; to kinsmen, to kiths and kin. For, if the family is atomized as the nuclear family and clearly differentiated from other families and other relatives, then the bond which holds society will snap as it has already snapped in modern atomized societies. The understanding of the family as intricately connected to community enables collective upbringing of children; enables community participation in child upbringing. In this understanding, the family extends to the entire clan, so every member of the clan is related by kinship ties. What affects one family within a clan affects the other. Since families are intricately connected within the context of the clan, it is then possible for the education of every child in the clan to be the concern of everyone. Any child who misbehaved was chastised and disciplined by any member of the community, different from his immediate family. And members of the child's immediate family felt happy and contented that their child attracted the attention of the community rather than get angry that the child was punished. In the circumstance, children were easily corrected and made to refrain from wrong deeds, as the "eye" of the community is on everyone. Moral instructions – the dos and don'ts – inculcated in the child by his family are reinforced by other members of the clan; by community. It is as if the primordial community made it impossible for the golden fish to have a hiding place because of the ever watchful, omniscient, "eye" of community on everyone.

In spite of this, however, within the context of the pristine African community, there were some individuals who transgressed community norms. And where such individuals are respected members of the clan, their conduct will diminish the vital force of the community. This is often divinized to be so when calamity befalls the clan. And the identified culprit is prevailed upon to appease the gods or the offended spirit of the community. So, in the primordial community, it was not only the children that were expected to be morally upright. The demand for moral probity is even more stringent for the adults or community leaders, who are expected to be custodians of the values of the community. So, there was an over-powering moral censor of the community. For, as children are checked by the ever-present adults in the clan against moral infractions so, too, were the adults under the watchful eye of the community spirits and gods. Thus, child upbringing within the family and the community was intertwined with moral training. So, as the individual develops from infancy to adulthood within the primordial

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



community he develops side by side with the moral training of the community. In other words, morality was embedded in child upbringing.

### **The Anyiam-Osigwe Clue To Filial Rationality**

It is this matrix of the primordial community that Anyiam-Osigwe proposes that the family can be reinvented in modern cosmopolitan societies. However, since the values which bound people together in the clan faded into the background as individuals got caught up in the web of cosmopolitan-urban existence, could we ever possibly recreate the family in the context of the primordial community?. In the modern urban communities, for instance, the once cherished values of chastity, honesty, integrity and respect for elders, and virtues like virginity of young maidens were quickly and easily eroded by the brutal realities of city life. But Anyiam-Osigwe thinks that a new world order constructed from the moral and corporate fibre of pristine African community is a feasible project. He cites examples of efforts being made through International Conventions, Protocols and Child Rights Charter, et cetera, as indicative that the concern for the well being of the family has become a global affair. He avers that while the advanced developed communities have put mechanisms in place to encourage families, reduce the burden of parenthood, assist with childcare facilities in public and private workplaces, and emphasize early childhood education, the developing and backward societies of the world are yet to come to terms with the new reality (Anyiam-Osigwe, et al., 2000). In developing, backward, societies until very recently when foreign aid from the developed world had to be tied to childcare and concern for family planning, the governments of developing societies had paid little or no heed to the family concerns, oblivious of the fact that a disruption of the family, ultimately, extends to the disruption of the state.

Apart from the risks identified earlier, Anyiam-Osigwe acknowledges the fact that economic recessions and circumstances of unemployment and under-employment have taken their tolls on the family. Family lives have been disrupted by the search of spouses for greener pastures. And as couples struggle to eke out existence from harsh economic circumstances, children are left unattended. And where families could afford to engage care-givers, such as housemaids and nannies, the emotional and psychological needs of the child, which are best given by the mothers, are left un-provided for.

Early childhood neglect and stress put on the child by social and economic circumstances of the parents manifest later in life in form of social deviancy and delinquency and, in much later life, outright rebellion against society. Thus, with Anyiam-Osigwe's signal-service from his family

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



ontology, a thorough-going thesis can be developed on the correlation between child-neglect and social rebellion.

The cue I have elected to take from all of this is that parenting is absolutely fundamental in creating a better world order. While the proposal on recreating the primordial community in cosmopolitan societies may sound like good music to the ear, the original African ontology that provided the bedrock of the extended family system has long been eroded by the realities of the modern state and thus consigned into the dustbin of history. In the first place, to begin to reinvent the family through corporative communities proposed by Anyiam-Osigwe, members of such communities would have to be siblings to be able to attempt some modicum of corporate existence and corporate child upbringing as well as a community of wives bound by a common moral outlook and heritage reminiscent of the primordial community. I do not see how people who come together to form a corporate community; from different social backgrounds; different parental orientations; different language groups; different socio-economic realities, in a cosmopolitan setting, can allow the practices of corporate child upbringing; a consensus of moral precepts and a philosophy of being your brother's keeper; of mutual aid and of reciprocal solidarity (Unah 2002b), can find their way into the hearts of cosmopolitan people.

The ontology that supported the extended family system is the ontology of hierarchy of forces; of interpenetrating and intermingling life forces, which has long been negated in the era of destabilization by Western-European thought and humanism (Unah 2002a). It is too late in the day to begin to preach restriction and regimentation of people's life and conduct when the windstorm of freedom, almost bordering on license, has swept across the globe, upturning empires and monarchies; tearing kingdoms asunder and throwing many regions into anarchy. The Arab Spring or Revolution is a not too distant example. But this does not imply that all hope for a rejuvenated human society through authentic parenting is lost.

### **Part III: FILIAL RATIONALITY AS AUTHENTIC CARING**

Nevertheless, though it may sound as sociological nostalgia, the proposal to empower the family, reinvent society as community and as a global family so painstakingly articulated in the Anyiam-Osigwe doctrine on family values, has energy and merit and deserves the attention of policy makers and governments. And I propose as addendum, a new form of rationality, which I think will bring us to the path not taken by human societies, which Anyiam Osigwe thinks should be taken. It is the revival of family values through parenting, caring and feeling for children. I call it "filial-rationality". It states that showing love, care and feeling for offspring is the over-riding consideration in social relations. This is because when children are poorly trained they cannot adjust properly in society. And those who take it badly become disgruntled, disillusioned and disrespectful of social norms and values. For this set of people, the hypocrisy of society even adds insult to injury as they are quick to show that those who pretend to be respectable members

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



of society, the upwardly mobile people are, indeed, scoundrels; who are only struggling to make amends and cover up for crimes committed in the early days of their existence.

The danger to society in breeding disgruntled children who become hoodlums and miscreants because they are uncared for by immediate parents who did not have the capacity to do so is enormous and frightening. It is from this group that society creates its armed robbers, bandits, kidnappers and prostitutes; disgruntled people that public office-seekers recruit as their henchmen, thugs, insurgents, and if one may add, fundamentalist suicide bombers! Social policy and regulation did not prevent their parents from having them. And once brought into existence, the powers that be, state actors, social regimes, treat them as other people's children and none of their business. Society refuses to care when it should and, thus, destroy the sense of community. In time, these ones graduate into rebels against society. And, they largely constitute the army of major social rebellions in history.

Imagine if children were cared for; provided for; loved and cherished in their formative years! Where would ambitious power seekers recruit their insurgents from? Where would disgruntled politicians who want to make the state ungovernable because they lost political power recruit their insurgents or terrorists from? From these other people's children that society refused to care for. Not caring for; not loving children, is at the root of social rebellion. The problem arising from this is far beyond the issue of immorality and criminality, and extends to violent social rebellion. On the other side of the matter, those that are adequately cared for by parents; loved by parents and relations, especially the male children, turn out to be icons of society; ever more productive; ever more brilliant; ever more ready to add value to the world. Because their parents cared for them when they needed the care, they also care for the world. They are the ones who create value chains for the world. A long term Harvard experiment may well serve, at this juncture, to illustrate the import of filial rationality.

### **The Harvard University Experiment**

In 1938, Harvard University selected 268 male undergraduate students and commenced the "longest running longitudinal studies of human development in history". The objective of the study was to determine as carefully as possible the factors that contribute most strongly to human flourishing. All sorts of things were factored into the study. Seventy five (75) years after, George Vaillant, Director of the study for more than three decades, published the findings (Vaillant, 2012) under the title, *Triumph of Experience*. The thrust of the report is that males who have adequate tender, loving care from their mothers in their formative years flourished more than others who did not have the benefit of such care. So, what does this show: loving, tender care for children – male children- deep emotional concern in their formative years by their mothers have a capacity to produce male achievers in all fields of human endeavour, who record monumental achievements before age 75. There is no evidence that any of them was involved in social

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



rebellion. So, what the world needs more than anything else in ensuring a better world order is the empowerment of the family and the caring for the offspring.

There is here a recall of matriarchal rationality as supportive of a peaceful world order. Nothing is said in the Harvard Report or the Grand Study about what makes for female flourishing. Again, we find here a hint of patriarchal rationality and partiality. So in one breathe, the study tries to recreate matriarchal rationality; and in another it tries to re-enact patriarchal rationality. Again, this is a lopsided study. However, the point made is not lost on us. That is, that well-cared-for children in their formative years will add more value to the world, reduce the risk to the family and usher in a better world order. This, we accept. But about the missing link; the contribution of fathers to human flourishing, is also omitted in the study. So too is what makes for female flourishing.

Luckily, the 2010 UK Riots presented a scenario in which well over 800 arsonists and rioters who perpetrated the riots were later apprehended, arraigned and sentenced by the British courts within a time frame of two weeks or so. It was then established that children from homes without father image, who felt that the world owed them a duty and a favour, were the perpetrators of the mayhem. Curiously, the British government, at the time, appeared to have a deliberate social policy of providing sustenance allowance or social welfare package for mothers that were estranged from their husbands. With the passage of time, immigrant Black and Colored population were recording serious marriage breakages because it favoured women who cashed in on it to collect social welfare benefits. The police were often invited by women at odd hours to dislodge their husbands and family heads for minor altercations. It was thus that the children grew big-headed and became a problem to themselves and society. Thereafter, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, was reported to have threatened to remove the social benefits. My information is that when he could not achieve that objective, he prevailed on the parliament to slash the benefit to single mothers!

The point in this is that you need the male and female to ensure proper parental care or child upbringing. While mothers may give love and care and emotional support to the child, fathers characteristically instill discipline and sometimes, where necessary, apply the stick that removes the beast from the child. The scriptural injunction: “spare the rod and spoil the child” is not without merit (Proverbs 13: 24 NIV). Western sociology of freedom and child-right has long discarded with this. And this has given emotional aid and comfort to juvenile delinquency and social deviancy.

Our thesis, therefore, is that proper parenting, meaning the cooperation and collaboration of mothers and fathers and the support of the state is absolutely fundamental to proper and successful childcare and upbringing (Unah 2009). When families are encouraged to sit down to love and nurture the children, especially in their formative years, bonded human communities and cohesive social order will naturally evolve. But this sounds utopian if unaided by social

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



support system and social legislation; encouragement by the state and organized private sector for families to remain together is not negotiable. In addition to that, because of the severe consequences to the world of uncared-for children in later life, it is my conviction that the modern state has been sleeping complacently on a keg of gun powder.

The state and the organized private sector should support and empower families economically to make childcare a serious business. There should be family competitions and promotional programmes, where family teams could compete with other families and the successful families who demonstrate bonding are made to win prizes. It is already happening in some places. But I think that it should be proliferated and replicated country-wide and world-wide. This is the carrot aspect where the family, as bedrock of society, is supported to remain bonded.

There is the stick aspect. People generally desire one thing and do another largely because of *akrasia* – moral weakness, and indiscipline. The erudite apostle Paul once wrote: “the spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak.” With moral suasion alone without the force of law, most human beings find themselves doing things that they regret afterward. When confronted with the social consequences of their conduct, they take solace in blaming the devil. Many families have more than the number of children they can care for largely because of moral weakness and inadequate planning associated with undisciplined sexual appetite. Thus, since people generally lack the moral fibre and stamina to see their wishes through in action, they need the aid and discipline of law to whip them in line; to force them to be free, so to speak.

If a man desires one thing and does another, it is often because what he desires is desirable, that is, if it has a positive social purpose. Those desires with positive social purpose that men are unable to actualize because of *akrasia* require the aid of social legislation or social engineering. But what can legislation do to the affairs of the heart? What can law do to redirect filial rationality and enthrone bonded human community?

### **Holding Spouses Accountable For Their Sexual Conduct**

While it may not be feasible to legislate on the affairs of the heart; while it may not be practically possible to legislate on who should love who or who should have sex with who; who should have a child with who, it is quite feasible and practicable for the law to hold people accountable for the consequences of their sexual behavior and choices. The Lagos state government has demonstrated recently that this can be done. The Lagos State law in this regard says that you cannot proclaim your inalienable right to have sex with whoever you like and run away from the consequences. Civilization will not allow that, only barbarism may allow it. In this regard, we call on the international community to craft family charters and conventions defining the sexual act principally as an application to the cosmic order or divine intelligence for a child or children that the applicants are ready and willing to care for. And then prevail on governments of the world to introduce family orientation, parenting and childcare in the school curriculum, from

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



elementary to tertiary education as a compulsory subject of study because it touches on the foundation of human existence.

Chaos-prone societies without adequate opportunities for human capital development and social support system for its population should be encouraged to become Malthusian in outlook. If left alone, unchecked by law, people may procreate themselves into trouble, and by extension, out of existence. If you breed angry people all over the place, you are procreating yourself out of existence. What Reverend Malthus predicted centuries ago is happening in India, Iraq, Libya, Syria, North-Eastern Nigeria, and a host of other troubled nations of the world. Shouldn't unprincipled procreative propensities be restrained by law, to prevent the breeding of angry *Homo sapiens* who will, in time, turn against society and tear it apart? Let there be laws prescribing the number of children families can have with adequate support by the state. For troubled societies without means, it should be pegged at a maximum of two children, with a proviso that any additional child will attract economic cost to the parents. Fees will have to be paid by such parents to the state on any additional child to enable it provide adequate facilities and infrastructure for all citizens. This prescription is not for all nations and not in perpetuity. The former military President of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Babangida (Rtd) proposed a maximum of four children per family in the late 1980s. China proposed one child per family several years ago. It is sufficient for families and societies to demonstrate adequate care and concern for the children that are born into the world under their watch.

## CONCLUSION

It seems pretty obvious that there has been a derailment of society from its fundament, its foundation. This fundament, this foundation of society is the human family. Not that anyone disputes the capacity of the family to construct the architecture of society. The point rather is that the family and parenting have not been accorded their pride of place by modern societies, though there are undeniable token efforts in that direction. The estrangement of the family from its primordial responsibility arose fundamentally from the age-long subtle contestations between matriarchal and patriarchal rationality in the development of societies, and this need not be so. If one connects chaos-prone societies to the disruption of families and the uncaring attitude towards children, then it becomes crystal clear that the neglect and disempowerment of the family is at the risk of societal peace and cohesion. The way out is empowerment of the family and social legislation and regulation.

The outcome of this, if rigorously worked out, would be the institution of filial rationality where adequate care and concern for the all round development of the child is the yardstick with which to measure the success of families, the vibrancy and cohesion of society and the legitimacy of state authority.

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher



## REFERENCES

- Anyiam-Osigwe, C. O., Ozurumba, D., & Anyiam-Fiberesima, P. (2000). *Advancing the Cause for a Holistic Approach to Human Existence and Development: Towards a Better World Order: the Family as Its Basic Building Block: Proceedings of the Second Session of the Emmanuel Onyechere Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Memorial Lecture Series, 2000* (Vol. 2). Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Foundation.
- Hobbes, T., & Macpherson, C. B. (1968). *Leviathan; edited with an Introduction by CB Macpherson*. Penguin.
- Kieninger, R. (1963). Cultural Balance. *The ultimate frontier*. <http://the-ultimate-frontier.org/civilization/Cultural/Balance.htm>. Retrieved December 27, 2019
- Kieninger, R. (1963). Stepping stones to an improved civilization. *The ultimate frontier* <http://the-ultimatefrontier.org/civilization,stepping.htm> Retrieved December 27, 2019
- Malthus, T. R. (1803). *An essay on the principle of population; a view of its past and present effects on human happiness; with an inquiry into our prospects respecting the future removal or mitigation of the evils which it occasions*.
- New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (1970 Revision). New York.
- Rousseau, J. J. (1998). The social contract or principles of political thought (trans: Tozer, HJ). *Herfordshire (French 1762)*.
- Unah, J. I. (2002a). *African philosophy: Trends and projections in six essays*. Lagos: Foresight Press.
- Unah, J. I. (2002). African theory of forces and the extended family relations: A deconstruction. In *Life Energies, Forces and the Shaping of Life: Vital, Existential* (pp. 265-276). Springer, Dordrecht.
- Unah, J. I. (2009). Values and development. *The Development Philosophy of Emmanuel Onyechere Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe, 1*: 52-61.
- Vaillant, G. E. (2012). *Triumphs of experience*. Harvard University Press.

ISSN: 2408-7920

Copyright © African Journal of Applied Research  
Arca Academic Publisher