1. Pan-African Brain Circulation

Cynthia Lucas Hewitt*

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a quantitative analysis of the relationship between the number of immigrants from a country and the amount of U.S. direct investment into that country, showing a direct relationship supportive of the emerging brain-circulation model, and discusses the possible use of this model to assist in bringing about the goals of Pan-Africanism. The principles underlying Pan-Africanism are considered in respect to the outcomes of the movement, given the recent political economy of capitalism. Brain circulation provides one focused approach to designing policies and projects for sustainable development in Africa that will impact the lives of Africans there and globally. The transnationalism paradigm, which provides analysis of immigrant communities’ identification and allegiance both with their homeland and their U.S. communities, is useful in highlighting factors important to the global Pan-African networking that is required for a successful African/African American brain circulation.

INTRODUCTION

This article provides statistical evidence supporting the brain-circulation thesis, and suggests ways in which the transnational movement of Pan-Africanism can adopt effective brain-circulation strategies for African socioeconomic development. It also reviews the historical background of Pan-Africanism and presents an analysis of the socioeconomic structures that present challenges to successful development. Brain circulation is a newly developing sociological framework for modeling the best practices of transnational communities promoting development in semiperiphery and periphery countries. This study investigates the processes whereby migration of substantial numbers of migrants from a developing country

* Morehouse College, Department of Sociology, Atlanta, Georgia.
Email: chewitt@morehouse.edu.
is associated with development of a significant flow of capital—financial, organizational, and human—back into the country. While the concept of brain drain associates out-migration with the dead end of lost human capital, the concept of brain circulation suggests that the outward flow is not without a return flow, and that the larger the outward flow the larger the potential inward flow, if the methods of promoting circulation are understood and employed. Out-migration is not conceived as a one-way street but rather as part of a current, which has been seen to return and build upon itself when the conditions along the way are propitious.

Pan-Africanism is a nationalist movement of African heritage people in the African Diaspora and in Africa, which has been growing since the mid-1800s, based on an understanding of the pivotal importance of the liberation and political unification of Africa to create an economically strong homeland for African people. A liberated and unified Africa would be the base for political empowerment globally to impact the cultural, social, and political freedom of African people everywhere. Contemporary social scientists attest to the importance of this conception (Henry 1999). The movement has been through many permutations and can count the political liberation of all the African continent’s lands, culminating with South Africa in 1994, as the fulfillment of one of its initial goals. However, the end goal of African unification for socio-economic prosperity for African people has remained elusive. Today, in the twilight of the hydrocarbon-fueled industrial revolution, the fundamental challenge of our era is resource distribution, or more to the point, redistribution. Development must take a different direction. Perhaps the continent of Africa, which has gone the least down the path of industrial development, will fare better in the new ecological economy that is most likely to emerge.

The theoretical background for this paper is Nkrumaism, the set of principles elaborated by Kwame Nkrumah. I also employ world-systems theory, established by Immanuel Wallerstein (1974), and incorporate the pioneering critical work of Andre Gunder Frank (1979), whose theorization of dependency in many ways laid the groundwork; and the work of Cheikh Anta Diop (1978, 1991), premiere African sociologist and theorist of the cultural unity of black Africa. First, I review the Pan-African approach to nation building and situate its strategies within the larger analytical framework of world-systems theory, after which I discuss the findings from the vibrant contemporary transnationalism paradigm and their relevance to analysis of Pan-African economic development. I then present a quantitative test of the basic thesis of brain circulation. Discussion centers on the implications of brain-circulation research for Pan-African