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Journal of Gender and Power is aimed at providing an international forum for discussing various issues and processes of gender construction. It is a scholarly, interdisciplinary journal, which features articles in all fields of gender studies, drawing on various paradigms and approaches. We invite scholars to submit articles and reviews reporting on theoretical considerations and empirical research.

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Editor's Preface

When we published the last issue of *Journal of Gender and Power* in December, there was no signal of the coming COVID-19 catastrophe. Suddenly, in March 2020 we started to live in a new reality full of uncertainty and danger. Every second could be the beginning of the end. The COVID-19 epidemic has changed our understanding of time and space and has influenced relationships between people. It appeared that virtual reality can be more real than “real reality”. Suddenly our children started to participate in their school lessons online and we began to teach our university students sitting before a computer screen. Even shopping for food felt like a mission on Mars. Our freedom of mobility and expression has been limited. And then when governments began to ease lockdown rules in many countries and communities, we saw the growing euphoria in face-to-face interactions. Shopping malls, beaches, restaurants, parties and family meetings full of people (without masks and gloves). The materialization of human need to be together even at the highest risk.

We haven't been able to gather articles related to COVID-19 and gender. But I decided to symbolically attach this issue to the *Journal of Gender and Power*. It is reflected on the cover of the volume. However, I didn't want to choose a pessimistic picture, so instead there are young people who are probably together and can live a valuable life even during the COVID-19 period. And perhaps I can believe, somewhat paradoxically that in this time of 2020 there will be a growing gender understanding of common problems and destiny. Also, I can believe that can be more support for gender and an acceptance of various differences, more gender empathy and solidarity.

Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik
Editor-in-Chief



ARTICLES





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Transparency dilemma in interpersonal relationships

ABSTRACT. Humans as social animals move from being strangers to becoming intimate by taking risks of engaging in self-disclosure—from sharing insignificant bits of information to details about their beliefs, opinions, lifestyles, prejudices, and values. Romantic and intimate relationships come about when players peel away their outer layers and allow others to get closer to their core. However, as couples become more familiar, they experience certain tensions known as relational dialectics. These are autonomy versus connection, novelty versus predictability, and openness versus transparency (openness). This paper presents the findings of a survey of the perceptions about these tensions among the Hispanic-America college students (N=108). The subjects rank-order these tensions in terms of their importance, and the level of difficulty in dealing with the tensions.

KEYWORDS: interpersonal communication, interpersonal relationships, gender communication, relational tensions, inconsistency of social needs

Introduction

The desire for meaningful friendships and relationships is a basic need among humans. In most of the western countries, children's first interaction with people other than their family members occurs on the first day at the nursery school or the kindergarten. Almost instantly, children begin to make friends. For adults, social needs follow immediately after physiological and safety needs (Maslow, 1954). While social closeness, intimacy, belonging, and marital bonding are dictated by cultures and their traditions, the desire for forging romantic relationships transcends all cultures and value systems.

Although people's choices in making friends and selecting romantic partners are voluntary, these actions are governed by cultures (individualistic vs collectivist), cultural traditions (Hall, 1959) and display rules (Saarni, 1993;

Soto, Levenson & Ebling, 2005). One of the best-known models for the development of relationships was proposed by Knapp, Vangelisti, & Caughlin (2014). Knapp et. al. proposed a 10-step model from “initiating” to “termination”. Other interpersonal communication scholars (Mongeau & Henningsen, 2008; Dunleavy & Booth-Butterfield, 2009) have argued that a relational model ought to include relational maintenance for keeping a relationship running smoothly. Rehman (2015) offered a three-stage model that included the formative stage, maintenance stage, and a dissolution stage.

There is a common agreement in all relational models. Every relationship begins with physical attraction. Appearance is a critical factor in the initial stages of any relationship (Mehrabian & Blum, 2003; Swami & Furnham, 2008). In the “hook up” phenomenon of recent years, physical appearance is the primary basis for attraction for “speed daters” (Luo & Zhang, 2009).

Once past the point of physical attraction, both players want to determine the potential for a relationship. This exploration is accomplished through safe and harmless self-disclosure (Petronio, 2002; Erwin & Pressler, 2011). If both partners sense reciprocity in disclosure, it is likely that both may disclose more of their opinions, beliefs, and fears by peeling off the outer layers (Altman & Taylor, 1973). During such an exchange of sharing, the individuals are trying to forge a relationship that becomes a source of strength and security. However, in trying to gain such strength one must expose one’s innermost feelings, fears, and weaknesses. In so doing, an individual may feel a sense of vulnerability. Thus, a relational tension: emotional strength comes at the cost of becoming vulnerable.

Based on the works of several communication scholars (Gamble & Gamble, 2014; Adler & Proctor, 2016; McCornack, 2016), it may be concluded that for most of the people, six relational needs are important in interpersonal relationships. These are:

Autonomy (a desire to retain one’s identity and freedom.)

Connection (a desire to connect with another.)

Novelty (a desire for new experiences.)

Predictability (a desire to be certain what the other person will do.)

Transparency (a desire to be open with the other about important things.)

Protection (a desire to conceal somethings from the other in order not to become vulnerable.)

These six needs lead to three relational tensions. For instance, the need to connect with another comes at the cost of one’s autonomy; desire

for novelty threatens the need for predictability, and the need for transparency (openness) impends one's need to protect personal/intimate information. Three relational tensions are:

Connection vs. Autonomy, Novelty vs. Predictability, and Transparency vs. Protection.

The present study attempts to determine the importance of each of these relational needs, and the (difficulty) in the management of the three relational tensions by college-age, Hispanic-American men and women. The data are analyzed for three variables: gender, age, and relational status.

Sample and Methodology

The sample consisted of 108 undergraduate students at a state-supported, regional, mid-size campus in a central-southern state where the student body is composed of 96% Hispanic Americans. The students were enrolled in four different sections of an introductory course in Interpersonal Communication. One section met twice a week on late mornings of Tuesdays and Thursdays, another group met in the afternoons. Two additional groups of students met once-a-week in evening classes. The rationale for this choice was to obtain a cross-section of day and evening students. All four sections were chosen randomly.

The participants completed a 12-item self-administered paper and pencil survey. The subjects were informed that their participation was voluntary, that they were not required to write their names or other identifying information on the survey, and that the topic of the survey related to one of the chapters in their textbook for the course. The principal researcher visited the classes personally, explained the study to the students and collected the data.

Since all items on the instrument were either close-ended demographic questions or Likert-scale items, it is safe to say that there was no coder bias in interpreting the responses. The data, for the most part, were treated either as nominal or ordinal in nature. Only the nonparametric statistics (*t*-test and Spearman's Rank Order Coefficient) were used for the analysis¹.

¹ The author used GraphPad: <https://www.graphpad.com/quickcalcs/ttest1/?Format=SD> for *t* test analyses, and Social Science Statistics: <https://www.socscistatistics.com/tests/spearman/default2.aspx> for Spearman's Rho calculations, and, <https://www.socscistatistics.com/tests/chisquare2/default2.aspx> for Chi-Square calculations.

The survey instrument included six Likert-scale items about the importance/significance of the six specific relational needs. The subjects expressed their opinions on items using a five-point scale: 5 as “very important” and 1 as “not at all important.” Another item asked the respondents to identify the relational need that was the easiest for them to manage. The next item asked which was the most difficult to manage. The final question asked which the most difficult dialectical tension was to manage. The aim was to uncover any difference among men and women in regard to the importance of relational needs and management of relational tensions. Similar analyses were undertaken for age and relational status. Primarily three sets of assumptions were tested. These were:

1. Gender and the importance given to relational needs.
2. Gender and management of relational tensions.
3. Age and importance given to relational needs.
4. Age and management of relational tensions.
5. Influence of marital status on the importance placed on relational needs.
6. Relational status and management of relational tensions.

The data and findings are presented in the following four sections. The first section presents the data for the entire sample. The next three focus on the three variables being analyzed.

Sample Profile

The sample consisted of 35 males (32.4%), and 73 females (67.6%). As expected, most of the undergraduate students 58 (54%) were 20-years old or younger. 40 (37%) of the respondents were in the 21–25 years group, and 10 (9%) were older. For the purpose of this analysis, the second and the third group were combined to form the ‘over-20-years group. Among the respondents, forty-four (40.7%) were single, 52 (48%) stated they were in a relationship, and 12 (11%) were married. The individuals who reported as being in a relationship or married were combined and treated as one group labeled as—In-a-Relationship.

Importance of Relational Needs

The questions asked: *How important is this need for you?* The scores ranged from 1 to 5. Table 1 presents the sample’s average scores and ranking of these needs.

Table 1. Importance of Relational Needs as Ranked by the Sample

Relational needs	Average	Ranking
Transparency	4.519	1
Connection	4.389	2
Novelty	4.241	3
Protection	4.019	4
Autonomy	3.648	5
Predictability	2.982	6

For the overall sample, transparency (openness) and connection ranked at the top; while autonomy and predictability were ranked as less important.

Managing Relational Needs

When asked which one of the six relational needs was the easiest to manage, the three most favored needs were *Connection*, *Transparency*, and *Autonomy*. The data are presented in table 2.

Table 2. The Relational Need Easiest for me to Manage

Ranking	Relational Need	Raw Score	Percent
#1	Connection	46	42.6
#2	Transparency	26	24.0
#3	Autonomy	22	20.4
#4	Protection	6	5.6
#5*	Novelty	4	3.7
#5*	Predictability	4	3.7
	Total	108	100

* Novelty and Predictability are tied in the fifth place.

In response to the most difficult need to manage, the need for transparency topped the list. The respondents' rankings are displayed in table 3.

A possible explanation that there isn't a perfect, or near-perfect inverse relationship between the easiest and the hardest needs to negotiate may stem from the differences due to gender, age, and relational status. However, the respondents do show consistency in their responses. For instance, when asked, which need was the easiest to manage, Connection was at the top of the list. When asked which was the most difficult, Connection was at the bottom of the list.

Table 3. The Most Difficult Relational Need for me to Manage

Ranking	Relational Need	Raw Score	Percent
#1	Transparency	36	33.3
#2	Protection	22	20.4
#3	Autonomy	20	18.5
#4	Predictability	14	12.9
#5	Novelty	10	9.3
#6	Connection	6	5.6
	Total	108	100

When asked: Which is the most difficult rational tension to cope with, most of the respondents said that Transparency vs. Prediction was the most difficult, and Connection vs. Autonomy was the easiest. Table 4 presents these data.

Table 4. The most Difficult Relational Tension to Manage

Relational Tension	Raw Score	Percentage	Ranking
1. Transparency vs. Protection	54	50	1
2. Connection vs. Autonomy	38	35	2
3. Novelty vs. Predictability	16	15	3
	108	100	

It is apparent from the descriptive data that the respondents desired transparency in a relationship and yet it was the most difficult to manage. It is, therefore, not surprising that Transparency vs. Protection seemed to be the most troublesome relational arrangement to navigate. A closer look at gender, age, and marital status, revealed some interesting (statistically significant) differences

Gender

The sample consisted of 35 men and 73 women. An analysis of the importance of the relational needs based on gender revealed that Connection, Transparency, and Novelty were the top-three choices for men. These were also the three top-choices for women. Protection, Predictability, and Autonomy were ranked lower by both groups.

Table 5. Gender and Importance of Relational Needs

		Men (N=35)		Women (73)		
Relational Needs	\bar{X}	St. Dev	\bar{X}	St. Dev	T =	Two-tailed P-value
Autonomy	3.66	0.84	3.64	0.95	0.1062	0.9156
Connection	4.37	0.77	4.40	0.72	0.1981	0.8433
Predictability	2.80	0.93	3.07	1.02	1.3238	0.1884
Novelty	4.23	0.81	4.25	0.64	0.1392	0.8896
Transparency	4.69	0.47	4.44	0.65	2.0327	0.0446*
Protection	2.66	1.21	3.19	1.06	2.3217	0.0222*

* The difference is statistically significant.

The analysis reveals statistically significant differences for two relational needs—Transparency which is deemed more important by men, and protection which is considered more important by women.

To analyze the perceptions of ease in negotiating the six needs, Spearman's rank correlation (Spearman's rho) was employed. The differences between men and women were not significant. Both groups ranked Connection, Transparency, and Autonomy as the top-three, in the exact identical order. The only difference was that men ranked Predictability at the 6th place while women placed Protection in the bottom. Both groups placed Novelty at # 5.

In ranking the hardest need to manage, men and women ranked these differently and the differences were significant. Both groups reported that transparency, Autonomy, and Protection were difficult to manage. Table 6 presents these data.

Table 6. Gender and the Hardest Need to Manage (#1 being the hardest)

Difficult to Manage	Ranked by Men	Ranked by Women
Transparency	1	1
Autonomy	2	3
Protection	3	2
Predictability	4	4
Novelty	5	5
Connection	6	5

Spearman's rho $r_s = 0.97276$; p (2-tailed) = 0.00767.

As per table 1., the need for transparency was perceived as the most important by the overall sample and yet it was also perceived as the most difficult to manage by both men and women.

The instrument included the question: Among the three relational tensions, which one do you find the most difficult to manage? Both men and women reported that Transparency vs. Protection was the most difficult to manage. For both groups, the smallest percentages reported that Novelty vs. Predictability was the most difficult. The data are displayed in table 7.

Table 7. Gender and the Most Difficult Relational Tension

Relational Tensions	Men (35)	Women (73)
Transparency vs. Protection	19 (54.3%)	35 (48%)
Autonomy vs. Connection	14 (40%)	24 (33%)
Novelty vs. Predictability	2 (5.7%)	14 (19%)

It is obvious that Transparency vs. Protection tension poses a greater challenge for both groups than Autonomy vs. Connection or Novelty vs. Predictability. The present data suggest that men and women seem to have similar perceptions of the importance of relational needs, as well as the management of the relational tensions.

Age

As stated earlier, 58 (54%) of the participants were 20 years of age or younger, the remaining 50 (46%) were grouped into “over 20-years of age” category. For both groups, Transparency was the most important need, and Predictability was the least important. For five out of the six needs, the two groups were identical, i.e. no statistically significant differences. However, in the case of Autonomy, the older group valued it more so than the younger group. This difference is significant.

Table 8. Age and Importance of Relational Needs

		20-years or younger (N=58)		Over 20 year (N=50)		
Relational Needs	\bar{X}	St. Dev	\bar{X}	St. Dev	$t =$	Two-tailed P-value
Autonomy	3.48	0.80	3.84	0.90	2.2006	0.0299*
Connection	4.35	0.85	4.44	0.58	0.6323	0.5286
Predictability	2.86	0.97	3.12	1.01	1.3627	0.1759

Novelty	4.17	0.79	4.32	0.56	1.1212	0.2647
Transparency	4.55	0.68	4.48	0.50	0.6010	0.5491
Protection	2.90	1.20	3.16	1.06	1.1845	0.2389

* The difference is statistically significant.

When asked which the easiest relational need was to manage, the two groups differed significantly. The rankings by the two groups are presented in table 9.

Table 9. Age and the Easiest Need to Manage (#1 being the easiest)

Easy to Manage	Ranked by Under-20	Ranked by over 20
Connection	1	1
Transparency	2	3
Autonomy	3	2
Predictability	4	5
Novelty	4	5
Protection	4	4

$r_s = 0.8933$; p (2-tailed) = 0.0165

The difference in the ranking by the two age groups is statistically significant. The younger group claims that Transparency is easier to manage while the older group reports Autonomy as an easier need to manage. The rankings for the hardest need to manage also reveal statistically significant differences. These data are presented in table 10.

Table 10. Age and the Hardest Need to Manage (#1 being the hardest)

Difficult to Manage	Ranked by Under-20	Ranked by over 20
Transparency	1	1
Autonomy	2	3
Protection	3	2
Predictability	4	3
Novelty	5	5
Connection	6	5

$r_s = 0.8827$; p (2-tailed) = 0.0198

The difference in ranking of the needs of the two age-groups is statistically significant. In regard to the management of the three tensions, both

groups reported that Transparency vs. Protection tension posed a greater challenge than Autonomy vs. Connection or Novelty vs. Predictability. In this regard, there was no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of the two groups.

Table 11. Age and the Most Difficult Relational Tension

Relational Tensions	20 years old or Younger	Over 20 years of age
Transparency vs. Protection	31 (51.7%)	24 (48%)
Autonomy vs. Connection	21 (38%)	16 (32%)
Novelty vs. Predictability	6 (10.3%)	10 (20%)

The chi-square statistic is 1.985. The p-value is .3707. The result is not significant.

The differences are not significant however, the tendency to identify Transparency vs. Protection as the most difficult to manage holds true regardless of age.

Relational Status

The sample consisted of 44 (41%) respondents who reported as being single, and the remaining 64 (59%) were in a relationship. The perceived importance of relational needs is presented in table 12.

Table 12. Relational Status and Importance of Relational Needs

	Single (N=44)		In a Relationship (64)			
Relational Needs	\bar{X}	St. Dev	\bar{X}	St. Dev	T =	Two-tailed P-value
Autonomy	3.73	0.87	3.59	0.95	0.7784	0.4381
Connection	4.00	0.86	4.66	0.72	4.3216	0.0001*
Predictability	2.82	0.72	3.09	1.02	1.5146	0.1329
Novelty	4.00	0.75	4.41	0.64	3.0485	0.0029*
Transparency	4.23	0.68	4.72	0.65	3.7777	0.0003*
Protection	3.14	0.98	2.94	1.23	0.8996	0.3704

* The difference is statistically significant.

The data indicate that people in relationships place a higher value on connection, novelty, and transparency than single people.

Table 13. Relational Status and the Easiest Relational Need to Manage as Ranked by the Sample

Relational needs	Single (N=44)	Ranking	In a Relationship (N=64)	Ranking
Connection	20	1	26	1
Transparency	10	2	16	2
Autonomy	10	2	12	3
Predictability	3	4	2	6
Protection	2	5	4	4
Novelty	0	6	4	4

$r_s = 0.7941$, p (2-tailed) 0.0592. The difference is not significant.

Table 14. Relational Status and the Hardest Relational Need to Manage as Ranked by the Sample

Relational needs	Single (N=44)	Ranking	In a Relationship (N=64)	Ranking
Transparency	4.23	1	4.72	1
Connection	4.00	2	4.66	2
Novelty	4.00	2	4.41	3
Autonomy	3.73	4	3.59	4
Protection	3.14	5	2.98	6
Predictability	2.82	6	3.09	5

$r_s = 0.9276$, p (2-tailed) = 0.0077. The results are significant.

The data suggest that people in relationships find it harder to cope with the novelty need than single people.

Table 15. Relational Status and the Most Difficult Relational Tension to Manage

Relational Tensions	Single	In a Relationship
Transparency vs. Protection	22 (50%)	32 (50%)
Autonomy vs. Connection	17 (38.6%)	20 (31.25%)
Novelty vs. Predictability	5 (11.4%)	12 (18.75%)

The chi-square statistic is 1.319. The p-value is .5171. The difference is not significant.

Statistically, there are no differences between the two groups—the singles and those in a relationship. However, it is evident from the data that Transparency vs. Protection is perceived as the most difficult relational tension to manage.

Discussion

The sample from the preset study lists transparency and connection as the key catalysts in forging an interpersonal relationship and the tension caused by the dichotomy of openness vs transparency as the most difficult to manage. These findings agree with previous studies (Petronio, 2002; Swami & Furnham, 2008). The biggest challenge to a relationship comes from the tension caused by the needs for transparency (openness) and protection (how much to disclose without becoming vulnerable). This was the tension identified as the most difficult to manage by the sample of the present study. This was also true when the data were scrutinized for variables such as gender, age, and relational status.

Historically, all social sciences research in anthropology, sociology, psychology, social psychology, political science, consumer behavior, and economics has treated gender as a major differentiating variable. With the changing gender politics and changes in career options, lifestyles, and financial independence, one can't help but notice that many of the gender-specific assumptions no longer hold true. As heads of families, as managers in workplaces, and decision-makers for major purchases, women have come to think, behave, and stereotype in the same ways as men. As a result, there are fewer studies that report significant differences based on gender. The data from the present study also hovers over the border of "no differences based on gender".

There are two factors that may explain the lack of difference among men and women in relation to our research question. First, American popular literature, as well as academic textbooks on interpersonal communication, put a great deal of emphasis on "honesty" and "openness" in relationships, making these as universal desirables rather than culture-specific that these are (Gamble & Gamble, 2014; Adler & Proctor, 2016; McCornack, 2016; Beebe, Beebe & Redmond, 2020). While greeting with a stranger with a smile, maintaining eye-contact while in conversation, and a firm handshake are signs of open communication in the American culture, in other cultures, refraining from smiling, not making eye contact, refusing to shake hands, and crossing one's arms across the chest are not codes of refusing an open communication. Similarly, "having no secrets" among intimate partners is not a requirement in all cultures.

Second, in most cultures, male and female indiscretions are judged differently. For instance, a marriage, in its traditional form, comes with a patriarchal double-standard that portions women to life-long lack of per-

sonal and sexual contentment (Heyn, 1992; Geddes, 2000). Most societies tend to condone marital infidelity of men as if it's a birthright—something that makes men more manly. However, such an unremorseful attitude from women (about their affairs) is seen as abnormal and unacceptable. Literary classics such as *The Scarlet Letter*, *Madame Bovary*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and *Anna Karenina* are grand examples of the domestic wreckage brought on by women's infidelity. Since, historically, openness has not served women kind well, women have learned to remain hushed about their "other" experiences. A woman's openness can threaten her relationship. Thus, a cultural double-standard becomes a barrier to openness and self-disclosure in a relationship. Ironically, men are more at ease with taking women's silence as an impression of innocence, than with their experience. Referring back to the Onion Theory of self-disclosure (Altman & Taylor, 1973), people will remain insecure revealing themselves due to fear of being judged unfairly.

As long as there is an excessive emphasis on "openness" and "honesty" and the double-standards prevail, the need for transparency and protection will keep causing the dialectical tensions in men and women.

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Appendix A – The Instrument

Friendships, serious relationships, and meaningful romantic relationships are neither easy to create not easy to maintain. Such associations need commitment and sincerity. This brief survey invites you to think about various factors that go into creating and sustaining a relationship. It is our hope that you will find this questionnaire thought-provoking and enjoyable.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are not required to disclose your identity.

Thank you for your cooperation and time.

Please respond to the items alone. This is not a group activity.

1. I am a ☐ male. I am a ☐ female.

2. Which age group describes you?

☐ I'm under 20 years of age.

☐ I'm in 20–25 years age group.

☐ I'm in 26–35 years age group.

☐ I'm over 35 years old.

3. Please check one of the following.

☐ I'm single. ☐ I'm in a relationship. ☐ I'm married.

☐ I was married, I'm separated. ☐ I'm divorced. ☐ I'm a widow/widower.

For each of the following statements, select and circle the most appropriate response.

1 stands for “strongly disagree”; 2 stands for “disagree”; 3 stands for “neither agree nor disagree”; 4 stands for “agree”; and 5 stands for “strongly agree”.

4. When I'm in a committed relationship, it is important for me to retain my autonomy, i.e., remain as an independent individual with my own identity. (*autonomy*)

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

5. When in a committed relationship, I like to connect with the other person so that the two of us become one pair or couple. (*connection*)

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

6. When in a committed relationship, I like to be able to tell what my partner is going to do and not surprise me. I prefer set routines. (*predictability*)

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

7. When In a committed relationship, I like to do try new things and seek novelty in my relationship. (*novelty*)

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

8. When in a committed relationship, I like openness, honesty from both partners. No secrets. (*transparency*)

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

9. When in a committed relationship, I like to keep some things private and secret. I feel protected by withholding some information. (*protection*)

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

The next two questions require one-word responses.

10. In your opinion, which of the above six is the easiest for **you** to manage?

11. And which is the most difficult for **you** to manage? _____

As you have guessed, relationships are complicated and often, we want contradictory things in our relationships. These contradictions (known as **relational dialectics**) can cause tensions and anxiety in the players in a relationship. There are namely three relational dialectics. These are:

Autonomy versus Connection Novelty versus Predictability Transparency versus Protection

12. Of these three, which do you find the most difficult to cope with? Please check only one.

☐ Autonomy versus Connection

☐ Novelty versus Predictability

☐ Transparency versus Protection

Listed below are the six important elements in an interpersonal relationship.

Autonomy

Connection

Novelty

Predictability

Transparency

Protection

Thank you for your participation.

Among the men, 12 (34%) were in 20-years or younger age group, the remain 23 (66%) were in the Over-20 age group. Among the women, 46 (63%) were in the younger group and 27 (37%) were in the older group. single and 46 (63%) were in a relationship.



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Subject-predicate-inversion of Gender-neutral-language: An emancipatory confusion

ABSTRACT. In this paper, I proposed a paradigm shift in Gender-Neutral-Language. The claim, which Gender-Neutral-Language can account for reality grasping and, thus, enable its actualization, is challenged; in place of an abstract reach towards social change, a more concrete emancipatory praxis must arise. Its current emancipatory prerogatives are not confronted from the standpoint of its already-established arguments but a more comprehensive standpoint of language, more specifically, of the philosophy of language.

KEYWORDS: gender-neutral-language, emancipatory-struggle, feminism, ontology, marxism

Introduction

The modern feminist theory claims that Gender-Neutral-Language can account for giving representation to Gender (e.g. Mikkola, 2016). In this paper, such a claim is challenged through a philosophical investigation of language. Four parts encompass the investigation. At the start, language is examined to enable the understanding of words' meaning and how they affect reality. Second, the relation between *Geist*, meaning and communication to apprehend how consciousness relates to language. Third, the fundamentals of current western societies are explained in general (ontology) and in particular (political economy) to permit a deeper comprehension of history and, hence, reality. Fourth, examples are used to elucidate the theoretical background and show in which way gender-neutral-language represents a subject-predicate-inversion, accounting, therefore, for emancipatory confusion. The latter is regarded in a double-part conclusion.

From von Schöfer to Wittgenstein

Let me try to give a deeper account of the matter by, first, illustrating it with one historical inquiry of words and, then, proposing the understanding of their meaning. The first part deals with the book *Was Geht uns Noah an?: Aus dem Unbewußten der Sprache* ("What is Noah's To Us?: From the Unconscious of Language") by Wolfgang von Schöfer. In this book, von Schöfer carries out a philosophical/philological analysis of the transformation of words over time to show that notions and meanings of language change simultaneously. This means with the transformation of words, both their meaning as well as our consciousness suffer transformation. (See section: *Geist, Meaning, Communication*.) The second part, which is essential, consists of the work *Philosophische Untersuchungen* by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1967). In which we deal with the meaning of the word and how its meaning belongs to practice.

A) Unstoppable transformation in/of language

Von Schöfer begins the analysis of the language with the biblical story of *Noah's Ark (Arche Noah)*. For him, this story can be explained in various ways, in archaeological, historical or mythological ways. Von Schöfer is interested in the mythological level of the event. The question, "*was heißt eigentlich fromm?*" (von Schöfer, 1968, p. 10) ("what is pious, after all?"), interests him, for God warns Noah, "*ihn als einzigen*" ("him alone") and no one else—only Noah was warned of the flood—because of this piety. Why is von Schöfer interested in the meaning of the word "pious"? What is the origin of the mythological/mythical level? Von Schöfer shows that the meaning of a story can change intensely only through the changed meaning of the words. "The key to the story is the phrase 'Noah did all that God has commanded'" (von Schöfer, 1968, p. 13). The investigation of the word *bieten* becomes a necessity. In German, command means *Gebot*, derived from *bieten*.)

Language appears to change from conscious to unconscious only due to the new understanding of a word. With the help of philology, he investigates the development of the word "*bieten*" ("offer"): "the etymological genealogy of 'offer' evidently has a number of meanings". (von Schöfer, 1968, p. 13)

He finds the root '*bheudh*', which at the same time contains different meanings:

"1st to be active, to be awake; 2nd to ask; 3rd to hear; 4th to give; 5th to commend"

According to current understanding, one could erroneously assume that Noah is aware of his actions as if “*er die Gebote halte*” (von Schöfer, 1968, p. 16) (“he keeps the commandments”).

This (misunderstood) hold is anything but unimportant and harmless: it justifies what, in sharp contrast to Noah’s piety as piety of law, stifles life again and again and everywhere [...]. This inconspicuous hold constitutes a stable world in which man is passively confronted with any authoritative, perhaps even arbitrary demands of a foreign power, called God, whom he is now to fulfill by virtue of some law which he understands or does not understand (von Schöfer, 1968, p. 16–17).

But, as I said, that is a misunderstanding, and the word ‘hold’ is again a good example of how deeply and how much to the detriment of understanding the whole meaning of the words is forgotten, not only individually but collectively: ‘hold’ means nowadays almost exclusively ‘stop’, [...] which is the opposite from do and move [...] (von Schöfer, 1968, p. 17).

“*In Wirklichkeit ist auch, halten’ ein Ausdruck der Bewegung*”, (von Schöfer, 1968, p. 17) (“In reality, ‘hold’ is also an expression of the movement”), von Schöfer presents, then, the root and the genealogy to make his argument explicit, which enables him to proceed with his investigation. He returns to the root “bheudh” and shows it emanates from “Buddha”. In fact, “Buddha” is worldwide an idea of passivity, but he shows that “offer”, and hence “bheudh”, and consequently “Buddha”, the opposite is, “*das heißt, daß ein Buddha nicht nur passiv erweckt wird, sondern auch ganz aktiv aufwacht*” (von Schöfer, 1968, p. 20) (“that means that a Buddha is not only awakened passively, but also actively awaken”).

After explaining this relationship, one can regard that “Noah, like Buddha, is the one who is so active that his motions are easy. Buddha emphasizes in his name the movement, Noah the rest, but both Buddha and Noah mean [...] the same truth.” (von Schöfer, 1968, p. 22). In this sense, we look at the clear reversal of the meaning of language, and with this linguistic reversal, communication changes, and with it, history and its meaning. The change takes place slowly:

for this is what Noah has to tell us, and what we know is as vital to us today as it was two thousand or four thousand years ago: this earthly realm is an area of change, of perpetual flow as Heraclitus saw it, of dying and becoming as Goethe understood him. Everything in this area is in motion, and now, as we move ourselves, we are alive (von Schöfer, 1968, p. 24).

And,

[c]hange—that’s what he has to say to us deeply—means not only life but also death. And again, the connection between life and death is not paradoxical but a logical and understandable one, like that of holding and moving, and of rest and movement. For transformation is change, and when something changes, it takes on the one hand a new form, on the other hand, it dies from the old form. Only what dies can become new, and what is new must at the same time give up its previous form (von Schöfer, 1968, p. 25).

So the line of death is actually and at the same time the lifeline (von Schöfer, 1968, p. 25).

Moreover, life, language, words, the meaning of words, and most important: consciousness, they all die, live and transform themselves—and conversely are transformed. This is how, over time, language and words are changed, reformed or no longer used and thus the meaning of this and above all the consciousness changes. Nothing is rigid; everything is a process.

B) Wittgenstein’s essential contribution

I am intentionally avoiding the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, since in this early work Ludwig Wittgenstein reduces the world to logical relations—hence, unable to give a real account of reality. However, in his *post mortem* work *Philosophical Investigations* he reverses (here *unimportant* if consciously or not) his methodology and instead of being trapped in the abstract absoluteness of logic, he achieves an investigation of reality, hence, indirectly, advocating for the prevention of *subject-predicate-inversion*. This should become clearer in our investigation below.

In some sense, Wittgenstein actualizes Immanuel Kant’s comprehension of the concept: “A concept that includes a synthesis in it is to be held as empty, and does not relate to any object, if this synthesis does not belong to experience.” (Kant, 1998, p. 323 [A220, B267]).

What is Wittgenstein reckoning?

In *Philosophical Investigation* on §§ 40 and 43, Wittgenstein examines the idea that in it-self a word neither has nor carries denotation. The word in itself has no meaning, it has to correspond to something, it must stand for something. What is an apple? What would be an apple? The word *apple* has only meaning due to the praxis—namely its employment, use—, the denotation associated with its use, or rather with its praxis.¹

¹ Interestingly, one could claim the word apple is the idea of the fruit apple, it contains in-itself an embedded truth of a specific praxis, however, if we disregard the mythological

§ 40: Let us first discuss *this* point of the argument: that a word has no meaning if nothing corresponds to it.—It is important to note that the word ‘meaning’ is being used illicitly if it is used to signify the thing that ‘corresponds’ to the word. That is to confound the meaning; of a name with the *bearer* of the name. When Mr. N. N. dies one says that the bearer of the name dies, not that the meaning dies. And it would be nonsensical to say that, for if the name ceased to have meaning it would make no sense to say ‘Mr. N. N. is dead.’ (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 20)

If this is true, namely that ‘*the meaning of a word is its use in the language*’ (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 20), then the *meaning arises from the praxis itself, as the expression of a given praxis and not from the intention over the praxis*. Moreover, we shall come to a new realization when we assume that the word or language is the access to the *Geist* (“mind”, “spirit”, “intellect” etc.) and consciousness. Considering Michael Pauen’s argumentation, first, it must be argued that words ought to be considered the access to consciousness, and second, the tentative of explaining the concept of consciousness, through words, certainly creates circularity. Therefore, understanding the practice of words becomes a precondition to drawing nearer to the vast scope perception of human consciousness.

Now, with the help of §§ 40 and 43, the meaning of a word itself is regarded. If words are the condition for understanding human consciousness, then one needs to grasp the meaning of the word. Nevertheless, the meaning of a word is its use (practice) and not the idea of the practice of the word. Accordingly, when grasping the understanding of consciousness, then practice entails a twofold sense. On the one hand, the practice of words allows access to consciousness; on the other hand, the practice of words shapes the meaning of the words. Therefore, the word and consciousness cannot be considered in isolation from each other. Word, meaning and consciousness are linked.

Following this argument, I begin to explore another next point within the next paragraphs of Wittgenstein’s examinations: language/consciousness in a private sense; or rather, to what extent language/consciousness is [are] possible in a private sense?

meanings of the word apple – which somehow relates to the fruit –, in our contemporary time we cannot disregard for the technological company apple, which is a trademark for technological gadgets, hence, it has a completely different meaning than the one from the fruit apple – even if the intention was to relate brand of technology to the bitten apple of the tree of knowledge.

Wittgenstein's reflections problematize the matter of a private language. After considering communication to be the mediation, the words the access, and the practice of both communication and words the real meaning of consciousness, a better understanding of this Wittgensteinian problem, relating and comparing private language and private consciousness becomes possible. According to him:

§ 243: A human being can encourage himself, give himself orders, obey, blame and punish himself; he can ask himself a question and answer it. We could even imagine human beings who spoke only in monologue; who accompanied their activities by talking to themselves.—An explorer who watched them and listened to their talk might succeed in translating their language into ours. (This would enable him to predict these people's actions correctly, for he also hears them making resolutions and decisions.)

But could we also imagine a language in which a person could write down or give vocal expression to his inner experiences—his feelings, moods, and the rest—for his private use?—Well, can't we do so in our ordinary language?—But that is not what I mean. The individual words of this language are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations. So another person cannot understand the language (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 88).

In § 243, the philosophical investigation of the private language begins. Wittgenstein commences the analysis with a clear assumption that a person can be self-conscious in it-self. If there were a person who could develop his own language, then that language would be understandable only to himself but not to any other person. Therefore, this language would be sterile, unfruitful, incomprehensible and pointless, since it does not enable communication: "*So another person cannot understand the language.*" Wittgenstein continues:

§ 246: In what sense are my sensations *private*?—Well, only I can know whether I am really in pain; another person can only surmise it.—In one way this is wrong, and in another nonsense. If we are using the word 'to know' as it is normally used (and how else are we to use it?), then other people very often know when I am in pain.—Yes, but all the same not with the certainty with which I know it myself I—It can't be said of me at all (except perhaps as a joke) that I *know* I am in pain. What is it supposed to mean—except perhaps that I *am* in pain? Other people cannot be said to learn of my sensations *only* from my behaviour,—for *I* cannot be said to learn of them. I *have* them. The truth is: it makes sense to say about other people that they doubt whether I am in pain; but not to say it about myself (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 89).

Not only interesting but § 246 is also essential for the understanding of this investigation. While it is clear that a private level of sensations exists, the question remains, what does this mean? Everyone feels their own feelings, everyone is both the bearer and the access to his sensation. But a private sensation stripped out from words is nothing more than a pure perception. On one hand, Wittgenstein clarifies that someone else cannot know exactly my sensation; but he contemplates, on the other, that the reflexivity of a sensation reveals the private character of the sensation. For the self-reflexivity of a sensation, one would have to think about this sensation and try to grasp it with words. That is: our private sensation, if it is not to exist as a mere perception but to be understood and contemplated as a sensation, then it cannot be private. The words themselves cannot be private if they are to embody meaning and enable our consciousness: words can only have meaning if they are not private.

Following, § 256 illustrates the just-mentioned explanation of § 246. Moreover, it becomes clear that § 243 is however incomplete and even contradictory because the assumption that a private viewing of the consciousness can be independent of the language is wrong and inconsistent. The following § 257 continues this last point. If someone could himself develop a word without having prior knowledge of the social usage of the word, or if there is no word yet, then that word would be meaningless if it exists as a word without any practical relevance. To make sense of that word, a general language would have to exist to explain that word. Also, words and the evolution of words are always dependent on other words. Words first arise as the expression of determining social relations. They depend on the practice of communication, which is why a single independent word is meaningless.

§ 256: Now, what about the language which describes my inner experiences and which only I myself can understand? *How* do I use words to stand for my sensations?—As we ordinarily do? Then are my words for sensations tied up with my natural expressions of sensation? In that case my language is not a ‘private’ one. Someone else might understand it as well as I.—But suppose I didn’t have any natural expression for the sensation, but only had the sensation? And now I simply *associate* names with sensations and use these names in descriptions.— (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 91).

§ 257: ‘What would it be like if human beings shewed no outward signs of pain (did not groan, grimace, etc.)? Then it would be impossible to teach a child the use of the word ‘tooth-ache.’—Well, let’s assume the child is a genius and itself

invents a name for the sensation!—But then, of course, he couldn't make himself understood when he used the word.—So does he understand the name, without being able to explain its meaning to anyone?—But what does it mean to say that he has 'named his pain'?—How has he done this naming of pain?! And whatever he did, what was its purpose?—When one says 'He gave a name to his sensation' one forgets that a great deal of stage-setting in the language is presupposed if the mere act of naming is to make sense. And when we speak of someone's having given a name to pain, what is presupposed is the existence of the grammar of the word 'pain'; it shews the post where the new word is stationed (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 92).

Now, let's imagine two examples to illustrate the previous point: namely pain as a sensation. It could be a sensation, an explanation, an idealistic private understanding, but in all cases, the words belong to the general public. A dismembering of words from a general language and their transformation into a private level of language reveals an irreconcilable misunderstanding. On the one hand, the very self-perception expressed by words is already a general apprehension of perception, because the general language is used to describe and summarize that perception. But if we consider something "with philosophical intentions", when we think about perception, then we use our private experience to explain the perception. Nonetheless, the private experience is never really private, because, on the one hand, to be conceptually recognized as an experience, one has to grasp it with thoughts and words, and, on the other hand, a human-being without society is ontologically impossible, that is, the separation of human society and singular human, who is a social product, is a pure illusion. Humans cannot exist as mere individuals; methodologically, this private abstraction is ontologically impossible; furthermore, historically, individuality—not singularity—arose from the development of human society—this point shall be further regarded later (Lukács, 1984).

§ 261: What reason have we for calling 'S' the sign for a *sensation*? For 'sensation' is a word of our common language, not of one intelligible to me alone. So the use of this word requires a justification which everybody understands.—And it would not help either to say that it need not be a *sensation*; that when he writes 'S', he has *something*—and that is all that can be said. 'Has' and 'something' also belong to our common language.—So in the end when one is doing philosophy one gets to the point where one would like just to emit an inarticulate sound.—But such a sound is an expression only as it occurs in a particular language-game, which should now be described (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 93).

§ 275: Look at the blue of the sky and say to yourself 'How blue the sky is!'—When you do it spontaneously—without philosophical intentions—the idea never crosses your mind that this impression of color belongs only *to you*. And you have no hesitation in exclaiming that to someone else. And if you point at anything as you say the words you point at the sky. I am saying: you have not the feeling of pointing-into-yourself, which often accompanies 'naming the sensation' when one is thinking about 'private language'. Nor do you think that really you ought not to point to the color with your hand, but with your attention. (Consider what it means 'to point to something with the attention'.) (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 96).

Wittgenstein conceives the memory as a part of the mind. Insofar. This part is inseparable from *Geist*. The denial of this mental process means the denial of remembrance itself. But how do we remember something but as representations, or rather representations of words? Pictures themselves are only pictures, because we bring and, hence, save them into consciousness. If I said, 'Do you remember '...?', What would that be? This word '...' does not exist except from individual compound letters, or this question has no meaning for me, the questioner, as well as for the recipient, because both do not know what '...' means. Therefore, it does not mean anything, and, as a result, neither memory nor access to the mind can exist. If it were not '...' but any existing word, then we would have just had a mental process of memory. Even if our answer to the question: "do you remember ...?" was *no*, then "the mental process of remembering ..." "has now taken place in" (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 102) us, because the condition of the answer "no" is the understanding of the word "...", and therefore we would have reminded ourselves of the word "...".

C) Transition

The conception of a word does not depend on my sole desire; "that will depend on the circumstances under which it is given, and on the person I give it to." (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 14).

Language presupposes (inter-)dependence and relation: "One has already to know (or be able to do) something in order to be capable of asking a thing's name." (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 15).

A word and its bearer are not in themselves a unity, but rather in and for themselves, that is, when the bearer is no longer there, a word does not lose its meaning, for its meaning is given by a general [external, or rather social] use, not private.

Then it is an impossibility to create a static, private language, one that has in itself determinations; in other words, a new language to enable

emancipatory commitments, to carry meaning and actualization, is in itself impossible; if this is true, would it be possible to use language to create consciousness to change reality? Is language an instrument to achieve and change consciousness? Does consciousness create reality?

***Geist*, Meaning, Communication**

How can we regard *Geist*, meaning and communication as one? Are there connections between the terms? I summarize these general questions into just one question: What is the sense of communication in *Geist* (mind/spirit), or namely, what does communication mean to the *Geist*?

The answer to this question is still unclear, so we carry out the investigation of this subject with the help of other authors, and then we can get a more concrete view on the subject.

According to Thomas Nagel, consciousness is a multifarious phenomenon. “[I]t occurs at many levels of animal life” (Nagel, 1974, p. 436) meaning “that there is something it is like to be that organism” (Nagel, 1974, p. 436). Furthermore: “But fundamentally an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is like to be that organism—something it is like for the organism.” (Nagel, 1974, p. 436).

Also, he underlines:

We may call this the subjective character of experience. It is not captured by any of the familiar, recently devised reductive analyses of the mental, for all of them are logically compatible with its absence. It is not analyzable in terms of any explanatory system of functional states, or intentional states, since these could be ascribed to robots or automata that behaved like people though they experienced nothing (Nagel, 1974, p. 436).

One looks into Michael Pauen’s book, *Fundamental Problems of the Philosophy of Mind* (Pauen, 2005), to understand to what extent consciousness can be a synonym of *Geist*. Or how we have access to consciousness, conversely, to our *Geist*? Could it even be possible to capture the *Geist*?

The concept of *consciousness* itself, or rather the use of the term has a broad spectrum, as Pauen explains in the next citation, that is, there are several uses for this term, each of which depends on a particular situation:

However, it would also be helpful to have a closer look at the different ways of using the word. Sometimes we just say that we are ‘conscious’, in other cases

we say that we have a 'consciousness of ...', but thoughts, feelings and feelings represent also forms of consciousness, after all there is the 'self—Consciousness'—it seems necessary to agree on similarities and differences of these very different kinds of consciousness (Pauen, 2005, p. 9).

Aside from this difficulty, one could start to assert the relation between consciousness and mind. Although many levels of consciousness exist, when one considers consciousness as a general view, then it appears as the access of the *Geist*. Indeed, sciences have often assumed concerning this problem that the technical understanding is not only sufficient but that it can indeed grant access to the mind. In contrast, Pauen asserts:

Thomas Nagel's 1974 essay, *What is it like to be a bat?*, has been of relevant share in bringing the debate on the difference between phenomenal and scientific knowledge into the center of discussion within the philosophy of the mind. Nagel's basic reasoning is as simple as it is plausible: even if we knew all about the neurobiological properties of a conscious organism, what there is to know, this knowledge would not provide us with direct access to the conscious experiences of that organism (Pauen, 2005, p. 176).

Nagel explains this consideration using the example of a bat. Even though the neural processes in the brain of a bat are fully explored, we still have no access to the bat's experiences. We still do not have to be *what it is like to be a bat*. Of course, it could be like trying to imagine what it would be like to be short-sighted, to orient ourselves with the help of ultrasound, to catch insects in the night and to hang upside down during the day. With this, Nagel emphasizes, we would at best imagine what it would be like for us humans to be a bat; we still would not know what it's like for a bat to be a bat and make that experience (Pauen, 2005, p. 176–177).

How does consciousness work? What are its capacity and properties? The apparent variety of discussion is limited here. On the one hand, if science considers itself complete, namely, as if its knowledge could explain and comprehend everything, then it immediately finds the finite capacity apprehension colliding with the infinitude that encompasses reality, hence, an ontological impossibility; to which Karl Marx says "all science would be superfluous if the appearance and essence of things immediately coincided" (Marx, 1964, 825); on the other hand, every form of knowledge can be nothing more than a simple description of a simplified reality. While the whole mechanism of the functioning of the consciousness can be understood, that is, the mechanism of the understanding of the brain could be

fully grasped, an explanation of its actions, its meaning, its *Geist* remains out of reach—insofar, there is no access to such parallel, to the meaning of consciousness, to the grasping of the *Geist*. Therefore, *Geist* cannot be fully understood by the natural sciences. But if the scientific description is too limited to capture *Geist*, is it possible to comprehend it at all? One could elucidate such concepts with words, but would it suffice?

The fact that the resulting progress in knowledge is not all that impressive becomes clear at the latest, when one strives for a more precise definition of the meaning of the term ‘consciousness’. Here deny those strategies that can otherwise be used in the understanding of a term. The most serious problem may well be that there is nothing that would be ‘like’ or ‘something other than’ consciousness, without having to resort to the very same description of *the* property that you just wanted to determine. Of course, there are transitional states in which our consciousness slowly awakens or gradually declines, but here, too, as before, a knowledge of the term, if we want to describe what is going on or increases. Yes, even the similarities of states, which certainly do not have anything to do with consciousness, can only be named by referring to this term—as just happened—as a delineation. A non-circular definition seems hardly possible (Pauen, 2005, p. 21).

Not only is the full scientific knowledge of consciousness limited and therefore incomplete, but also a clear explanation and a definition seem impossible. The constitution of a concept of consciousness must be represented by words, creating, consequently, circularity. Explaining the meaning of words with words corresponds to the meaning and conceptuality of the word, so the explanation cannot escape this self-referred idea, it remains circular. The conceptuality of the words is intended to clarify the word itself, but if there cannot be any clear definition for consciousness, then we cannot accept the meaning of consciousness as the access of the *Geist* but rather the activity of consciousness, namely the understanding and manifestation of consciousness—its expression not as a word but as a practice/activity. Words cannot be explained as pure concepts, they are foremost understood in the practice of their use. Moreover, communication is the condition for access to the mind, because every mental reflection is mentally comprehensible only through the representation of understanding—even if distorted. How does communication work concerning *Geist*?

Marx summarizes it:

Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical, real consciousness that exists for other men as well, and only therefore does it also exist for me;

language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity of intercourse with other men (Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 49).

In summary, although consciousness can be understood from different perspectives, it must represent access to the mind/spirit/*Geist*. Accordingly, an understanding of consciousness becomes essential. But can it be scientifically determined? No, because pure knowledge—and technology—does not allow access to the mind, it can insofar only point towards a form of consciousness. On the contrary, access to the *Geist* is attained in practice; but how? Access is created through words and their meaning comes from cultural-historical development. But then how can we be conscious of consciousness? We do not look, however, at consciousness in the sense of a definition, but rather, the practice/activity of the words (of what words express) creates the specific social consciousness that allows access to the *Geist*.

Beyond Irrationalism: Relation between the different languages and reality

A) Grasping reality presupposes an ontological apprehension

To understand the relation of language, of consciousness, in reality, one has first to apprehend reality. Here, I try to discuss such categories, which can help us comprehend reality.

What is the nature of the human being, or, simply, what is being human? These questions long concern philosophy. However, in the last 250 years, *western* philosophy has discussed categories of *being* profoundly influenced by bourgeois society, hence its ideology. To fully grasp the political economy and, hence, the meanders of our socialization, there is the need to explain the reasoning behind them. Since this section is almost a digression, I shall throw light on ontological relations through the prism of the so far established methodological standpoint and will not be able to establish multiple relations.

Arguing against much of the ideology of the 21st century, which is in itself a historical product of multiples schools of thought—e.g. neoliberalism, post-modernity, existentialism, critical theory, even Marxism, etc.—that have transformed history in philosophy of history, I claim to bring back the category of history to my analysis; not as an abstract category or a logical one, namely one category that contains movement in itself but

rather history as a result, not as a starting point, i.e., history as a product of different relations and contexts.

György Lukács apprehended such problematic and pointed to the correct understanding:

In the meantime, however, it has become clear to many that Kant's propertyless-unknowable-abstract thing-in-itself conception, which conceives of our reality as a world of mere appearances, like Hegel's logistical-historical ontology of the identical subject-object and more than ever the irrationalist dreams of the nineteenth century often remove us from any real problem of being (Lukács, 1984, p. 11).

Instead, he called attention to the materiality of being, reality constitutes the very essence of what ought to be grasped in thought. For instance:

Cars on the street can be explained epistemologically very easily as mere sensory impressions, ideas, etc. Nevertheless, when I get run over by a car, it does not create a clash between my idea of the car and my idea of myself, but my being as a living person is endangered by a car-being in existence (Lukács, 1984, p. 11).

Though Jean-Paul Sartre apprehends reality of being as movement, its real movement becomes constantly a product of idea: "Since it is the being that *has* nothing without doing (condemnation of freedom), the world appears to him as that in which nothing is given to man, which man has no place unless he carves it out for himself." (Sartre, 1992, p. 44). This transforms men in ahistorical men since its claim of "nothing without doing" transcends the teleology as a necessity within causal relations and becomes absolute truth—*absolute Geist*. The same truth Sartre criticizes Hegel of defending an "absolute-subject" (Sartre, 1992, p. 53) and also Marx for being mechanical. (Sartre, 1992, p. 11). By suppressing causal relations, Sartre becomes rigid himself, the total teleology falls into the above critique established by Lukács. Insofar, a fetishized natural-being appears the criterion of reality.

Nevertheless, if human-beings belong to nature as natural-beings, they also belong to society as social-beings. They can never separate themselves from nature, the process of socialization, the process of becoming human, nevertheless, necessitates a retreat of the barriers of nature but not its abolition. (Marx, 1906, 1992).

The grasping of the determinations of being can either be true or false (non-moral and non-normative apprehended), but only the grasping, the

ideology, the form in which the determination is apprehended; whilst the determinations, themselves, cannot be true or false, they can only be. However, the essence of the being is not given, is a product of a process, as an unceasing-process, being can only perceive as a given being, it can never be a given being, its essence is a non-essentialist.

The human-being as an unceasing social determination must, hence, be socially produced, cannot be socially given. This ontological fact regards the form and content in which human-beings produce themselves as human beings, namely labor (Marx, 1992, p. 329). Lukács explains:

This is immediately evident in the basic essential fact of social being, of work. This is, as Marx has shown, a deliberately accomplished teleological-setting which, if it proceeds from correctly recognized facts in the practical sense and correctly utilizes them, is capable of establishing causal processes, which otherwise only spontaneously functioning processes, objects, etc. to modify oneself to be, yes, being objectives that did not exist before work at all (Lukács, 1984, p. 14).

If the humans shape the world according to his teleological-setting, then the form in which humans apprehend the world gains greater significance. As apprehension is immediately a collective fact, the form and content, which society grasps reality, can be translated as ideology, which immediately appears as a non-moral-normative category but merely as an in-nature-qualitative-different one. The social execution of labor presents constant conflicts, its impacts can be translated through decisions, which, though teleological, are always constrained within casual relations—both social and natural. The less a social body grasps reality, the more important it becomes ideology for its functioning. Insofar ideology appears as an ontological necessity for the development of the-social-being. (Lukács, 1984, p. 17).

Lukács underlines the importance of differentiating causal and teleological relations (Lukács, 1984, p. 20). He gives an account of Kant's brilliancy for grasping the singularity of such problematic:

If Kant calls the adaptation act of organisms 'expediency without purpose', then this saying is also highly intelligent in the philosophical sense, because it aptly refers to the peculiarity of the reactions that the organisms in opposition to their surrounding are constantly forced on his own part to carry out spontaneously in order to be able to reproduce at all (Lukács, 1984, p. 20).

He continues:

That is why in Kant's definition the "without purpose" is so witty, because the process itself ontologically points to the essence of the purpose—in contrast to the purely causal consequence—because it seems to be set without being really set with the awareness of something conscious. Where Marx talks about the first concept of work, he emphasizes this very moment (Lukács, 1984, p. 20).

However, Marx emphasizes:

But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the laborer at its commencement (Marx, 1906, p. 198).

Hence, despite the plenty of well-founded critiques on capitalism, the development of the capitalist mode of production stands out for making possible for the first time in history a truly social society, in which the conscious teleological-setting becomes dominant, leading to the birth of particular sciences (Lukács, 1984, p. 29). However, even though the latter represented a breakthrough in historical terms, they have never been free from ideology, especially its self-preserving reactionary one, which has made them uncritical (Lukács, 1984, p. 34).

Lukács summarizes his ontological thesis as follows:

The genuine recourse to being itself can only take place if its essential properties are always grasped as moments of a process of historical development, and—on accordance with the specific character of historicity, precisely in accordance with its particular mode of being—placed at the center of critical consideration (Lukács, 1984, p. 35).

Lukács criticizes Sartre, in the same form he criticizes his earlier self by weaving criticism to his famous work *"Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein"*; for both cases, he claims Marx' conception had been distorted (Lukács, 1984, p. 38). Hence, they were unable to grasp the essentiality of Marx ingenious. Such a mistake is already contained in Ludwig Feuerbach's views and Lukács explains the centrality of it:

For Feuerbach divides here intellectually the co-existent inseparable, he must completely misunderstand this human being, the *genericity* of man. He carelessly avoids the novelty of human-social existence, for he is so compelled to

conceive of the *genericity* arising here, as it is in organic nature, as essentially 'dumb,' which the many individuals merely natural connects (Lukács, 1984, p. 38–39).

This concept of 'genericity'² expresses Marx' ontology, which appears as the starting point to where Lukács builds his own, where he makes careful consideration of Kantian and Hegelian ones, to derive an authentic apprehension of the being. The genus merely given from nature becomes in and through socialization changeable, namely social-historic determined. This does not wipe the genus of human beings, it, instead, adds a social-historical component to it, broadening it, never being able to obliterate it as an immediate part of nature (Lukács, 1984, p. 43).

Further, according to Lukács, Leibniz had already shown the relation of the universality and the singular,

[a]s a matter of fact, detail, like universality, is one of the basic categories of every being: there is no being that would not exist at the same time a copy of his Genus (general) and as a single objectivity (individual) (Lukács, 1984, p. 44).

It appears, however, more important, even more relevant, the assertion grasped both by Marx (in his "*Grundrisse*") as well as by Lukács that the development of individuality is always socially funded, never naturally given, hence, it appears as a rupture from its very natural singularity. Such development is a complex process, "which basis of being indeed forms the teleological-settings of practice with all its concomitant circumstances, but which itself has by no means a teleological character." (Lukács, 1984, p. 29).

It is not an absolute-teleological but a historical process. The more complex the labor activities become, the more sociability is required to overcome their obstacles. The consolidation of socialization and the emergence of language derive from necessity, they are simultaneously a historical and an ontological process of the social-being. As apprehended by Marx and Engels when they stated that language is the practical consciousness (see above).

Language here goes beyond mere communication, further than those from the natural realm of higher animals. Historically, going beyond signs

² There is no translation for the word *Gattungsmässigkeit*, hence I have to use neologism, *Gattung*=genus, genre; *gattungsmässig*=generic; *Gattungsmässigkeit*= 'genusity', 'genrity', 'genericity', I shall choose the last.

became imperative. "From the known-being (the being-for-us concrete and immediate) develops a perception from the being-in-itself." (Lukács, 1984, p. 46).

Insofar, language emanates from socialization, and yet, the former makes a "separation" of oneself from the latter possible. Meaning, the language makes it possible for one to begin to differentiate, to enable a consciousness which, although derives from, is not identical to his/her 'genericity'. But, as *practical consciousness*, a language cannot ontologically create its own reality. As the praxis changes so does its corresponded practical consciousness mutates; the latter occurs when foundations of nature and economy change, namely those elements to be grasped and modified while shaping reality are altered; economy changes within the reproduction of human-life, creating new objective conditions, which lay grounds for a new economy, hence, for new social relations. Thus, when conditions of production vary, then social teleological-settings are transformed through labor practices, conversely, political arrangements, social concessions, commitments, etc. must gradually be adapted and accommodated towards reality. The conditions, in which new arrangements can be developed, derive from a combination of causal processes. The multiple elements of teleological-settings account necessarily for a non-singular, non-homogeneous teleological-setting. This process breaks away from any natural determination, it constantly influences and, hence, modifies reality, however, it remains part of a causal process. Its outcome cannot be determined *a priori*. This process is, consequently, determined as a human historical process and not solely the transformation within natural history (Lukács, 1984, p. 47–54).

Such developments, frictions, results are products of class struggles, namely struggles to determined concrete interests and, first and foremost, relations of power (Lukács, 1984, p. 60). The changes in objective conditions change, necessarily, the subjective ones. Under different conditions, the same person can have and develop different subjectivities.

If this is true, then it is necessary to throw light on, at least, some capitalist relations, namely, it becomes imperative to unveil its objective conditions to lay focus in contemporary reality as part of my methodological claim.

B) Grasping contemporary reality presupposes understanding Political Economy

Directly above, I have discussed some of the real ontological conditions of human life. However, such an analysis focused on grasping its universal-

ity. Now, I should shift the focus to elucidate our problematic, namely how to account, or rather, to change consciousness in relating to emancipatory struggles, more specifically to struggles of gender.

Any given reality has multiple variables as constituents of reality, insofar it is impossible to claim to explain any given reality without a totalizing theory. Furthermore, to pay proper attention to ontology, that is to say, if social relations are to be explained, one must first understand their underlying determinants. Ontologically, the categories that determine the existence of the organic nature and separate the latter from the inorganic nature, namely its genesis, are the categories of production and reproduction. Considering this central aspect of Lukács' Ontology, I emphasize the Aristotelian paradigm "that man is by nature a political animal" (Aristotle, 1984, 4268 [1252^b1], if so, then human-being must also be inherently social. This sociability is understood in Marx's assertive view that the fact of living human-beings presupposes the production of living human-beings. (Marx, 1992, p. 283) Marx is unequivocal, "[l]ife itself appears only as a *means* of life." (Marx, 1992, p. 328). As an existential being as human-being cannot be conceived isolated, then social life appears as a means of individual life.

By incorporating economy into social relations, subjects of political decisions, or rather, of political social (tautology) arrangements, create economic structures of and for the production of life that reciprocally alter the concrete social structures and, hence, the social tissue of the very political arrangements that actualized them. Nonetheless, as the present analysis relinquishes giving ontological priority to logical abstract categories but instead asserts the need to focus on real relations, the analysis of the particular form, from which our social relations emerge, becomes an imperative, in one word, political economy, namely capitalist relations, must be regarded to discuss emancipation.

Under capitalist relations, life itself appears not as a means of life anymore but rather a means of wealth, or rather of capital reproduction. Life ceases to be the means to the end that is itself *life*; instead, it becomes the means to an external end, external-to-life, estranged-to-life. Life becomes an external means of and beyond itself. The first paragraph of *Das Kapital* summarizes this accurately.

The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, present itself as 'an immense accumulation of commodities,' its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must, therefore, begin with the analysis of a commodity (Marx, 1906, p. 41).

From start, it discloses that the nexus of the society appears³ as something external to this society. The being of this society becomes capital—as hypostatized social relations—, which, in its first, specific form, appears as money, and the latter appears as one specific form of commodity. Money is presented by Marx as the “unit” of the whole capitalist society. At the ontological level of production and reproduction, human relations become relations between commodities. It presents at the outset that relations in a capitalistic society appear as non-human relations, namely estranged relations. Society becomes, hence, ahistorical, *i.e.*, a product of an external-being. Hence, a hypostasis.

If the nexus of social relations is external to social relations, this nexus appears as the non-nexus, as an entity with no reality, no substance. The relation between all commodities appears as the relation with the one commodity which represents all and no commodity simultaneously, as a universal-commodity-non-commodity, which is money. Since the relations in capitalist society are relations among equivalents, their specifics, characteristics and specificities must disappear, they must succumb to equality, to equivalency, to different proportions of the same. Insofar, individuals must constantly renounce their individuality and actualize their lives amorphously.

Hence die magic of money. In the form of society now under consideration, the behavior of men in the social process of production is purely atomic. Hence their relations to each other in the production assume a material character independent of their control and conscious individual action. These facts manifest themselves at first by products as a general rule taking the form of commodities with the character of money. Hence the riddle presented by money is but the riddle presented by commodities; only it now strikes us in its most glaring form (Marx, 1906, p. 105–106).

In the *Grundrisse* Marx reveals the opposition between the objective conditions of the lively labor and the worker, whose working abilities are antagonized by independent exchange values. The latter appears, then, as a subject-existence from the former-objectify-labor of the worker. The labor conditions appear as subjects, the subjects of labor appear as objects subjected to those estranged subjects—namely his labor conditions.⁴

³ Appears is translated from German as “presents itself” from *erscheint*

⁴ “The objective conditions of living labor appear as separate. Independent [verselbstständigte] values opposite living labor capacity as subjective being, which therefore appears

Marx shows that under capitalist relations a human being can never be fully human. The subject becomes constantly an object; while the object, as the new subject, dominates the immediate conditions. The living work faces his objectified work.

In bourgeois society, the commodity becomes and, conversely, is the true community:

In bourgeois society, the worker e.g. stands there purely without objectivity, subjectively; but the thing which *stands opposite* him has now become the *true community* [*Gemeinwesen*], which he tries to make a meal of, and which makes a meal of him (Marx, 1993, p. 496).

C) Grasping human reality presupposes a historical investigation

Such relations of oppositional, contradictory interests are by no means merely a matter of economics. They are very much embedded in the way whole cultures think. Not only the production and the reproduction of working conditions affect almost the whole society and has multiple implications in other organizations and cultural aspects. But also, they are politically organized to foster a one-dimensional ideology, hence, leaving no room for real emancipatory struggles.

This becomes clear when one regards France Stoner Saunders' historical research encompassing the time frame of the Cold War both concerning the USA and Western Europe. While in the Soviet Union it was explicit that the government was supporting its ideology with propaganda and censorship, in Western countries the discourse of freedom of speech and thought was strongly emphasized to make the case for the so-called capitalist democratic system(s). However, Saunders' *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (Saunders, 2013) shows how the political left and many artists were vastly used for Western pro-capitalist political-economics agendas as—and most of them unknowingly—propaganda instruments. Governments, private companies, selected individuals

to them only as a value of another kind (not as value, but different from them, as use-value." Marx grasps the Subject-Predicate-Inversion: "The objective conditions of living labor capacity are' presupposed as having an existence independent of it, as the objectivity of a subject distinct from living labor capacity and standing independently over against it". "What is reproduced and produced anew [neuproduziert] is not only the presence of these objective conditions of living labor but also their presence as independent values. i. e. values belonging to an alien subject. confronting this living labor capacity." In: K. Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)* (London, New York, Victoria, Ontario, New Delhi, Auckland, Rosebank: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 461–462.

from the elite, foundations, NGOs, secret services, etc. worked together to achieve concrete, specifically set goals. However, in the present days, such unilateral exercise of power persists. Moniz Bandeira's analysis regarding history and geopolitics unveils such relations (Bandeira, 2014, 2016), which in other times could have been accounted as "conspiracy theory", but due to the work of Snowden, WikiLeaks (<https://wikileaks.org>) and others whistle-blowers have been proven to be true. Even in the CIA Library (www.cia.gov/library), one can find official information concerning such matters.

Point being, emancipatory struggles, on the one hand, and intellectual analysis, on the other, cannot abdicate to introduce such real categories and relations, and, by doing so, they enable both a better understanding of reality and attain an openness for self-critique.

Concrete Example among Languages

A) Emancipation in thought

Example 1: In Brazil, the slums (*favelas*), ghettos, which have become quite ordinary but being common does not make them part of a less tragic situation, less deplorable; currently, they are being called 'communities' (*favela* becomes *comunidade*). The historical existence of *favelas* gives way to the ahistorical absolutization of the concept *comunidade* by surrendering its specificities. In idealism, by simply changing the name of the slums, one is creating a better life for the oppressed people that live in them, they are not regarded as sub-humans anymore, hence it is possible to enhance real-life conditions by changing it from a degraded perception into a one more dignified.

Example 2: For some years, in the USA and Brazil, a strong campaign to change the word nigger and substitute it either black or Afro-American has been promoted, to overcome racism, of emancipating the "black community". In idealism, changing the name grants the oppressed "black community" dignity and empowerment, hence it is an emancipatory struggle.

Example 3: Also, in Brazil, for over the past 10 years the worker, namely the labor force is being regarded not as a worker or employee (*trabalhador*, *funcionário* respectively) anymore, but collaborator (*colaborador*). Does exploitation, namely the gratis labor hours which the employer, or rather the capitalist appropriates, acquires as gratis hours, does it disappear? Does alienated labor become immediate labor? In idealism changing the

name, i.e., how workers are regarded as grants workers independence and liberty, brings democracy to the work environment.

Example 4: This last example considers something that though has not been yet implemented, it could just as the former examples been implemented with the reasoning of possessing an emancipatory potential in-itself. Around the world, US-Americans are regarded as Americans and the United States of America as America. Nations and continents become identical. This has a historical dimension and is aligned with Monroe Doctrine prerogative: American for Americans, which means, within the imperialist powers only the United States of America can determine the destiny of their fellow American nations (all in North, Central and South Americas). By calling people from other nations from the American Continent also Americans, that would bring balance, equality, self-determination, and representation to all other countries of the Americas and their peoples.

Critique on example 1: But how does calling slum a community change the degraded conditions of it? Do the people who live there get better jobs, health care, education, security, infrastructure and so on, merely because its name was changed? The clear answer is no. What idealism does instead of grasping reality and trying to overcome it in praxis, meaning, changing its real conditions; it overcomes reality solely in thought. The impact of such is tremendous but not in changing reality but rather in perpetuating the very condition it claims to overcome. Instead of achieving emancipatory consciousness, calling a slum community establishes a rather comfortable situation (for the outside world), a situation that needs less (if any) effort to overcome at all, since this has already been achieved in thought. It has no emancipatory impact in reality from within; it does, however, have a political impact from without. It avoids confrontation and relinquishes any real struggle for better conditions.

Critique on example 2: In the same manner, idealism confuses real conditions of black people with only imagined ones. In Brazil and USA, a great number of black people suffers prejudice, live in degraded conditions, suffer violence in work, suffer violence from the state with marginalization, suffer violence from the police with beatings and killings; insofar, racism is still very much present and calling it otherwise does not change this fact, not from within. But only from without as a mere perception, or rather an illusion. This allows ideology to transform the imaginary of anyone who still thinks racism is a problem by appeasing the urgency of the problem.

Critique on example 3: Idealism presupposes to give representation to the labor force by changing its name, *i.e.*, the worker becomes a collaborator. Hence, it imagines superseding the inherent antagonism between the labor force and capitalist, employee and employer, or those disposed of the means of production and the owner of them. However, if exploitation, namely appropriation of gratis-labor, persists as the foundation of productive forces if workers still are dispossessed from means of production if workers are commanded; how can workers be collaborators? They are only collaborators in the sense of accepting antagonism but by no means superseding it; they become collaborators as a docile working force, as apolitical-beings, as those, who succumbed to their fates as commodities, as raw materials to set motion into the externally-owned means of production. In this sense, they do not collaborate with each other, affirm themselves and their activities. Idealism transforms class struggle in struggle of semantics, the struggle of thoughts and ideas. Idealism relinquishes the political struggles of the social-being and substitutes them with subjective struggles of the self.

Critique on example 4: Regarding Mexicans, Argentinians, Nicaraguans, etc. as Americans, would not change the fact that the USA commands almost all countries in America, all three Americas: North, Central, and South. It would not change the fact that *regime change* is the real practice of the Monroe Doctrine. It would not change the fact that those who refuse to align suffer (or are going to suffer) moral, mediatic, economic (sanctions and embargo) wars and, also, the constant threat of real war. The emancipation of nations, by changing the way they are regarded to, would only have occurred as mysticism, the reality remains veiled under the mist of idealism,

Idealism appears in all examples rather as reactionary instead of emancipatory. It turns everything upside down. Only by flipping it over again, one can confront reality.

Quoting Marx: “As *species-consciousness*, man confirms his real *social life* and merely repeats in thought his actual existence; conversely, *species-being* confirms itself in *species-consciousness* and exists for itself in its universality, as a thinking being” (Marx, 1992, p. 350–351).

B) Portuguese, English, German and the Gender-Neutral-Language

Now I compare three Indo-European languages: Portuguese, German and English. However, it lies beyond the scope of this paper, arguments regarding the specific genesis of those three languages. These languages en-

able different approaches towards feminine, masculine and neutral; hence possessing comparable groundings for discussing gender-neutral-language.

The problem, though, with these considerations, lies in the fact that I am arbitrarily selecting these three languages and some words to create a tangible understanding with concrete examples. Nevertheless, since a theoretical discussion has already been introduced above, which grasps language in its general and not in its specific form, then, methodologically, this arbitrariness does not constitute a problem in essence but merely a problem in appearance.

Luise F. Pusch claims the suffix—and this constitutes the category number 3, according to her, when regarding the German language—is one of the forms of genus in language. In German, it specifies the female gender with ‘in’ (Pusch, 2010, p. 193), moreover, it, still according to her, what constitutes the centenary subordination of women from men (Pusch, 2010, p. 202). However, Pusch also claims that the history of the genesis, functionality, etc. from the German suffix ‘-in’ has not been yet written (Pusch, 2010, p. 198). Insofar, after grasping the thesis and antithesis, she achieves the reconciliation in her synthesis; the emancipation of women should introduce the abolishment from ‘-in’ (Pusch, 2010, p. 201). In other words, Pusch provides a double transcendental argument to establish a connection between language and emancipation. First, she postulates a historical category, which she claims there is no historicity behind it, hence an abstract history, a transcendental history, an ahistorical history. Second, she claims emancipation in the language, meaning abolishing the term is a necessary condition for emancipation. Thus, she considers neither the present nor the past to realize what the term means; instead, she creates a transcendental argument to establish a normativity—how should it be—towards a transcendental future.

Pusch also derives from genus-in-wording two other categories: 1. Lexicon (a): attributes of male and female: such as male child and female child (Pusch, 2010, p. 193). Lexicon (b): inherent pairs such as sister and brother, or mother and father. 2. Grammatical categories such as genus masculine and feminine.

For 1.(a): In German and English the primordial term for both son and daughter is children (in German: *Kinder*); while in Portuguese is *filhos* (‘sons’). The feminine term in Portuguese arises when it is comprehended for daughters only (*filhas*). How does this impact reality? Are Brazilian/

Portuguese children more “oppressed” because of the term used? Furthermore, child in general—when not regarding son and daughter—is in English neutral, *the child*, and in German as well, *das Kind*, while in Portuguese it becomes feminine, *a criança*. In Brazil, Portugal, etc., are female children not represented at home and male children not represented in non-parental-groups?

For 1.(b), it is analog: parents (G: *Eltern*) and siblings (G: *Geschwister*). In Portuguese however, would one regard parents as *pais* (‘vaters’) and siblings as *irmãos* (‘brothers’). Do such differences affect reality? Is the mother unrepresented? Among male and female siblings, do the female ones become oppressed by their representation of language?

For 2.: In respect of these three languages, we can discuss two different concepts: *human* and *person*. In English, the articles of these categories are *the human/person* or *a human/person*, so both are neutral. To account for a specific person, one would have to add some attributes to these concepts, e.g., a female person. While in both German and Portuguese human becomes ‘male’—*der Mensch, o homem*—and person becomes ‘female’—*die Person, a pessoa*. Do feminine and masculine articles account for only male and female beings?

Here the problematic reveals itself, meaning, can language create reality? Is everything performative, as respected feminists have claimed;⁵ does, hence, changing language change consciousness, changing, therefore, reality? Do linguistic categories account for real categories in the sense of creating/shaping reality?

Questions were posed without direct answers because the theoretical background presented earlier has already revealed that giving independence to language, to give language creative power in- and for-itself is an impossibility. As practical consciousness, when one changes the language, one creates a different perception of reality but never changes the embedded reality. Therefore, for thousands of years, the power of rhetoric and words has been perceived as a means of domination. Changing language creates a consciousness detached from the immediate reality, it separates

⁵ E.g.: According to Butler (Butler, 1999, pp. 10–11), sex and gender distinction is unintelligible: “If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called ‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all.” Further: (p. 179) “Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*.”

praxis from its perception. The gender-neutral-language, like any other claim for shaping reality through language—instead of its opposite: language as practical consciousness—must turn reality upside-down to hover above it.

Subject-predicate-inversion of gender-neutral-language: Hypothesis as reality

When one compares feminist claims, any notion of homogeneity concerning the apprehension of reality disappears. For one, Judith Butler argues a complete des-ontologizing of the being by claiming “[t]hat the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality.” (Butler, 1999, p. 173). On the one hand, Linda Alcoff shows partial agreement by asserting that “[g]ender identity is not exhaustively determined by biology; it is not ahistorical or universally the same. Thus there is no gender essence all women share. But gender is, among other things, a position one occupies and from which one can act politically.” (Alcoff, 2006, p. 175). On the other hand, she opposes an all-embracing des-ontologizing by claiming recognition of an objective type without having to fall into a “reified nature” (Alcoff, 2006, p. 175), as it occurred in the past. Insofar, Alcoff’s assertions verge on the notion of the ontology of the social-being in Lukács’ sense, whereas Butler’s claim constitutes a transcendental notion of culture, as the latter appears as a determination in-itself.

Elizabeth Spelman does not claim a non-ontological woman and argues against the reduction of the multiplicity of women in an abstract bourgeoisie woman:

Western feminist theory has in effect used Stamp’s argument⁶ whenever it has implicitly demanded that Afro-American, Asian-American, Latin American women separate their ‘women’s voice’ from their racial or ethnic voice without also requiring women to distinguish being a ‘woman’ from being white (Spelman, 1988, p. 13).

⁶ Spelman clarifies what the Stamp’s argument means: “Stamp goes on to say that the fact that Black men really are white underneath gives ‘their story a relevance to men of all races.’” (Kenneth Stamp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Knopf 1956), vii-viii., in Spelman, 1988, p. 12).

Yet, Spelman acknowledges the importance of the category woman, especially, to truly portray reality. Not in the slightest can this claim be confused with an abstract all-encompassing woman, such as a white western middle-class woman. “In order to speak if someone is a victim of sexism, as being oppressed on account of her being a woman, she has to be identifiable as a woman.” (Spelman, 1988, p. 13).

Even though Mari Mikkola’s understanding of ontology do not grasp the centrality of the dialects in the sense of Lukács’—namely the causal and teleological relations, which can transform, but never fully suppress—, she allows part of reality to presents itself as determinant category:

[E]ither feminists work hard to modify everyday conceptions of sex and gender so that they are in line with the conventionalist and abolitionist views, or feminists modify their conceptions of sex and gender so that they are closer to everyday thinking (Mikkola, 2016, p. 69).

Finally, we give voice to Nina Power, who demands going beyond capitalist Manichaeism among feminist struggles and theories:

If feminism takes this opportunity to shake off its current imperialist and consumerist sheen it could once again place its vital transformative political demands center-stage, and shuffle off its current one-dimensionality for good (Power, 2009, p. 69).

Power grasps the central role which feminism plays in emancipatory movements. However, she also realizes feminism has to enable a self-critique to turn itself upside down and, by doing so, to realize its centrality beyond its one-dimensional idealism instead of a multi-dimensional reality. Or, as Nancy Fraser puts it: “Henceforth, feminist theorists cannot avoid the question of capitalist society” (Fraser, 2013, p. 227).

Hence, the present analysis tends to agree with Aristotle, when he says:

Medicine, for instance, does not theorize about what will help to cure Socrates or Callias, but only about what will help to cure any or all of a given class of patients: this alone is subject to technique—individual cases are so infinitely various that no knowledge of them is possible (Aristotle, 1984, 4628 [1356^b1]).

The base of science is also the base of knowledge, it is also the base of language: it is always a generalization. Even if we consider a microscopic sphere, *e.g.*, genetics, it can only be regarded as science, as knowledge

as soon as its further development unveils a world of possibilities, from which general “laws” can be extracted and in which they can also be applied. Conversely, when knowledge cannot extract a trend, a generality from the totality either of singular beings/objects or broader relations, then the lack of reduction represents the impossibility of the abstract movement of turning the infinite into finite. The complete relativism succumbs to irrationalism as by crossing its ontological limits rational thinking becomes pure mysticism.

Following Marx’s methodology, I synthesized this problematic as the Subject-Predicate-Inversion of Gender-Neutral-Language.

If capitalist relations represent the reproduction of the objective conditions of oppression. So-called emancipation, which reproduces such relations, appears necessarily not only a non-emancipation but also, ontologically, cannot never become one. Every objectified relation becomes the very relation which oppresses the subject (Marx, 1993, p. 266–367).

To actualize the emancipatory claim of gender, a claim that argues to give gender voice, recognition, neutralize the oppression, then one has first to recognize the existence of the opposition between oppressor and oppressed. Marx discloses, “[h]ow does one resolve an opposition? By making it impossible.” (Marx, 1992, p. 213). Insofar, I paraphrase his conclusions: How does one resolve any oppressive opposition in human relations? By abolishing all oppression in human relations, by making them impossible.

Finale

Emancipatory struggles must leave the realm of idealism, where the idea appears to acquire an independent existence. Where social relations appear as a mere product of the idea, insofar praxis appears as a predicate, idea as a subject. Or as Feuerbach puts it: “A being undifferentiated from thought, a being, which only is a predicate or a determination from reason, it is merely a thought abstract being, in reality however not a being.” (Feuerbach, 2013, p. 29–30). As a product of thought, any social nexus appears above and beyond society, it acquires a transcendental existence. Considered ontologically but not metaphysically, such ideal struggles for affirmation become struggles for self-denial. The subject becomes predicate; predicate becomes subject. An inversion has been performed; emancipation appears now as its reversal. Only when conceived from within,

i.e., as real relations, namely as general conditions, only then can emancipatory struggles realize any real emancipatory claim, that is to say, not because of their claim in- and for-themselves but because of their practice.

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Women in antiquity through the eyes of Plutarch

ABSTRACT. This article deals with the writings of Plutarch and some of his radical views regarding women. Excerpts from Plutarch's texts referring to female nature are studied and presented. The main issue that occupied Plutarch and many other authors of his era was the question of virtue, a purely philosophical concept deeply rooted in the ancient Greek culture. For this reason, some of Plutarch's writings focus on the place of virtue in women's society. Plutarch tries to prove that virtue exists equally in women, that women are dynamic, lawful wives who have the power to take matters into their own hands and who can perceive also the ultimate matter of friendship. This paper, therefore, seeks to show the other side of the coin regarding the position of women in antiquity, among Plutarch's ethical essays, the *Moralia*.

KEYWORDS: women in antiquity, Plutarch, virtue, *moralia*

Introduction

When we talk about antiquity, our mind goes straight to the thought of misogyny and inequality between men and women. However, there have been ancient Greek philosophers and writers who have generally expressed progressive views on women, accepting their rights and demanding equal treatment and access to education, such as Socrates, through the writings of Plato (Collette, 2018), and Euripides who showed the portraits of "strong, assertive, successful women", as well as the reasons that led to their actions (Pomeroy, 1995, p. 107/8). Another person who did not hesitate to dedicate entire philosophical treatises to his wife and to his female-friend, who fought for the equality of humans and animals by making him a proponent of vegetarianism and a protector of all beings on earth, is Plutarch.

Plutarch, as an aspiring philosopher, writer, biographer, priest of the god Apollo, graduate of the Academy of Plato and well-traveled (Κακριδής, 2012), is known for two works: The *Parallel Lives* (Ancient Greek: *Bíoi*

παράλληλοι) and *Moralia* (Ancient Greek: Ἠθικά). In *Parallel Lives* there are 50 biographies, four of which are unparalleled and the remaining are matched in twenty-three pairs. Each couple consists of an important Greek (politician, military leader, etc.) and a Roman whose life and actions are similar. Plutarch's goal was to compare their lives and cultural differences, honoring both of the comparing couple, and help readers exemplify the virtues and avoid mistakes (Κακριδής, 2012). His *Moralia*, according to the title, include philosophical essays focusing on ethics and morality. Despite the fact that these essays belong to his early writings, they have a lot to say and point out.

A much-discussed phenomenon of the time was the concept of virtue (Ancient Greek: ἀρετή) in all its manifestations (temperance, wisdom, bravery, justice etc.). Socrates, Plato, Aristotle were the masters of writing about moral virtue, followed by the Stoics, the Skeptics, and others. Virtue meant excellence, to be virtuous with a quality character that would eventually lead to the state of happiness (Ancient Greek: εὐδαιμονία) (Parry, 2014). Plutarch therefore relied on this and recorded his thoughts on women of his era.

“Man’s virtues and woman’s virtues are one and the same” (Plutarch, pp. 475, 243A)

As mentioned above, Plutarch had dedicated some of his essays to his wife Timoxena and to his friend Clea, a priestess at the temple of Apollo (Plutarch, 1931, p. 473). This fact alone proves that the women of his life had exerted a reasonable influence on Plutarch and his mentality, helping him spiritually express his thoughts and reach conclusions about the female nature.

His treatise on the *Bravery of Women*, dedicated to Clea, presents from the outset some convictions for women with whom Plutarch disagrees (e.g. Thucydides’ view that the best woman is the one who speaks less and stays confined to the home) (Plutarch, 1931, p. 242E). Thus, he introduces the subject of this treatise which is the proof of virtue in both women and men, recording various female personalities, their words and actions that, thanks to their bravery, are admirable. He presents stories about women from many areas (Troy, Chios, Argos, Persia, Miletus, Pieria, etc.) dealing with historical facts. In his work, women set the example of devotion, intelligence and help that they provide to men who face some adverse condi-

tions, mainly war and hardship, emphasizing the lawfulness they show to their husbands and acting as their saviors, until the men take action again (Stadter, 1999, p. 178/9).

A typical example are the women of Chios. The Chians, at some point, were at war with the Erythraeans, a very strong opponent. So, they thought of giving up, losing every chance of hope. It was then that the women called them cowards and told them to say some brave words to defend their morale and drive out the enemy:

But when the men said that they had given their oath, the women bade them not to leave their arms behind, but to say, by way of answer to the enemy, that the spear serves as a cloak, and the shield as a shirt, to a man of spirit. The Chians took this advice, and when they used bold words towards the Erythraeans and displayed their weapons, the Erythraeans were frightened at their boldness, and no one approached them nor hindered them, but all were well pleased at their departure. So the Chians, having been taught courage by their women, were saved in this way (Plutarch, pp. 487, 245A-B).

This is a classic case of the courage of women acting outside the home, always defending their husbands or men.

As it turns out, the way Plutarch describes the stories is essentially a comparison (Ancient Greek: *σύγκρισις*) between men and women's actions. The motif of comparison was an integral part of ancient Greek literature, especially that of Plutarch, who, as we know, wrote the *Parallel Lives* comparing distinguished people. The purpose of the comparison he uses on the *Bravery of Women* was to highlight the various manifestations of virtue in individuals and to understand its nature (Duff, 2002, p. 248):

And actually it is not possible to learn better the similarity and the difference between the virtues of men and of women from any other source than by putting lives beside lives and actions beside actions (Plutarch, pp. 477, 243C).

Furthermore, it has been argued that this comparison is deliberate in order to simply emphasize the courageous actions of women, using a male tyrant as a rhetorical mechanism (Monaco, 2019, p. 194). In particular, the tyranny regime allows, or rather facilitates, women to show their virtues, as men are hindered, which otherwise would not be easy (Monaco, 2019, p. 196). Megisto's story confirms this theory.

During Aristotimus' tyranny, Hellanicus, a powerful and just opponent, was preparing a revolt against the tyrant. Aristotimus then

threatened the women in prison to write a letter to their husbands so that they would leave the country, otherwise he would kill the wives and their children. The women, united and strong, did not respond, and their leader, Megisto, told him that what he was doing was cowardice, that is, using women to deceive his enemies. After all, it wouldn't hurt much the men to lose their wives because they want to restore justice after all:

[...] But if you despair of persuading them yourself, and are attempting to use us to mislead them, do not expect to deceive us again, and I pray that they may never entertain such a base thought that, to spare their wives and little children, they should forsake the cause of their country's freedom. In truth, it is not so bad a thing for them to lose us, whom they have not at present, as it is a good thing to rescue the citizens from your cruelty and overbearing insolence (Plutarch, pp. 523/5, 252C).

So, Aristotimus asked for her child to be brought in to kill him in front of her eyes, and Megisto replied to her son that it was easier for her to see him die than to be tortured as a slave in this tyrannical regime:

[...] his mother, calling him by name, said, "Come here, child, and, before you can realize and think, be delivered from this bitter despotism; since for me it is more grievous to look upon your undeserved slavery than upon your death" (Plutarch, pp. 525, 252D).

Other events had taken place in this story, but the most important is at the end, when Hellanicus got rid of the tyrant and the time had come for the daughters of Aristotimus. Many wanted to torture and kill them, but the voice of justice spoke (Megisto) and said that it was not democratic to kill them as violently as tyrants do. Thus, they allowed the daughters to commit suicide and prepared a proper burial for them, shedding real tears of bitterness as they were not heartless and cruel but real people with emotions:

But Megisto, with the rest of the women, meeting them, cried out that they were committing a frightful crime if they who deemed themselves worthy to be a democratic people were, in this matter, showing recklessness and wanton violence like despots. [...] In consequence no one there was so bitter or such a hater of despots as not to shed tears and commiserate the nobility of the maidens (Plutarch, pp. 529/31, 253C-E).

In other words, there is the successful comparison of the tyrant, who is violent, arrogant, barbaric and brazen, with a woman who is dynamic, not afraid of death, courageous and fair. Again, one may notice that men are finally acting to restore democracy, but the contribution of women and their supportive words is just as important.

It is not known whether all events are true, despite the fact that Plutarch was also known as a historian, because, in this case, he seems to have shed light purposely on the morality of the women and the immorality of the tyrant. His intentions and interests, in other words, surpassed the simple recording of historical events and unfolded unknown stories, just as Breebaart commented, "He was more a historian in his methods, than in his intentions" (Breebaart, 1967, p. 36), and that's a point that tells a lot about Plutarch.

Women in the light of animals

In his *Moralia*, three treatises refer to animals, the use of rationality (*logos*), their abilities, and vegetarianism as a moral way of life. At this point, it would be reasonable to ask what Plutarch's attitude towards animals and women has to do with each other. This subchapter will answer that question.

One of the two sources on Plutarch's conception of women, under the animals' spectrum, is the detailed description of a sea-bird, halcyon, in an attempt to argue about the virtues of animals. Specifically, in his essay *Whether Land Or Sea Animals Are Cleverer*, Plutarch, in the words of Phaedimus, speaks of two very important virtues possessed by halcyon, which are similarly observed in the human species. These are the love for her partner and her children, which, according to Jazdzewska, "represent virtues of women who are wives, mothers, and household caretakers." (Jazdzewska, 2015, p. 429). Described as the wisest of the sea animals, halcyon expresses her love for her partner as any faithful woman would. She is devoted only to her partner, she never leaves him, and her intentions are always good, without hiding subterranean plots against him:

If it is proper to speak briefly of her several virtues, she is so devoted to her mate that she keeps him company, not for a single season, but throughout the year. Yet it is not through wantonness that she admits him to her company, for she never consorts at all with any other male; it is through friendship and affection, as with any lawful wife (Plutarch, pp. 463, 983A).

Perhaps such a view may be stereotypical today because, certainly, women are not only characterized by these virtues of a mother and a wife, but it is worth noting that such a description in antiquity would be considered as progressive. After all, these encomiastic words of Plutarch were recorded with the ultimate goal of praising the female nature for these virtues. It is also noteworthy the fact that Plutarch uses the analogy of halcyon with a lawful wife, which may indicate two things: on the one hand the equation of animals with humans, and on the other hand Plutarch's appreciation of these feminine virtues.

Later on, another art that takes on anthropomorphic extension is the one of building the nest, which is indirectly similar to the art of women's weaving, an activity very common at that time. Plutarch, at this point, once again equates humans with animals and, much more, creates a pattern to be imitated (halcyon), based on the ideal standards of the women of his society (Jazdzewska, 2015, p. 432):

She collects the spines of garfish and binds and weaves them together, some straight, others transverse, as if she were thrusting woven threads through the warp, adding such bends and knots of one with another that a compact, rounded unit is formed, slightly prolate in shape, like a fisherman's wheel (Plutarch, pp. 465, 983C).

It is well known that at those times, married women were responsible for the housework, the raising of the children, and generally internal activities, such as weaving (Cartwright, 2016). This was not considered degrading then, on the contrary, it was the normal course of events, so such an act, according to Plutarch, had to receive due attention.

In his essay *Beasts Are Rational*, the second major report on women of the time comes from the mouth of Gryllus, a pig and former soldier, who has the ability to speak, enchanted by the spells of Circe. Gryllus, discussing with Odysseus, presents the positive aspects of being an animal. He states, among other things, that in the animal kingdom there is equality between males and females, and that valor is not exclusively a characteristic of men, but extends to women too:

in beasts valor is naturally equal in both sexes and the female is in no way inferior to the male. She takes her part both in the struggle for existence and in the defense of her brood (Plutarch, pp. 505, 987F).

In an ironic tone, Plutarch emphasizes the fact that there is inequality in human society, implying that it is inferior to that of animals. In animals,

females are just as brave, defending their families, such as panthers and lionesses (Plutarch, pp. 507, 988A). What Plutarch wants to say in other words is that he had obviously noticed the acts of inequality against women and that is why he wanted to remind his readers, who would basically be men, that they are making a big mistake by thinking that they prevail over courage and bravery in comparison to women.

Eros and women

A significant discussion on the subject of women is also held in the essay *Dialogue on Love*, the main axis of which is love and married life. It is a philosophical dialogue based on the rich widow Ismenodora who wants to marry the late-teenager Bacchus. In this type of Platonic dialogue, the speakers are in favor of and against this relationship, presenting arguments and discussing about the god Eros, the concept of friendship and giving several examples. Plutarch agrees with Ismenodora's future relationship with Bacchus, because he believes that such a woman will now have acquired wisdom and intelligence through life and will be able to enter into friendly relations with her partner, so she will have the right to govern this relationship, as the younger must respect and obey the older (Tsouvala, 2014, p. 202):

The nurse rules the infant, the teacher the boy, the gymnasiarch the youth, his admirer the young man who, when he comes of age, is ruled by law and his commanding general. No one is his own master; no one is unrestricted. Since this is so, what is there dreadful about a sensible older woman piloting the life of a young man? She will be useful because of her superior intelligence; she will be sweet and affectionate because she loves him (Plutarch, pp. 339, 754D).

Accordingly, in order to validate his argument, Plutarch invokes other persons, such as the teacher with the student, claiming that as this is generally the case, there is no cause for concern if this gentle presence of a woman rules over the relationship because it will be out of love.

Another statement is the belief that both men and women are characterized by their virtue and beauty, both of which contribute to love:

To be sure they say "that beauty is the flower of virtue"; yet it would be absurd to deny that the female produces that flower or gives a 'presentation' of a 'natural bent for virtue' (Plutarch, pp. 415, 767B).

To put it in other words, Plutarch states that not only men but also women can equally produce the flower of love and participate in it both physically and spiritually. That is, love springs with the true beauty that is virtue, which can exist in both sexes (Beneker, 2008, p. 691).

As for the major issue of friendship, Plutarch adequately acknowledges the corresponding possibility for women by saying that sexual intercourse is the beginning of such a friendship, as the measure is maintained and thus ensure a long-term spiritual relationship. Women are endowed by nature with beauty, sweet voice and attractive body, which, if used properly and wisely, will win the sympathy and friendship of their spouses (Tsouvala, 2014, p. 202/3):

On the other hand, in the case of lawful wives, physical union is the beginning of friendship, a sharing, as it were, in great mysteries. Pleasure is short (Plutarch, pp. 427, 769A).

“So, it is ridiculous to maintain that women have no participation in virtue.” What need is there to discuss their prudence and intelligence, or their loyalty and justice, when many women have exhibited a daring and great-hearted courage which is truly masculine? And to declare that their nature is noble in all other relationships and then to censure it as being unsuitable for friendship alone—that is surely a strange procedure. They are, in fact, fond of their children and their husbands; their affections are like a rich soil ready to receive the germ of friendship; and beneath it all is a layer of seductive grace. [...] just so nature has endowed women with a charming face, a persuasive voice, a seductive physical beauty and has thus given the dissolute woman great advantages for the beguilement of pleasure, but to the chaste, great resources also to gain the goodwill and friendship of her husband (Plutarch, pp. 429, 769C-D).

In the above passage, reference is also made to the virtues of women: intelligence, prudence, justice, courage, affection. Prodigal women use their merits in the wrong way to gain pleasure, but the pure woman will unconsciously use them to secure the friendship and goodwill of her husband. The comparison of the dissolute with the virtuous woman may sound a little inappropriate to someone’s ears, but Plutarch’s purpose would have been to highlight the virtues of women and to break some stereotypes that want all women to be the same and unscrupulous.

Plutarch must have examined the subject in detail before reaching this conclusion between male and female friendship, since this issue played a key role in his life. He had written philosophical treatises dedicated exclusively to this subject, or referring to it in various parts of his reports

(*How Could You Tell a Flatterer from a Friend, On Having Many Friends, Table Talk* etc.). Friendship meant more to him than just casual acquaintances. It was something higher, moral, a hard work that brought together virtue, intimacy and usefulness, offering pleasure (Baltzly & Eliopoulos, 2012, p. 59/60).

Conclusions

In summary, what can be said with certainty is that Plutarch made a difference for his time. He claimed that the virtue of women is the same as that of men, women are active, intelligent and brave, they are affectionate with their husbands and children and respect traditions. He also argued for equality between men and women, he spoke at length about the idea of friendship and the potential for women to acquire it, and finally, he expressed his opinion on the couple's love and the highest spiritual relationship.

It is interesting that Plutarch favors heterosexual moral relationships, where both subjects have control over their actions and their sexuality simply facilitates the situation rather than misleads. This makes him a traditional type, blessing the reins of *Eros*, and subversive introducing the term of spiritual relationships between men and women (Brenk, 1988, p. 460). He seems to have believed in love between a heterosexual couple, aside the procreation purposes.

Furthermore, the fact that he equated people with animals, that he supported the ranks of slaves (Plutarch, pp. 317, iv. 4-v. 4), and that he generally fought—through writing at least—against discrimination and injustice does not go unnoticed. These are the views that make him generally a proponent of marginalized beings, a characterization introduced by Newmyer, and a pioneer in introducing the idea of showing compassion and sympathy to other sentient beings (Newmyer, 1996). This is how his thoughts about women expand, too.

In any case, Plutarch, although proposing a revolutionary image of women and their actions, stating that they can acquire virtues just like men, implied, according to Warren, that their virtue must be in accordance with their gender, acting in an internal context (in their home) and simply support the man's life, not replace it (Warren, 2018, p. 11). However, such a view would be expected in those years and it would be unfair to overlook all the times that Plutarch supported the female nature. After all, the

purpose of this article was to shed light on some of the prevailing views of women at the time, emphasizing progressive attitudes towards them presented by Plutarch. Even if that seemed paradoxical, it was the truth.

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Does abuse depend on gender? Men as a victim of women's violence

ABSTRACT. The aim of this article is an attempt to reflect on what violence is and what effects it can cause. The conventional wisdom has been that women are victims and men are perpetrators of violence and abuse. Social schemes describe women as fragile and vulnerable. However, women can be equally aggressive, dominating and use violence. Each year acts of violence against men increase and it is very important to be aware of this phenomenon. Usually men hide the fact of being abused out of fear of public stigma, felling bashful, being laughed or losing respect of their family. This paper aims to show how important this problem is and explore new ideas and possible solutions for victims of violence, as well as to improve preventive measures for abused men.

KEYWORDS: violence, violence against men, aggression, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, victims of violence

Characteristic of violence against men

Problem of violence is continually current in literature and media. Violence touches different sphere of our lives and different environments. Nowadays this phenomenon is more and more visible and worryingly it increases. But how exactly do we define violence? In subject literature there is five forms of violence: 1. physical violence—which is a form of behavior that aim to hurt the victim by causing him or her pain. What is important—this behaviours are against victim will and in the end can cause body damage, make one's wellbeing worse or even take your life; 2. psychological violence—it aims to lower one's self-esteem and by using humiliation, degrading, putting a victim to shame, threatens and intimidation, cause victim's fear arousal; 3. sexual violence—contains all behaviors starting with unwanted sexual comments through forcing a partner to have sex and ending with genitals damage; 4. economical violence—where the victim starts to be financially depended on offender. It contains overcontrolling

one's expenses, removing by force victim's earned money, theft, taking loans without victim permission, holding the victim back from going to work or destroying victim's personal belongings; 5. neglecting—failing in taking proper care of both physical and emotional needs of someone. Neglecting behaviours can be both conscious acts as well as unconscious and may be caused by lack of offender competences or interest (Makara-Strudzińska & Sosnowska, 2012, p. 57–61). What should be stressed though is, that mostly all those kinds of violence are combined by offender. WHO (World Health Organization) definition though seems to reflect that as it defines violence in these words:

the intentional use of physical force or power threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation (World Health Organization, *World report on violence and health*, 2002, p. 5).

Usually when we use term “violence” people associate it with men and almost automatically think about men as offenders and women as victims. It is difficult to be surprised taking into consideration historical and cultural influences which have shaped some of later discourses regarding abuse. Historically, men's violence and abuse of women was sanctioned by legal and social norms. And even though laws such as this one do not exist anymore in modern, western societies, there are still some cultures in the world, where violence against women is considered to be socially ‘normal’ and accepted. For instance, in some Asian countries killing of wives is practiced to preserve ‘family honor’ (Krug et al., 2002). What is more, most of the literature surrounding the topic of intimate partner abuse is influenced by feminist perspectives of women as victims (Walby, 1990). Maybe those are some of the reasons why the phenomenon of men abuse is so hard to be believed as a problem and women's abuse of men is still a peculiar taboo. Thus, it's not only women who became victims. It's a stereotype that is being repeated in society and there is a social scheme describing women as fragile and weak individual comparing to strong and dominating man. Those kind of schemes, publicizing men violence and depreciating women violence, lead to those stereotypes. In reality though, there are situations where a man is a victim and a woman is a perpetrator. But this kind of violence configuration is very bashful for men. They don't want to be perceived as weak individual who can't stop his wife, partner or female boss from

abuse. That is why barely ever they report abuse. And this in turn implicates lower statistics and lower scale of problem in public opinion. If anything, men are reporting abuse more eager to social workers and look for help in social help centers, rather than reporting abuse to the Police (Wai-Man Choi et al., 2015, p. 217–226). Drijber's et al. research seems to show similar results. According to their research of 380 males who were victims of their partner violence, 32% of them talk to police officers about what happened, whereas only 15% reported it (Drijber, Reijnders & Ceelen, 2013). Therefore, it is common yet not publicized problem. Women have almost the same tendency to use violence against men as men against women. There are research showing that women are able to perform acts of violence. If we take into consideration physical aggression, studies show that as many women self-report perpetrating as do men. Cercone, Beach and Arias studies on collage samples, found that men and women commit similar rates of physical aggression (Cercone, Beach & Arias, 2005). Straus research on the other hand, indicates on higher prevalence of women who commit physical aggression (Straus, 2004).

A representative study of 6,002 men and women showed in National Family Violence Survey carried out in USA, found that 4,8% of wives reported using violence against their husbands and 3,4% of husbands reported using violence against their wives (Straus & Gelles, 1990). Carmo and Grams carried out their research on 4746 people being a victim of their partner violence. 11,5% of them, which is 535 people, were men, whereas the rest were women. The most common form of violence they indicate was scratching—almost 20%, fist hitting—16,7% and hitting using blunt objects—16,6%. In Drijber research that was mentioned before, 67% of responders experienced both physical violence such as barging, kicking, biting or hitting, and psychological violence such as insulting, ignoring or stalking. The Polish Institute of public opinion in 2012 conducted a survey and the results showed that men more often comparing to women declared to be emotionally abused by being insulted (22%) or cutting down from their family and friends (12%). What's more, every tenth men, which was 10% of all male responders, experienced violence from their partner while being in relationship and every fifth—20%, was psychologically abused. What's important, the survey showed that men (22%) as likely and often as women (21%) experienced both physical and psychological abuse (Research statement, (2012). *Domestic violence and conflicts*. Warsaw: Public Opinion Research Centre).

Women as violence perpetrators—characteristic of women who use violence

Biological base of violence is aggressiveness which is an instinctual human behavior—both for men and women. Historically, males were considered to be more aggressive and more likely to be a perpetrator, whereas women were considered to be ‘weaker gender’ and associated with hearth and home, maternity, female traits such as fragility, obedience and being emotional. Nowadays, there is more and more information in the body of literature emphasizing the fact that every woman as well as every man has some aggressive elements and desires in their personality and it depends on individual how and when they decide to use it. Women’s dominating forms of aggression are more indirect and psychological rather than direct and physical. For instance, women are more likely to needle, gossip, irritate, verbally insult or humiliate. Thus, it is often difficult for men to not only realize that they are a victim, but also to name those behaviours out loud as violence. What’s more, consequences of women’s violence are therefore not as visible and obvious, because there is no direct physical suffering or pain but there are deep, emotional, negative experiences and thoughts which may significantly disorganize victim’s life (Crick, 1997; Bjorkqvist, Osterman & Lagerspetz, 1994; Konopka & Frączak, 2013).

There are some factors that determine if and to what extent aggressive behaviour appears. One of them may be childhood trauma and cultural and social conditions. Several studies suggest that there are high rates of childhood abuse and trauma among women who use violence. Among Swan et al. research of women using intimate partner violence, there were 60% of them who experienced neglect and emotional abuse, another 58% who experienced sexual abuse, 52% who were physically abused and 41% who were physically neglected (Swan et al., 2005). Those who experienced childhood abuse and neglect have higher risk of repeating those aggressive behaviours in their adult life. A lot of women transfer those aggressive, violent behaviours and attitudes towards their husbands, sons, fathers or uncles (Bodzon, 2013). Several studies where experiences of childhood abuse have been found to be a risk factor for women’s violent and abusive behavior toward others, seem to confirm that. (Sullivan et al., 2005; White & Humphrey, 1994). A high correlation between women’s use of violence and them being victimized is not uncommon (Johnson, 1995). According to Johnson (1995), women who were victimized were 10 times more likely to be perpetrators of violence in their intimate relationships than non-

victimized women. Siegel study of 136 women found that experiences of being hit or beaten by a parent predicted women's violence against their partners. What's more childhood experiences of sexual abuse predicted women's use of violence against intimate partners and also the partners' use of violence against them.

Other factors may be biological factors connected with limbic system, central nervous system and personality traits. Explosive personality characterizes by lack of ability to control anger, very strong and sudden humor changes which lead to sudden acts of aggressiveness. Similarly, psychopathic personality characterizes by lack of emotionality and pangs of conscience, sudden explosiveness, aggressiveness, tendency to be cruel and violate other's boundaries. There is higher chance of exposure aggressive behaviours if one has either explosive or psychopathic personality. Damages of CNS resulting from serious head injuries can influence on individual ability to solve difficult situations and problems and control their impulsiveness. As a result, these lacks abilities can foster aggression which is even more exposed in difficult and frustrating situations. Of course, there is no one bio-psych-pathological pattern of perpetrator. Nevertheless, some of violent aggressors may characterize by different biologically connected factors.

Another very important factor that should be taken into account is psychological functioning and condition of individual. The effects of childhood abuse are far reaching and influence both physical health and psychological adjustment into adulthood (Thompson et al., 2002). There are some of psychological conditions such as depression, substance abuse, anxiety or posttraumatic stress disorder that have been associated with traumatic experiences and domestic victimization. The prevalence of these conditions is high among women who use violence against their partner. Swan et al. in their study used some variables measuring psychological functioning of women using violence against their male partners. They found that 69% of sample women met criteria for depression, 24% took psychiatric medication, almost one in five were suffering from either alcohol or drug problems and one in three met criteria on a PTSD. Similar conclusions derived from Dowd et al. study (2005) were they evaluate 107 domestically violent, heterosexual women referred to an anger management program. They found a high prevalence of depression—67% of responders, substance use problem—67%, bipolar disorder—18% and anxiety issues—9%. Overall women tended to have histories of childhood attachment disruptions and victimization, mental health problems and substance abuse.

Intimate Partner Violence

In many countries, to describe violence between partners, mostly the term 'domestic violence' has been used. However, the word 'domestic' as violence terminology suggest connotation with family and that it is happening only in families or marriages. Also, it can encompass child or elder abuse or abuse only by any member of a household. Because of this adequacy problems, more recently, many adopted the term 'Intimate Partner Violence' which seems to be wider definition that encompass more than just a household and better describes violence between partners. One of the subjects that use this term is World Health Organization. They describe it as:

Intimate partner violence refers to any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship. Such behavior includes: acts of physical aggression—such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating; psychological abuse—such as intimidation, constant belittling and humiliating; forced intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion; various controlling behaviors—such as isolating a person from their family and friends, monitoring their movements, and restricting their access to information or assistance (World Health Organization, *Understanding and addressing violence against women*, 2012, p. 1).

What is worth noticing is that this definition acknowledges controlling behaviors in addition to physical, psychological and sexual abuse. What's more, it contains words psychological 'harm' which implicate that intimate violence is not only physical, act-based phenomenon, which is very important and need to be stressed, as some people believe that violence has to be connected with acts of violence and only in this case they can report abuse. Nevertheless, it may be problematic for men who may not identify acts of their partner behavior as harmful when objectively its psychological violence.

Intimate partner violence may have different patterns and nature. Johnson's (2005) typology may be helpful to show that the nature of abuse can be various. In his theory of intimate partner abuse distinguishes four patterns of intimate partner abuse within relationships: situational couple violence, mutual violent conflict, violent resistance and intimate terrorism. The first two categories: situational couple violence and mutual violent conflict are, according to Johnson, equally perpetrated by men and women whereas the other two are describing to be perpetrated by men

and experiencing by women. According to his theory, violence in relationship depend on each individual controlling behaviors and he distinguish this kind of behavior as something that is not directly done to individual. In situational couple violence there is no pattern of control within the relationship. Johnson claims that this pattern of violence is the most common form of abuse between couples as it is likely to occur during arguments where partners, or one of them, yell and assault the other. But because neither of partners have control motives this kind of abuse is not escalating over time. The violence here is a reaction to some particular situation that evoke the behavioral reaction. The next pattern—mutual violent conflict is according to Johnson the rarest of the patterns of violence and it characterizes by both partners being equally controlling and violent to each other. Another pattern—intimate terrorism is a pattern where one of partners is both violent and controlling to another one who is neither violent nor controlling and because of that it is particularly harmful for a passive individual. Even though intimate terrorism is the first of two patterns in Johnson's typology named as gender asymmetrical it may be successfully used as a framework to support victims regardless of their gender. The last pattern—violent resistance is quite similar to the previous one, but here, one of the partners is intimate terrorist, so is both violent and controlling whereas the other one is violent but is not controlling. According to the author of this typology, it may be often observed in relationship where a woman 'hit back' a man but receive not only violence, but also controlling behavior in return (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Johnson, 2006). To prevent intimate partner violence, WHO, based on literature review recommends organizing media and advocacy campaigns to raise awareness, reform civil and criminal legal frameworks or building coalitions of government and civil society institutions. (World Health Organization, *Understanding and addressing violence against women*, 2012). School-based education and early prevention may reduce violent behaviors in later live. It is also very important to remember and educate that violence is not only happening in configuration men to women, but also women to men.

Abused men characteristic

Abused men's psychological state of mind is very complex and full of mechanisms not allowing him to reveal his real feelings. Behavior of abused men is similar to abused women's behavior. A man starts to lose his self-es-

teem, feeling helpless and doesn't understand this difficult relationship he was involved into. He also may feel guilty and looking for responsibility of his partner's aggressive behaviors in himself. Hence, an abused man is waiting for another attack, he feels shocked when it happens again, but after making the situation soften by his partner and after promises of happy later life, he believes and wants to trust it's true. And then, like in a cycle, it all happen again and again. A man has to deal with his subjective feelings of being ashamed and being a victim. Very often someone who is a victim is also equate with being a victim in general, in all of his life spheres. It makes a man who is a father being perceived as a failure by his children and as a consequence of his failure, their mother cannot communicate with him, so she is aggressive. In this way a man seems to be a bad one in his children's eyes, whereas a mother is a poor woman having a failure husband. This all cause feeling fear of being rejected by man's family, friends or colleagues, especially when one has socially high position or position that aims to protect others like policeman, firefighter or doctor. A man may feel lack of understanding and acceptance by those who surrounds him. This all cause a man feeling lonely, abandoned in his relationship and fearful from reporting a violence to accurate services. (Thureau et al., 2015). Very often to describe their abusive situation, a man focusses and reports on facts, not their feelings. According to Bodzon (2013) they describe abusive incidents as hurtful, they can draw conclusions from those situations and logically and precisely place it in the timeline. They often don't want to be called 'victims' and are rather avoiding identifying as one and if they're looking for any help at all, it is usually reduced to legal service. What is also characteristic, while describing an abusive or harmful situation, a man may use passive form like the situation wouldn't involve him and like he would be just an observer. It may be extremely difficult for the man to realize that he is a victim, call it out loud and let the thought of being a victim be in his consciousness. Those kinds of mechanisms that male victim of intimate partner violence may have, surely make going through internal conflict harder and more difficult. Sometimes, after being violated for a very long time, the consequences may have the character of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) such as intrusive memories, avoidance of thinking or talking about traumatic events, negative changes in thinking and mood like feeling hopeless about the future, feeling detached from family and friends, having negative thoughts about yourself, feeling emotionally numb. It also might cause change in physical and emotional reactions like overwhelming shame or guilt, trouble sleeping, drinking too much or other self-destructive behaviors. As it comes to

PTSD though, in the body of literature, there is more statistics taking into consideration women and children, therefore, there is still a need to proceed studies on men.

Conclusion

Violence is a very important global social health problem. Social perception of violence or, being even more specific, intimate partner violence as mainly female issue have caused the development of measures, research perspective and methodologies unable to capture the full picture of male victimization. Violence against men is considered to be phenomenon of minor importance than violence against women. It is still insignificant and there are many stereotypes that it is more difficult to harm men because of their strength. Men, stereotypically, are being considered to be more aggressive than women, whereas it's not true in every case. That is why there are more often considered to be perpetrators rather than victim. Nevertheless, there is more and more men being a victim and it is a challenge for professionals and helping services to treat both genders equally as it comes to violence, to control one's stereotypical thinking or prejudice and to treat this phenomenon and research on male victimization reliable so service providers could adjust their interventions to male victims and help them more successfully.

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Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) on women empowerment

ABSTRACT. The need to empower women seems to center on the fact that women have potentials to contribute to the development process but are constrained by some factors that render them powerless. For this reason, this study examined the impact of justice development and peace commission on women empowerment by assessing the empowerment initiatives, women participation and identifying factors that militate against full empowerment and participation of women. The theoretical background for this study is structural functionalism and the study is descriptive in nature. The study was conducted in JDPC, Ijebu-Ode and data was collected from primary and secondary sources. For primary data, IDI was conducted for 12 beneficiaries of the empowerment programmes and 6 employees of JDPC while secondary data were collected through extensive review of literature. The data collected were content analyzed. The findings revealed that not until recent empowerment programmes organized for women, women do not have the zeal for the programmes which has limited their consciousness and strength in the society. Also, awkward spending of women contributed to their failure from receiving further loans from JDPC. Equally, low level of education, tradition and belief that men are better than women affected the slow rate of empowerment of women.

KEYWORDS: empowerment, JDPC, religious organization, women empowerment

Introduction

Empowering women has become a frequently cited goal of development intervention (Mosedale, 2005). In 1970s when women empowerment was first invoked by the Third World feminist and women organizations, it was explicably used to frame and facilitate the struggle for

social justice and gender equality through a transformation of economic, social and political structures at national and international levels (Bisnath, 2003). The need to empower women seems to centre on the fact that women have potentials to contribute to the development process but are constrained by some factors that render them powerless. While the reasons for any particular woman's powerlessness (or powerfulness) are many and varied, it may be necessary to consider what women have in common in this respect. The common factor is that, they are all constrained by their reproductive responsibilities, societal norms, beliefs, customs and values by which societies differentiate between them and men (Kabeer, 2000).

Women's level of education, poverty and men's attitude towards women have over the years posed a serious threat to women's participation in development. It is obvious that level of education and economic conditions of women most often determine their level of participation in decision making both at family, community, state and national levels. There is generally unequal burden of domestic maintenance and childcare responsibilities allocated to women as compared to men. Male dominance in sexual relations, with its consequence on women's lack of control over their sexuality in many societies has denied women right to determine the number of children they want. They have a low decision-making power as compared with men. The prevailing patriarchal ideology, which promotes values of submission, sacrifice, obedience and silent suffering often undermines the attempts by women to assert themselves or demand for share of resources and right (Hawkesworth, 1990).

The problem

The empowerment of women is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Gender equality and empowered women are catalysts for multiplying development efforts. Investments in gender equality yield the highest returns of all development investments (OECD, 2010). Whether the issue is improving education in the developing world, or fighting global climate change, or addressing nearly any other challenge we face, empowering women is a critical part of the equation.

Statistic shows that the dramatic accumulations of social imbalances begin to worsen within marriage, religious and government institution

and access to good health program. Statistics has further shown that high rates of maternal mortality and violence against women make Nigeria one of the toughest places in the world to be born a girl. Education statistics have been used as an indicator of gender inequalities military women's empowerment in Nigeria. The population census conducted in 1991 by the federal government of Nigeria found that 61% (41 million) of Nigeria women suffer from intellectual poverty. In Africa, there are different form of education, such as agricultural extension programme, in service training, out of school education, in service personnel training, community development, cooperate education, evening classes, literary services, extra-moral education.

Implicit from the assertions above shows that evidently there are factors militating against women empowerment and also women's believe about social construct and not much have been done from government and even the religious organization. It is, thus, high time researchers are able to check more on impact of Religious Organization on the women's empowerment.

Research objective

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of justice development and peace commission on women by assessing the empowerment initiatives, women participation and identifying factors that militate against full empowerment and participation of women in the developmental process.

Literature review

Empowerment

According to Sahay (1998), "empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life". It implies decentralization of power and authority in the deprived, oppressed and powerless people who have not been able to participate in decision making and implementation of policies and programs of both government organizations as well as in societal matters.

Women Empowerment

Women empowerment has attracted the attention of many scholars. Okpoko (2002) stated, "Women empowerment came into popularity with the feminist movement whose demand was that women become empowered to take control of their own lives; to set their own agenda of what to do and how to do things that affect them". The effect of women empowerment creates a powerful influence on family, community norms and values and finally the law that governs the community (Page, 1999). Empowerment of women now can be categorized into five main parts—social, educational, economic, political and psychological.

Women in Socio Economic Development

The fact that women are the subject of a growing national and international interest is unquestionable (Ekejuiba, 1991). This interest stems from the acute recognition that women are crucial to social and economic development. Anikpo (2000) contended that women are denied various rights and their contribution to national development were either stifled or ignored. According to Eudora (1997) in the wake of the global conference on women in Beijing, China, the world community has witnessed several conferences where efforts have continued to encourage women participation in their societal development. Similar conference was held in Africa in November, 1994 in Dakar Senegal where the African Platform for action was prepared for ratification in Beijing. The platform states the need to accelerate the societal, economic and political empowerment of all women at all levels and stages of their lives using the universal principles of equal partnership between men and women; a fuller and more active participation of women in policy formulation and decision making processes of government; the participation of women in economic, social and political empowerment at all levels on an equal footing with men, women becoming active contributors in and benefiting from all aspects of national development; and priority action being taken for protecting the human rights of girls and ensuring that they receive adequate nurturing, care and education and opportunity for achieving their full potential equally with their brother.

Theoretical framework

For the purpose of this study, structural functionalist theory and modernization theory are adopted as the theoretical framework upon which

this work is anchored. The silence of structural functionalist theory to capture religious organization of women empowerment paves way for modernization theory to capture structural function.

Structural-functionalist Theory

This theory contends that society is like a system, that is a set of interconnected part which together form a whole for example religion, politics, education, economic and family are functioning part of the society that brought about progression. Functionalist sees social structure or the organization of the society as more important than the individual. Structural functionalist perspective on women empowerment programmes opens the view that women also have their own role to play in the societal progress. As men are being valued so also women are to be valued too and they all function together to safeguard its people to live better live and this group helps to promote social solidarity. From Parsons Perspective which views society as a system to achieve an objective, the role of women should not be side lined because they are also an agent of social progress. And to Merton's application on social dysfunction, he said when society system fails to work together it dysfunction, so as if women's empowerment programmes are looked upon as one of the agent of development it means it has not translated to the progress of that society because women are still regarded as the poorest in Africa. The theory likened the society to a system without consideration for factors that could instigate change and development. The theory also emphasized that inequality is functional in the society as such less emphasis was placed on the extent to which such inequality can alter development and distort effectiveness of the social structures. As such, the theory did not sufficiently provide a universally acceptable template for Women's Empowerment Programme.

Methodology

The research design adopted was descriptive survey and the study area was Ijebu-ode, a town in Ogun-state, Southwest Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of the employees of Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) and female beneficiaries that are registered under them in Ijebu Ode. The officials of Justice Development and Peace

Commission (JDPC) are six (6) in number while the female beneficiaries are twelve (12) in number giving a total of eighteen (18) as sample size. In-depth interview was conducted and the data gathered was analysed using content analysis.

Results

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the employees

The table 1 shows the six workers that were selected from the JDPC for in-depth interview. The first interviewee was 75 years old male with 29 years of experience, Christian, has MSc as highest degree and currently serving as the Head of Education Department. The second interviewee was 37 years old female, Christian, Agriculture officer with 3 years of experience, and has BSc as the highest educational qualification. The third interviewee was 44 years old Muslim female serving as the assistant commissioner in Human Right department with 16 years of experience and BSc as the highest qualification. The fourth interviewee was a female, Christian, who is serving as the Human Resource Manager, 58 years of age, has MSc as the highest qualification with 20 years' experience. The fifth interviewee was the head of gender equity and women empowerment programme, Christian, 53 years old female with MSc as the highest educational level and 21 years of experience. Lastly, the sixth interviewee is a Christian, male, 45 years both assisting gender department and head of alternative dispute resolution with 17 years of work experience and BSc as the highest level of education.

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of the employees

S/N	Age	Gender	Religion	Position	Highest educational level	Years of working experience
1	75	Male	Christian	Head of Education Department	M.sc	29 years
2	37	Female	Christian	Agriculture Officer	B.sc	3 years
3	44	Female	Muslim	Assistant Commissioner for Justice Development and Peace Women in the Human Right Department	B.sc	16 years

4	58	Female	Christian	Human Resource Manager	M.sc	20 years
5	53	Female	Christian	Head of Gender Equity and Women Empowerment Programme	M.sc	21 years
6	45	Male	Christian	Assisting Gender Department and Head of Alternative Dispute Resolution	B.sc	17 years

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the beneficiaries

Table 2 shows the socio demographic background of the selected interviewees. Twelve women were randomly selected from JDPC organization purposively. The ages of these women ranged from 38 to 73, majority (8) of them were Christians, majority (10) were traders and only two of the beneficiaries had less than 10 years of experience. One person had Higher National Diploma (HND) as the highest educational level, three had no education, three had Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE), two had Ordinary National Diploma (OND), one had Primary School Leaving Certificate while two dropped of secondary schools.

Table 2. Socio-demographic Characteristics of the beneficiaries

S/N	Age	Religion	Occupation	Highest educational level	Years of experience
1	65	Muslim	Trader	SSCE	10 years
2	45	Muslim	Trader	SSCE	13 years
3	38	Christian	Trader	OND	16 years
4	73	Christian	Trader	Primary School Certificate	18 years
5	70	Christian	Teacher	HND	20 years
6	39	Christian	Farmer	No education	8 years
7	48	Muslim	Trader	OND	14 years
8	42	Christian	Trader	SSCE	9 years
9	38	Christian	Trader	No education	7 years
10	45	Muslim	Trader	No education	15 years
11	40	Christian	Trader	Secondary school dropout	6 years
12	37	Christian	Trader	Secondary school Drop out	3 years

JDPC empowerment initiatives programme

Respondent 1: Employees

All the interviewees revealed that JDPC renders various empowerment programmes. They include: Economic empowerment program where loans were given, Educational Empowerment Programme which creates adult literacy class that enlightens the women on issues of domestic violence, how to read and write and to know their rights and privileges, Political Empowerment Programme encourages women to go into politics, Cultural empowerment, Gender equality empowerment and agricultural empowerment. A respondent shed some light on the importance of these empowerment programmes:

The objectives of the empowerment initiatives programmes are to reduce poverty rate, promote good home and marital stability because we believed that if a woman is empowered there will be no frequent fighting in the home between the husband and the wife and that will curb the issue of domestic violence and the women self-esteem will also be enhanced (IDI/75 years/Employee of JDPC).

In the same vein, an interviewee explained a special empowerment programmes that JDPC made to the beneficiaries like the Human Right programme that covered both males and females to eradicate discrimination. This was stated below:

We have the Human Rights programmes that attend to both male and female in erasing all sort of discrimination and one thing we don't allow here in JDPC is discrimination. Everyone is created in the image and likeness of God; everybody deserves to be respected whether you are a male or female. But generally we encourage women to work not to be idle at home so when people say women office is in the kitchen we say no at JDPC because we are there to encourage them to work to support their husbands. JDPC is not saying women should take over the home but they want women to be more responsible so in every decision man takes in life women should also be involved (IDI/44 years/Employee of JDPC).

A respondent affirmed that JDPC empowerment programmes packages available to the physically challenged women and men. It was stated that:

[...] JDPC believed that we can deal with women and the physically challenged using the societal approach that is to take good care of the haves not. We use

the caritas approach to take good care of the physically challenged and here we encourage them to go to school where they learn craft, make shoe, and bag for children and also learn mat making. Also, we provide grinding machine for the physically challenged ones for them to work not to remain jobless and we provide the blind with grinding machine too so their children can help them operate them. Also, here in Ijebu-Ode we provide tricycle for the physically challenged ones. The first man we started with was Baba Ibeji, they now have their association here in JDPC known as the 'Physically Challenged and the Maruwa Riders' which made them a formidable group. Others with disability have fish pond, piggery etc. So, these are some of the empowerment initiatives in which we give to our beneficiaries (IDI/53 years/Employee of JDPC).

Respondents 2

The beneficiaries revealed the various women empowerment initiatives provided by JDPC. They are Economic empowerment, Political empowerment, Educational empowerment, Cultural empowerment, Gender equality empowerment and Agricultural empowerment. 41.6% of the beneficiaries take part in economic empowerment programmes, 16.6% engage in both political and educational empowerment while cultural, gender equality and agricultural empowerment programmes had 8.3% of the women each. The pie chart below represents the responses.

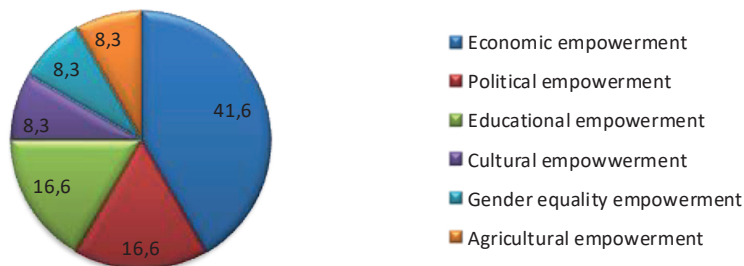


Figure 1. Percentage of women in JDPC Empowerment Programmes

Also, the beneficiaries revealed that these empowerment programmes are classified into human rights advocacy, skills acquisition, scholarship, leadership training, financial loan and adult education. 18% of the women in economic empowerment programme applied for adult education, majority (50%) of the respondents got financial loans, while 8% each participated in human rights advocacy, skills acquisition, scholarship and leadership training. In political empowerment programme, 8% of its ben-

eficiaries went for adult education, 26% opted for financial loan, 34% applied for leadership training while 8% and 26% chose skills acquisition and human rights advocacy respectively. For the educational empowerment programme, 34% of its beneficiaries got adult education, 8% each went for the leadership and scholarship programme while 26% each participated in skills acquisition and human rights advocacy. The remaining empowerment programmes had only adult education, financial loan, skill acquisition and human rights advocacy programmes with participation from 8%, 26%, 33% and 33% of the beneficiaries respectively from cultural empowerment programme, 26%, 33%, 18% and 18% respectively from gender equality empowerment programme and 18%, 42%, 33% and 8% respectively from agricultural empowerment programme. The responses are represented in the figure 2:

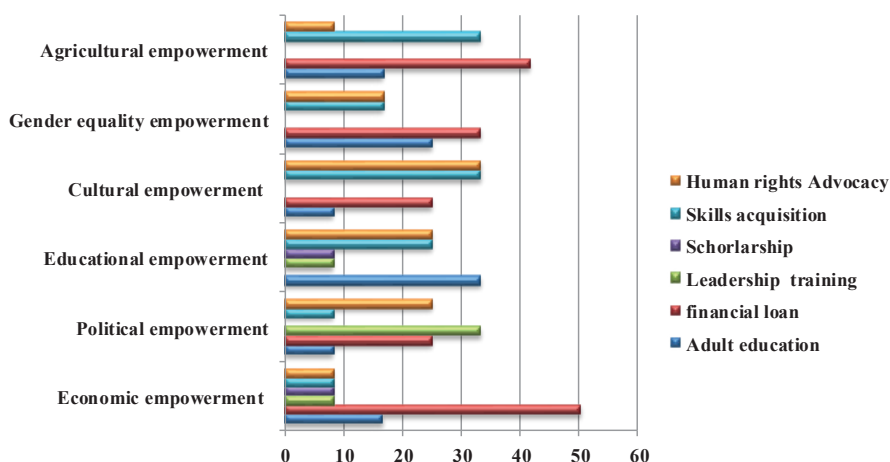


Figure 2. Distribution of women in empowerment programmes

Factors that militate against full empowerment and participation of women

Employees of JDPC were interviewed on the factors that militate against full empowerment and participation of women and a lot of factors were revealed. Majority of them explained that unwise spending of some of the beneficiaries contributed more to decrease in empowerment programmes. Some beneficiaries also find it hard or take too long to refund

money as they have complained of the payment duration which causes a difficulty for others trying to apply. Mismanagement by the women also contributed to their inability to get full and effective empowerment programmes especially in the sense of patriarchy and culture and the fact that many beneficiaries run away with loans. Below are responses by some participants:

Women themselves cause setback against the full empowerment programme. They collect money and spend it unwisely on worldly things like clothes they don't need and so on. The purpose of the money given to them is to set up a business and probably send their children to school. Though I won't lie the money JDPC gives to them maybe insufficient but we are trying our best (IDI/58years/Employee of JDPC).

Overspending unwisely could result to JDPC not issuing loans to women because the money meant to save a business are used for parties which ijebus are known for forgetting the money was borrowed and should be used to do something tangible so that the loan can be repaid (IDI/44years/Employee of JDPC).

More so, patriarchy is also a major problem these women encounter. Some of their husbands are alcohol addicts so if they see that the wife is making money or have business and instead of the man to go to his place of work, he sits with the wife in shop to spend and lavish all the money made which serves as hindrance against their empowerment programmes from JDPC (IDI/75years/Employee of JDPC).

Another limitation is the fact that majority of the beneficiaries are poor. Imagine someone getting loan and running away with the money. This is a great factor that could stop us from giving further loans. In fact, it is the current issue we are discussing as it happened recently (IDI/45years/Employee of JDPC).

Discussion of Findings

Finding revealed that JDPC are involved in six empowerment programmes: Economic empowerment, Political empowerment, Educational empowerment, Cultural empowerment, Gender equality empowerment and Agricultural empowerment which are further classified into human rights advocacy, skills acquisition, scholarship, leadership training, financial loan and adult education. It was further revealed that majority of the

women under these programmes accessed the financial loan. The work of Kurukshetra (2015) is in tandem with this finding that “Micro finance for ‘women’s empowerment’ is emerging as a powerful instruments for poverty alleviation in the new economy”. The findings revealed that the economic empowerment has the largest involvement of women (41.6%) as it also provides some skills acquisition; provide some advice on how to spend their money right in form of informal adult education. The political empowerment and educational empowerment programmes has the second largest involvement of the beneficiaries with 16.6% each which covers the objective of creating consciousness for women, developing capacity building, making their voices heard, helping women create awareness of their own rights and know what is wrong from the status quo, and more so helping women in developing the ability to read and write. This finding strongly affirmed with the work of Brill (2010) that explained that “without our own voice being heard inside the governmental areas, and halls of public policy and debate, we are without the right to accountability and a basic establishment of those who are governed. Kurukshetra (2016) equally holds that ‘traditional concept recognize higher education as an instrument of personal development as it helps in growing an individual’s intellectual horizons, wellbeing and potential for empowerment’. The last empowerment programmes had 8.3% participation each and they were identified as the cultural empowerment which helps women to strengthen the social relations and positions in the social structures; gender equality empowerment which works hand in hand with the cultural empowerment to ensure equal opportunity for women and men in a patriarchy society and the agriculture empowerment where loans, skills acquisition and education are well provided on the new and available existing technology for improved production. Gangrade (2012) posited that the cultural empowerment as women status to women opportunity and freedom to develop herself.

On the factors that militate against full empowerment and participation of women, findings revealed that the tradition and traditional belief that men are better than women contributed to slow rate of empowerment of women. This was affirmed by Umar (2018) who noted that the girl child is not valued for who she is, her potentials or achievements but for her services, submissiveness and at best good looks and it is believed that the place of the girl child and subsequently women is in the kitchen or at home. Also mismanagement of funds and negligence on the side of women were also crucial barrier to women’s development where loans are mis-

managed towards buying of different traditional clothes for party to flaunt their wealth instead of maximizing their profits from the loans. This mismanagement contributed to them not receiving further loans from JDPC as they were unable to pay back the loan on due time. Okoju (2011) stressed that women who lack power drive will find it difficult to assume leadership position and this impediment is attributed to low self-concept. The findings also reported that duration of loan payment is equally responsible for the loss of women empowerment programmes. Some loans which are to be disbursed to the beneficiaries every month as a custom by the organization have been shifted to weekly loan payment which seems unbearable to the beneficiaries who have invested in some businesses that requires paying loans every month due to customers.

Conclusion and recommendation

Generally, JDPC has largely impacted on women empowerment programmes which allowed women to become self-dependent, self-sustained, have the ability to influence their home even without the husband serving as the breadwinner of their home and were able to take part in development process of the society, partaking in rallying to protect their interest by largely giving support to their female colleagues, enjoying capacity building and ensuring full adult education. It was therefore recommended that the Government, the JDPC and the community (people, Oba's, Baale's) should work together towards creating some public awareness about cry of women living in absolute or relative poverty and help direct them on the available impact of JDPC on women's empowerment programmes across Economic empowerment, Educational empowerment, Political empowerment, Cultural empowerment, Gender equality, and Agricultural empowerment. Also, necessary materials like textbook, Classrooms block with all facilities in good condition should be provided in educating the women on how to manage loans and maximize their potentials.

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Male homosexuality and homophobia in contemporary Slovakia: A qualitative inquiry into personal online narratives

ABSTRACT. Homosexuality in Slovakia is covered in a veil of secrecy. With constant attacks by the Catholic Church and populist, traditionalist politicians, it is barely visible in society and politics, unless when discursively attacked. Similarly, homosexuality in Slovakia has failed to become a topic in the contemporary academia, with the exception of a few local works. This article, aiming to fill that gap, confronts a selection of online narratives of Slovak homosexuals via Qualitative Data Analysis through the qualitative tool, QDA Miner, including narrative analysis. Additionally, having in mind the strong propaganda of the Catholic Church against homosexuality, select homophobic narratives are analyzed via the same means.

KEYWORDS: Slovakia, homosexuality, QDA analysis, narratives

Introduction

In this article, we are exploring the experiences of a number of male homosexuals in Slovakia via methodological paradigms of qualitative inquiry; namely, qualitative data analysis and content analysis, on a corpus of personal narratives of male Slovak homosexuals available online. In a rare article about the topic of homosexuality in Slovakia, Wallace-Lorencova wrote how 'the emerging visibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender-identified people is a contested story in Slovakia's post-socialist transformations, one that continues to be absent from contemporary academic examinations of Eastern Europe' (Wallace-Lorencová, 2003, p. 103); since 2003, the situation has not changed much due to the general lack of interest in Slovakia. Indeed, homosexuality in Slovakia has failed to engage scholars on a global level. The only research so far has been conducted

by a relatively small number of Slovak scholars (Heretik & Novotný, 2003; Kobes, 2011; Ondrisová et al., 2002; Seidl, 2006), none of them coming from a qualitative orientation, and some even from an eldritch religious perspective (Keefe, 2000). Segueing thus into questions of religion, the staunch Catholicism of Slovakia can be said to present a significant problem for a wider social acceptance of homosexuality in Slovakia, including local scholarly research, as shall be seen in the analysis to come. Homosexuals in Slovakia are a silent minority, struggling with their daily experiences of homosexual arousal and lack of opportunity for togetherness and inclusion. It has to be noticed that while male homosexual narratives are available on the World Wide Web, female homosexuality – lesbianism – suffers from even a larger lack of visibility (both within the country and in the Ivory Towers), including transgender people, yet this will be the core of another research article in the near future.

Methodology

As qualitative researchers have been made aware, and as qualitative researchers has been writing for almost two decades, ‘recently, concerns about validity in qualitative research have increased’ (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 319); many have responded onto those allegations, leading to an increased production in qualitative theory. Nevertheless, ‘a lot of effort has been expended by methodologists over the years, trying to give some guidance to qualitative researchers in improving or judging the quality of qualitative research’ (Seale, 1999, p. 465). Among other methodologies, since 1999, Qualitative Data Analysis seemed to have stepped up to the task. QDA was, at a point, called the ‘black hole of qualitative research’ (Lather & Lather, 1991, p. 149), yet this was over a quarter of a century ago. In the meantime, QDA has been strengthened by digital tools, allowing a new resurgence of qualitative analysis, as ‘development in digital tools in qualitative research over the past 20 years has been driven by the development of qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) and the Internet’ (Davidson, Paulus, & Jackson, 2016, p. 1). Among a plethora of available tools, we shall be using QDA Miner (Derobertmeasure & Robertson, 2014; Lewis & Maas, 2007), a valuable utility for a qualitative researcher, one that allows both textual input and several modes of analysis that allows also for several modes of quantitative research, making it fall under the mixed (hybrid) methods designation,

since 'the deployment of a qualitative methodology does not rule out the use of qualitative methods' (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 456). Among this slew of relevant instances, however, *coding* is key to qualitative analysis conducted via QDA Miner.

A coded unit is "a segment of content that is to be considered a basic unit for purposes of categorization and frequency measurement," (Bardin, 2001, p. 135), whilst to 'code data, then, one must assume that words textualized in interview transcripts and field notes are not only data but also brute data that can be broken apart and decontextualized by coding—even using existing coding schemes from others' research projects. Once coded, words can be sorted into categories and then organized into "themes" that somehow naturally and miraculously "emerge" as if anyone could see them' (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014, p. 716).

Following the emerging paradigm and recently made available tools, we shall investigate personal narratives of Slovak male homosexuals found on the World Wide Web, via engaging into qualitative data analysis (mixed with quantitative data) and content analysis of the given corpus of text. As we are analyzing narratives/stories, we are bound to understand that 'stories are fundamental to our sense-making, to making our lives meaningful, and to what drives our hearts. In the stories we tell, we discover ourselves and each other' (Pelias, 2015, p. 609). These stories are part of larger discourses, which can be broadly defined as 'habits of interpretation distributed through communities that frame experiences, objects, and events in particular ways. These discourses can be said to constitute experiences insofar as they make the experiences legible and meaningful, thus available for comment, discussion, and reference' (Rosiek & Heffernan, 2014, p. 730), having in mind that 'the materiality of our bodies, along with our capacity to produce symbols through communication, combine to constitute stories that can be analyzed to learn more about identities' (Jones Jr, 2015, p. 767).

Having also in mind that we are engaging a discriminated, silenced group, whose voices have been stifled in a Communist-cum-Catholic environment, we are aware that 'critical qualitative research for the future requires unthought collaborations and explorations with traditionally marginalized knowledges and ways of being as lenses from which to literally reconceptualize research as construct' (Cannella, 2015, p. 3).

When it comes to the question of the corpus of research at hand, much can be said about its breadth, as 'we can only code what is actually said, which is a severe constraint on a researcher's ability to interpret the sig-

nificance of social dynamics. When research locates meaning only in what is actually said, expressed, or done, then the absence of expressions, gestures, and voice is tacitly framed as meaningless. Silences, however, are not always meaningless. Silences can be produced by imbalanced power dynamics, such as when a student never mentions he or she has same sex parents for fear of harassment and being ostracized' (Rosiek & Heffernan, 2014, p. 727). Thus, even the smallest of corpora can provide an insight into the chosen topic, especially nowadays, within the contemporary digital environment, as many researchers have stressed the importance of on-line spaces in relation to homosexuality (Riggle, Rostosky, & Reedy, 2005; Rosenmann & Safir, 2006).

Additionally, we shall inquire into the Catholic opposition to homosexuality via engaging the same type of sources: online accessible narratives of alleged 'healed' homosexuals, who have, according to the sources, been 'cured' of homosexuality via their faith in Christ. This is a relevant addition, especially having in mind the strength of the Catholic propaganda against homosexuality, and it will show the main instances in religion-based opposition to homosexuality that will show itself reported by the initial narratives of Slovak homosexuals, as in societies 'where traditional values are dominant, LGBT rights are hardly considered important' (Mestvirishvili et al., 2017, p. 3).

The socio-political context

In general, homosexuality in Slovakia is a matter of secrecy, undebated and hidden. Homophobia is present – stemming commonly from the Church and Right Wing political parties – including a 2000 spread of leaflets that promoted 'homocilin', an imaginary 'cure' for homosexuality that is 'guaranteed to cure homosexuality' (Wallace-Lorencová, 2003, p. 103), playing into the Christian Democratic Party's dominant discourses. The accent needs to be put on the 'Christian' part of the party's designation, as 'condemnation of homosexual behavior by the Catholic Church has found a fertile ground in contemporary Slovakia, where 69% of adult citizens identify as Roman Catholics' (Wallace-Lorencová, 2003, p. 104). Catholicism has been connected to instances of severe homophobia in a slew of scholarly works relating to a vast geographical array (Cerbone & Danzer, 2017; Frawley-O'Dea & Goldner, 2016; Hilliard, 1982; Reygan & Moane, 2014; Ward, 2015), while Slovakia is known to be under the strong in-

fluence of Catholicism, which is 'linked historically with the quasi-fascist Slovak state during the Second World War' (Benda & Wilson, 1985); the heteronormative attitude towards homosexuality has not changed during Czechoslovakia's later drift into Communism. Nonetheless, whilst the Czech Republic, after the breakup of Czechoslovakia, became significantly more liberal (Hamplová & Nešpor, 2009), as well as secular/atheistic (Lužný & Navrátilová, 2001; Spousta, 2002), Slovakia still boasts significant religiosity, especially when compared with its former state counterpart, the Czech Republic. On the other hand, the non-parliamentary Right Wing has been active in the creation and dissemination of homophobic discourses (there was a slew of such parties/groups during the last few decades, such as *Slovenská pospolitost', Slovenská ľudova strana, Nové slobodné Slovensko, Slovenská národná jednota, Jednota slovenskej mladeže, Stropkovská stráž, Slovenské hnutie obrody*). These are the environments and spaces which homosexuals in Slovakia are forced to navigate on a daily basis; by engaging some of their personal narratives, we can get insight in the most salient of issues they face.

In 2005, The Slovak Spectator published an editorial about homosexuality in Slovakia, saying that, even though homosexuality in Slovakia is legal since 1960, 'twenty to thirty years ago, there were officially no homosexuals in Slovakia. At least, that was how the Communist regime treated them. Homosexuals did not exist; they were simply a "product" of the Western world, which, according to party line, was spiralling into chaos and self-destruction. In general, homosexuality remains taboo. For gays, it would be very difficult to live openly in most Slovak towns or villages' (Balogová, 2005), and the situation has not changed much in the meantime, with the exception of a Gay Pride event in 2010. In 2014, 'Slovakia's Christian Democrats teamed up with the governing left-populist party, "Smer" ("Direction" in Slovak) of Prime Minister Robert Fico to pass a constitutional amendment to "protect the Slovak family," vaguely reminiscent of the infamous Defense of Marriage Act, overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court last year. Since this past September, the Constitution of Slovakia thus stipulates that "marriage is a union solely between man and woman. The Slovak Republic fully protects marriage and provides all means to secure its wellbeing"' (Rohac, 2014). In 2017, homosexuality is still seen by some as a 'perversion' (ČTK, 2017), even though LGBT rights are protected legally. This is a common case in a vast number of countries, where, even though officially, the state protects the rights of homosexuals, in practice, these rights are seldom enforced by the state.

Coding research results

Eight narratives concentrating on personal experiences *of* homosexuals *about* homosexuality and their own lived experiences have been coded by three categories:

- 1) tropes (motives);
- 2) feelings, and
- 3) actions.

As subdivisions, tropes were coded into the following sub-categories:

- 1.1 religion,
- 1.2 heterosexuality,
- 1.3 admission (of being homosexual), and
- 1.4 prejudice (against homosexuality),
- 2.1 fear,
- 2.2 attraction (to a person of the same sex),
- 2.3 suffering,
- 2.4 desire for a homosexual relation,
- 2.5 being in love,
- 2.6 confusion,
- 3.1 coming out,
- 3.2 sex,
- 3.3 porn,
- 3.4 masturbation,
- 3.5 (engaging) Internet,
- 3.6 encounter (with another homosexual).

The above were chosen due to their iteration and consequential relevance to the narratives based on the grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser, 2017; Suddaby, 2006).

Table 1. Case, word and code percentages

Category	Code	Count	Codes [%]	Cases	Cases [%]	Nb Words	Words [%]
tropes	religion	5	8.8	2	25.0	23	0.5
tropes	heterosexuality	6	10.5	4	50.0	57	1.3
tropes	admission	2	3.5	2	25.0	9	0.2
tropes	prejudice	1	1.8	1	12.5	1	0.0
feelings	fear	1	1.8	1	12.5	4	0.1
feelings	attraction	9	15.8	6	75.0	175	3.9

feelings	suffering	1	1.8	1	12.5	2	0.0
feelings	desire for hom. relation	4	7.0	2	25.0	15	0.3
feelings	being in love	3	5.3	2	25.0	6	0.1
feelings	confusion	1	1.8	1	12.5	1	0.0
actions	coming out	1	1.8	1	12.5	3	0.1
actions	sex	6	10.5	5	62.5	370	8.3
actions	porn	6	10.5	4	50.0	23	0.5
actions	masturbation	6	10.5	3	37.5	6	0.1
actions	internet	2	3.5	2	25.0	8	0.2
actions	encounter	3	5.3	2	25.0	12	0.3

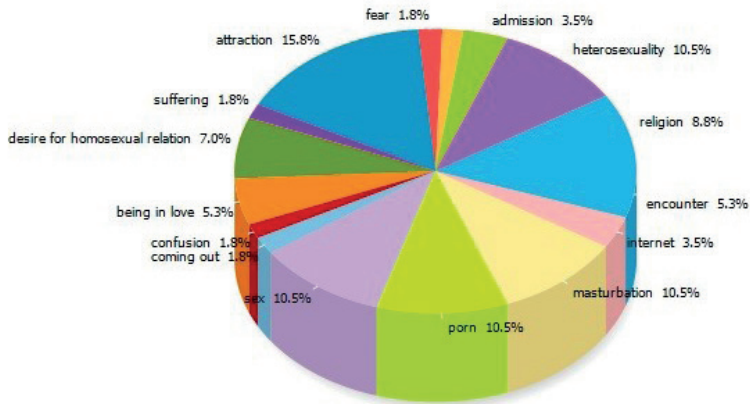


Figure 1. Distribution of codes (frequency)

As seen in table 1 and figure 1, several instances overshadow the others, such as a strong emphasis on attraction, which was seen in 15.8% of the coded material, as well as sex, pornography and masturbation, that appear together in 31.5% of the narratives. The Code Frequency additionally revealed that sex, masturbation and porn were, unsurprisingly, sequentially linked to each other. Sex *per se* leads the list of the most salient of topics within the eight narratives.

Going into content analysis of the coded material above, more can be revealed. Religion figured as a stifling factor in several of the narratives. In Narrative nr. 5, we see an admission that, since the subject was coming from a religious family, 'I had to keep it all a secret'. He continues to say that, since he came from a religious societal background, 'I lived through inner conflicts and kept asking myself why boys attract me instead of

girls, I did not know how to explain it to myself ... this was strengthened by the fact that socialism was still present, and that topic was a societal taboo, nobody spoke about it in public, but my sexual aspirations could not be overcome'. In Narrative nr. 8, we see an admission that the whole society, including the Church, was the reason for secrecy, as 'in movies, homosexuals are always depicted as men in latex ... the reality is entirely different', as 'the majority of homosexuals keeps their orientation a secret in front of the society. The Church. The inheritance. People around you ... we are seen as sick and disgusting'. As Purnell wrote on the same topic from the point of view of the hidden homosexual, 'as he feels new desires growing inside of him, desires that are forbidden and sinful according to everyone in his life, he is driven into hiding due to the shame culture in which he lives' (Purnell, 2016, p. 1). The religious environment seems like an ineluctable hindrance for accepting homosexuality in Slovakia on a broader, societal level.

Secrecy was also stressed several times. Narrative nr. 2 speaks about how 'we agreed to a second secret meetup. It was secret for me, as nobody knew about me before'. The construction 'knew about me', meaning 'knew about my homosexuality', without directly referencing it, speaks to the importance of secrecy, as the narrator himself seems to have succumbed to the necessity of clandestineness. When confronted by another gay man, one of the subjects claimed 'Sorry, but this is not for me. I like girls. I like them and I want to have a classical family. My girl, and soon, children', in fear of being outed by another homosexual. The necessity for secrecy overpowered even the subject's personal desire to engage in homosexual relations.

The coding analysis results given by QDA Miner, however, speak to the fact that the narratives at hand did not concentrate as much as one would expect on the negative aspects of a homosexual daily experience in Slovakia, such as the need for secrecy or suffering. To the contrary: most of them emanate an aura of hope. The most important issues seen in the narratives (see: table 1, figure 1) are attraction, sex, porn and masturbation. World-view negativity was overshadowed by a thoroughly positive view, in which concentration on personal sexual issues was stressed.

Using the Ochiai's coefficient for coding co-occurrences, figure 2 shows us the connection of masturbation, the desire for homosexual relation, porn, and even heterosexuality, as several cases reported experimenting with heterosexuality.

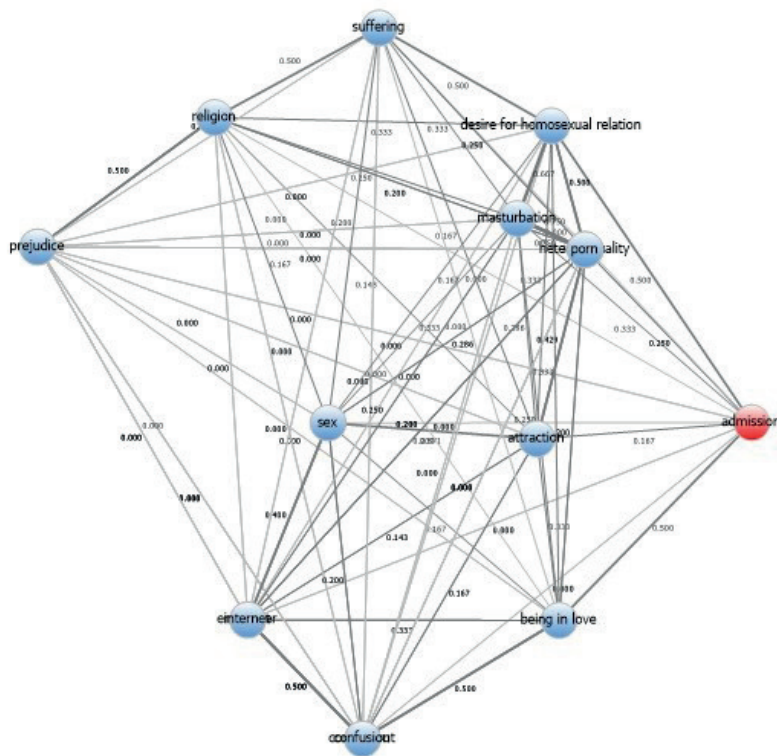


Figure 2. Ochiai's coefficient coding co-occurrences

Finally, the analyzed occurrence similarity informs us of the high levels of connection between the *Internet* and *encounters*, telling how the World Wide Web is the most important means via which the subjects managed to find partners, due to the secretive nature of homosexuality and homosexual relations in Slovakia. In other words, the Internet has allowed homosexuals in Slovakia to have at least one social outlet for potential meetups.

'Cured' by Christ

An addition has to be made to the analyzed narratives, due to the strong influence of the Catholic Church onto the daily lives and experiences of Slovak homosexuals. Several online spaces in Slovakia, boasting a strong reli-

gious orientation, engage in a specific discourse in which homosexuality is presented as a disease, with alleged narratives of those who have managed to 'cure' themselves, such as the Mojpribeh.sk ('My story'), in which several allegedly 'cured' homosexuals claim that their 'disease' has been 'cured' via finding faith and accepting Christ as their Lord and Savior. An excursion into these discourses enables us to better comprehend the spaces which homosexuals need to navigate, the hostile environment in which they live. It is impossible to corroborate the veracity of these narratives and divulge whether they are just propaganda, or perhaps simply invented. We can use this platform to implore other scholars to research into this direction; for now, the question remains conjecture.

The character of Jozef Demian tells how 'in childhood, I had been sexually molested by an older man, I went through poverty, occultism, depressions, sexual partners of the same sex, as well as attempts of suicide. The light was brought into my life by the faith in Jesus Christ'. As seen, homosexuality is further negatively stressed by framing it within a context of poverty, occultism and suicide. 'My confused longings and the reality that men attracted me, led me towards thinking of myself as "gay" since I was twelve. I began a sexual life with an older man, with whom I have been for several years ... it was never love, only a purely physical relation'. The putting of 'gay' in parenthesis is a further stress of the 'unnatural' view of homosexuality, as well as presenting a homosexual relation as purely physical. The religious within the text overshadowed everything else:

As I was thinking about everything, it became clear to me that homosexuality prevented me from finding my true inner identity, as if everything was all about it. In the sense, evil he produces evil. But God has shown me the truth, about myself and me as a human being, that I am sinful and I need of His grace—that is what one does not deserve, it is a gift from God. And the truth is that he created a man and a woman, not anything third, or I do not know how many. Imagine that there are only homosexual relationships in the world, for a few years life on earth would be lost. God said in his word: Be fruitful and multiply ... and this is God's plan for man ... I have accepted the identity I have in Christ—I am a man. We cannot see the truth when we are blinded ... Sin conceals the truth. God touched my heart and showed me what is inside of me and I was crying. I have seen dirt, sin ... I confessed to Jesus that I was deceived by sin.

At the end, he 'admits' that 'thanks to Jesus Christ', he was 'free' from a conglomerate comprising 'homosexuality and other addictions that I mentioned, marijuana, alcohol, drugs, occult practices'.

The religious discourse about 'healing' and reverting from homosexuality was significantly easier to code, as the vast majority of the discourse simply engaged in expounding alleged negative connotations and religious faith as the solution. Thus, we have engaged the following codes:

1. 'Healing' from homosexuality / homosexuality represented as a sickness
2. Changing to heterosexuality
3. Importance of family ('family values')
4. Religion
5. Heteromascularity
6. Being molested by homosexuals / homosexuals represented as molesters
7. Heteronormative family
8. Connection of homosexuality with an array of negative instances (drugs, depression, suicide)
9. 'Unnaturalness' of homosexuality
10. Propagation of 'homosexual propaganda'

The distribution of codes is given in table 2 below, as well as on a pie chart that follows.

Table 2. Case, word and code percentages

Code	Count	Codes [%]	Cases	Cases [%]	Nb Words	Words [%]
healing from homosexuality	7	12.5	3	75.0	462	4.1
changing to heterosexuality	2	3.6	1	25.0	42	0.4
importance of family	1	1.8	1	25.0	30	0.3
religion	24	42.9	4	100.0	3854	34.4
heteromascularity	3	5.4	2	50.0	131	1.2
being molested by homosexuals	6	10.7	2	50.0	170	1.5
heteronormative family	1	1.8	1	25.0	12	0.1
connection with negative instances	8	14.3	4	100.0	282	2.5
unnaturalness of homosexuality	3	5.4	2	50.0	16	0.1
propagation of homosexual agenda	1	1.8	1	25.0	99	0.9

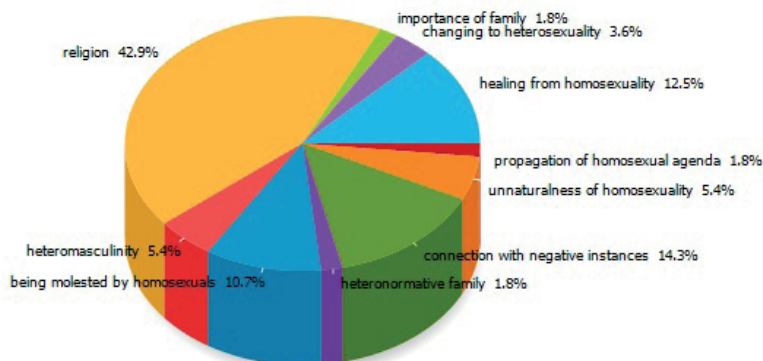


Figure 3. Distribution of codes (frequency)

As visible, religion stands as the single most used trope in the discourses on MojPribeh.sk, taking up as much as 42.9% of the coded material, with full salience in all the narratives on the webpage (four of them), 100% total. Negative connotations, such as presenting former homosexual relations as 'being molested' by other homosexuals, including the stress on the heteronormative family and the 'healing' from homosexuality fall in an important second place.

Conclusion

Based on the research results given on the preceding pages, and taking the precarious societal position in which homosexuals find themselves in contemporary Slovakia, the following conclusions can be reached:

1. Homosexuality in Slovakia is still a taboo and cloaked in a veil of secrecy. Unlike the Czech Republic, where 'being gay' has become significantly less of a stigma (including a number of homosexual bars in larger cities and no problem with the local population), homophobia is still an issue in Slovakia.
2. Male homosexuals in Slovakia are still not able to 'come out' and 'confess' their sexual orientation, resorting instead to the Internet and secrecy whilst finding a partner. The Internet figures as crucial in homosexual social and romantic/sexual lives.
3. Even though visibility is low in a predominantly heteronormative space, the subjects included in this survey have seldom concentrated on the lack of visibility and societal homophobia; instead, they

chose to concentrate, in their own, personal narratives, on questions of attraction and sex.

4. The Catholic Church is seen as one of the prime promoters of homophobia and homophobic discourses, concentrating almost exclusively on the 'faith in Christ' as a 'cure' for what it considers to be a disease.

Much needs to be done to better the position of homosexuals in Slovakia. More research needs to be conducted on the societal positions and experiences of lesbians and transgender people, and we implore the scientific community to delve into these issues. When it comes to research on the former Czechoslovakian space, most research tends to concentrate on the Czech Republic, as Slovakia is often seen as the rump of the former union; this is seen not only in academic research, but in worldwide public interest, including journalism, that puts Czech Republic in the first place, with Slovakia constantly playing second fiddle. We hope that this research article will help in the breaking of a discriminative stereotype.

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Symbols in traditional dance: A study of Nkwanwite dance

ABSTRACT. The use of iconic symbols during traditional performances (dance) has remained an indispensable tool. The major problem facing the use of signifying symbols during performances is because they are seen as mere performative enhancer. These assumptions might be generally accepted, but in core dance scholarship it can be argued for or against, but this paper stands against its wrong perceived nature as mere performative enhancer. The aim of this paper is to interpret some of the signifying symbols used in dance in order to understanding their socio-cultural essence. This paper would analyze the signifying symbols used in Nkwanwite traditional dance for the following reasons: (a) To acknowledge the use of cultural symbols as part of people's mythology belief. (b) To interpret, analyze and document the signifying symbols as a socio-communicative tool. (c) To give each of the signifying symbols relevance and interpretation in dance. In order to achieve this Sense Making Theory would be used as theoretical frame work to interrogate the essence of the signifying symbols. Findings show that, due to lack of interpretation and documentation on the use of signifying symbols in dance. It is gradually going into extinction as mere props. The paper concludes that non dance scholars should cherish and appreciate the use of symbols in dance as communicative tool.

KEYWORDS: dance, Nkwanwite, tradition, symbols

Introduction

Dance as an art uses non-verbal forms to communicate with its audience. The non-verbal forms always come in the form of gestures, movements and symbols. In non-verbal communication using a signifying symbol, rhythm and movement are of great essence. The use of communicative signifying symbols in traditional dances tells us the situation of events at a particular time, what gave rise to situation and proffer the possible way in resolving the situation. Akas Nicholas emphasized this when he observed that "In dance the use of signifying symbols in traditional dance are not static, it changes because its thematic potency always centers on communal mythological" (Nicholas & Prisca, 2020).

Dania Aspasia (2015, p. 34) concurred with this, signifying codes are a form of knowledge representation which retains the characteristics of

things or behaviors that are directly observable in the environment (e.g. trees, animals and people).

The use of signifying symbols in dance makes it symbolic language tool for communication. The level of the symbolic language exhibited in dance using signifying symbols cut across barriers of language and culture making it a universal tool for communication irrespective of tribes, religion, tradition and profession. Roxy Levy (2014, p. 46) maintains that; "Dance is among the unique art that through its style and form, unities people during performance, to watch and share their experiences, thereby helping them to deemphasize personalized issues to promote culture".

The essence of signifying symbols in dance brings the people closer to their various dances on the bases of seeing it beyond mere annual festivals and use of signifying symbols as mere artifacts Akas (2015, p. 22) suggested that: "The movement pattern of symbols during performances are usually influenced by cultural barriers in order to under the essence of the performance".

The dancer uses his body movement/signifying symbols to externalized the choreographer's inner most emotion and reproduce it before an audience in order for them to understand the originality of the existing dance in form, styles, contextualization and otherwise.

Rosemarie Samaeritter (2009, p. 55) further see Akas above that:

For the dancer's body to communicate effectively using signifying symbols, it must undergo series of training, formation and adaption in order to enhance the communicative cum interpretative essence in dance movement. The dance steps are well crafted within the signifying symbols during dance festivals, in such a way that it will make a positive statement before the live audience.

The above simply show the communicative essence of any dance lies in the context, so choreographers should always go for that and not aesthetics only.

Theoretical framework

All analysis in this paper is anchored on Sense Making Theory by Brenda Dervin (2003) Sense Making Theory helps to examine the communicative value in any creative work of art, be it dance, music, printings and drawing. It gives the artist that sense of belonging that at the stage of creation every idea matters, especially when utilized positively. Brenda Dervin as cited by foreman Dervin (2003, p. 23) opines that:

The use of sense making theory while analyzing cultural symbols pays explicit attention to the “hows” of communication that occurs at every level of performance that helps us not only to understand the performance, but rather to intervene, change and improve the potency.

Naresh Kumar Agarwal (2017, p. 66) observed that: “Sense Making Theory is all about trying to reconcile apparent differences and polarities without wishing away the difference, but reorganizing them as important”.

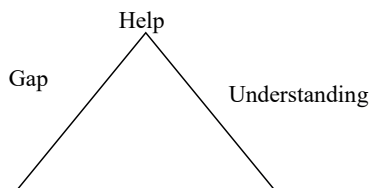
The above assertion shows that no cultural symbols exist in abstraction; rather the environmental factors give rise to its existence and substance. The essence of any symbols used in traditional dances is to pass the required information across, but in a situation whereby the intended message is not achieved, it automatically becomes ordinary props. Brenda Dervin (2003, p. 45) states that:

Be it in music, dance, symbols, play analysis and costume analysis the sole aim of any creative work is to bridge the gap of complex or multiple misinterpretations placed on content analysis of performance rather than aiming to assist individuals and community to make sense in the usage of cultural symbols beyond generalized assumption.

This paper adopted this theory (because of Brenda’s ideology that every performance must be valued, understood and interpreted) in order to give the iconic symbols used in the dance understudy (Nkwanwite) sense of belonging and socio-cultural values. Dervin (2003, p. 234–245) maintained that:

If the communicative gaps in the use of symbols are not well analyzed, interpreted and documented. The required essence (communication) becomes mere art for art sake only.

Dervin (2003, p. 200) further stated that every cultural symbol used in performance or literary work must be appreciated by the evidence from its point of pictorial diagram.



The socio-cultural values of signifying symbols

Akas (2015, p. 12) posits that “though symbols are beautifying in the eyes, its usage before the choreographer automatically becomes a corrective instrument”. Uji Charles (2014, p. 13) concurred that: “People should always look beyond aesthetic cultural attachment in the use of symbols: rather what should be is the interpretative utilization before the ideal audience”.

For any signifying symbols in dance to be identified and appreciated, it must always perform the following cultural values:

1. It always stands as a corrective tool, this is where the choreographer contextualized every dance movement to tell a story.
2. It stands as a watch dog, here with aid of contextualized dances the audience will be able to assess their rulers while the rulers will assess the ruled to know whether they are still acceptable or not especially in keeping political promises.
3. It stands as historic referral for proper documentation especially in oral traditions, through this our culture especially dance will not go into extinction.
4. It aids in cultural identification, a man without a traceable origin, automatically becomes a ghost. So with dance sociologically helps to portray where people come from culturally irrespective of their status, religion and profession.

Perspectives on signifying symbols in traditional dances

The use of signifying symbols in dance is gradually being misinterpreted as artistic enhancement or indigenous tool for performative display. This assumption which is based on generalized perception is true and acceptable, but in this paper it goes beyond that. Therefore in dance, for any signifying symbols to be culturally acceptable as communicative tool, it must undergo four due processes such as:

1. What gave rise to the emergent of the symbols; simply put what matters most is the interpretative essence of the performance in order to understand the intended message and avoid myopic generalization.
2. The effectiveness of symbols beyond its assumed usage, it is true that most symbols are very attractive in nature, but what is of the

essence is the communicative use of the symbols either to correct or lampoon the society.

3. The communal belief system on the symbols. In traditional dances, none emerge as mere aesthetic display or body flexibility, rather any iconic symbol used is been anchored on a particular myth e.g. (Monkeys are sacred animal in Awka Anambra State Nigeria, at the sighting of such iconic statue in dance show the god are present).
4. The socio-cultural essence of the symbols in solving situation of things in the community, at this point dance automatically becomes a corrective tool.

Signifying symbols vary in their usage but what should be the basic perception of any choreographer is its sociological function. It is the sociological perspective attached to the use of symbols in traditional dances that reawaken people's consciousness to begin to value the use of symbols in dance as a communicative tool. Akas (2015, p. 34) affirms that:

The use of signifying symbols must be made sacrosanct for the initiate only because they are the ones who understand and uphold the cosmological ideology imbedded in them as cultural signifier, identifier and sustainability.

The essence of symbol in this paper becomes didactic rather than entertaining.

The origin of Nkwanwite dance

This dance centers on women and their various experiences in their matrimonial home. The dance started in 1905, a woman called Mrs. Udu Ibeh, who was believed to be the first woman to perform this great and ageless dance in Afikpo community. Mrs. Udu Ibeh in the interview said she played a symbolic role in this dance, because she was the first woman to get married at the age of eleven in Afikpo community. So because of her inexperience in what marital life is all about, she suffered a lot in the hands of her husband, her husband used to beat her every day because she was not good in sex, she did not know how to wash her husband's clothes and she was not good in cooking. So because of all these, her husband beat her claiming he wanted his wife to be strong, sexually active and caring. In another interview Mrs. Julian Uruh, corroborated, "the beating was so much on Mrs. Udu Ibeh that as a child, she ran back to her parents for help. But her

parents would return her back that same night to her husband telling her that in marriage, parents are not allowed to interfere. On several occasions, Mrs Udu Ibeh was disgraced in public by her husband for forgetting to call him the pet name he loves which was “di m oma”(my beloved husband) . Mrs. Ejem O. another community woman interview said; ‘It was recorded that each time she forgot to call him the pet name, her husband would flog her with any available stick around. Mrs. Udu Ibeh was highly maltreated in the hands of her husband who was fourth five years older than her”. Her husband on his part was a drunk, a womanizer and a chain smoker. On several occasions, the husband would be so drunk that he would end up inside a gutter, at times her neighbors would call her and say that ‘your drunk and good for nothing husband has chosen his comfortable place again as usual, go and carry him”. Mrs. Julian Uruh still in an interview explained, “if Ibeh sleeps inside gutter till the next day, he would kill his wife the next day”. So each time she hears her husband was inside a gutter, she rushed out to save her husband. So one fateful day, according to Mrs. Ibeh, she was trying to carry her husband who was heavy both in size and body structure, when she had a dislocation and was taken to a midwife for treatment. It was in the house of the mid-wife under serious pains that she started crying and singing. Her crying and singing was narrating her ugly experiences in the hands of her husband, starting from the first day till that particular moment. She said in one of her songs that “marriage has a sweet and bitter taste; it is the duty of a woman to accept both tastes for peace to reign”. It was her cries of lamentation that originated Nkwanwite dance in Afikpo till date. Nkwanwite dance performance in Afikpo bases its origin and communicative potency on some metaphoric guide such as (songs, egg, objects and costumes), serving as a reflective pointer and as a reminder in the mind-set of any woman in Afikpo that wants to get married.

Nkwanwite dance performance

Initiation Ceremony

The initiation ceremony into Nkwanwite dance performance is of great essence. It is strictly meant for young ladies between the ages of 20–34 years. The reason for this age is because it is believed that at this age bracket, any young lady in Afikpo is supposed to be in a relationship and/or preparing to get married. So once any lady in Afikpo is to the earlier mentioned, she will be fully initiated into the dance. During the initiation

ceremony, there is no sign of ritual of any kind, rather the body of dancers determines whether they will be initiated into the dance or not. The bodies of the dancers remain highly indispensable symbolically because they help to determine whether the young men who will come to watch the dance will be attracted, and afterwards seek for any of the ladies' hand in marriage. According to Mrs Ibeh; 'what makes a good dancer and a full initiate in this dance is the ability of the dancer to take care of her body. It is believed that once she can achieve that, she will look charmingly attractive in the eyes of young men who will be searching for their future wives during the performance'. In order to achieve the required body configuration to be a member, the selected young ladies to be initiated will be assembled together in a compound fenced round which symbolically is called Ngkachi Umunwaanyi (protector of the ladies). The essence of this symbolic fence (ngkachi umunwaanyi) is to protect the outside world from seeing the ladies until the D-day. Inside this compound, the initiates would be taught a lot of things like:

- a) how to seduce their husbands;
- b) how to feed their husbands and children;
- c) how to take care of their mothers-in-law;
- d) how to avoid being a gossip subject;
- e) how to manage in the time of lack in the family;
- f) how to take care of themselves and still be in good shape before and after giving birth.

Mma ugogbe nwaada remains a symbolic woman during the initiation because during her days as a young lady and a full member of Nkwanwite, she kept all the rules and regulations guiding the initiates then. She had up to eight suitors all asking for her hand in marriage, and there was a general saying that 'whenever she is dancing, all the men watching her performance would be carried away to empty their pockets on her'. So during the initiation, she makes sure that the initiates are very attractive, charming and beautiful for the young men who will be watching their performance. It is a belief that any initiate who has gotten to the age of marriage and keeps the rules and regulations guiding the dance must surely get her future husband from the young men who are watching the performance. During the full initiation into the dance of Nkwanwite, the initiates always appear in three symbolic dance line formation:

- a) the sampling formation;
- b) the bravery formation;
- c) the readiness formation.

All these formations are communicative in nature more especially in exposing the different stages Nkwanwite initiates pass through before becoming full initiates. The communicative potency of this formation is as follows:

The Sampling Formation



Figure 1. A cross section of maidens on the sampling formation

This Sampling formation is dotingly called the formation of queens. This formation is solely meant for maidens who are complete women and have all it takes to make their various would-be husbands' remain forever faithful to them. The idea of being complete women is that the maidens are virgins who will get impregnated on their first sexual intercourse with their would-be husbands. The special gift from their 'chi' to those who maintain their virginity before becoming initiates into the dance is a male child. The male child serves as a proof of faithfulness of the woman before getting married to her husband. At this point, the initiates are told to always be attractive to their husbands before, during and after child bearing, because once they stop being attractive, their husbands will have the necessary justifications to cheat on them. They are also advised to always ex-

pose those attractive parts of their body like their stomach, breasts, waist, laps and hair, because once all these are well kept too, their husbands will forever remain faithful to them. It is at this point that the initiates are fully educated and informed on what it takes to be a wife both in child bearing, looking attractive to their husbands and also knowing how to encourage, motivate and sustain the family during agonizing moments.

The Bravery Formation



Figure 2. A cross section of maidens on bravery formation

This can be interpreted as the moment of tribulations in the various families the women will be married into. The initiates are here reminded that marriage is not a bed of roses, rather at times, the taste differs like:

- a) some marriages are sweet sweet sweet;
- b) some marriages are bitter sweet bitter;
- c) some marriages are bitter bitter bitter;
- d) some marriages are neither sweet nor bitter.

But whichever situation they meet in their marriages, all they need to do is to give unswerving support to their husbands and guide their children. The bravery formation fortifies and presents the various realities of life to the initiates by telling them that depending solely on their husbands will at times warrant dehumanization, starvation, and make the woman a 'non-locomotive engine' before the eyes of her husband's mother in-law and her

husband's siblings, thereby relegating the woman to the adage of 'oriaku' (A woman born to enjoy). So in order for the initiates to maintain their respects in their husbands' house, they must contribute positively at home.

The Readiness Formation



Figure 3. A cross section of maidens on readiness formation

The body communicative potency of initiates here presents them as being fully trained, informed and equipped on how to take care of the house, their husband and their children. Also, it means the initiates are fully prepared for marriage and any man that marries them at this point marries forever to breakthrough and open doors. The semiotic- interpretative gift that follows the initiates at this point is always showcased whenever they spread their hands during performance which implies—'we are a blessing to any man that marries us and remains faithful to us'. The initiates at this point are seen as full initiates and are officially welcomed into Nkwawite dance performance.

Music

The use of the music called Akwa Oyiri in Nkwawite dance performance is of symbolic essence, because the thematic strength of the song centers on reminding any married woman in Afikpo the disadvantages of

being a barren woman. According to the thematic analysis of the music, any married woman in Afikpo that is not pregnant nine months after her wedding or that has stayed years in the marriage without any child is always seen as a she-he and cannot be associated with.

The husband of the barren woman or wife is free to marry another wife once it is confirmed that the barren woman fondly addressed as 'she-he' who give birth to a child, or she will be asked to go back to her parents. The music semiotically portrays the various sufferings barren women go through in their husband's house in Afikpo. These include the following:

1. She will not be allowed to cook for her husband, because it is a belief in Afikpo that once a barren woman cooks for her husband, he will not be able to impregnate any woman again should he decide to re-marry.
2. She is not allowed to send the children of her co-wife on an errand, because it is believed that sending the children on an errand blocks the favour that will follow the child when he/she gets married in the future.
3. She is not allowed to stay in the same room with her husband, rather she is subjected to a thatch house, the reason for subjecting her to this symbolic thatch house is to remind her that she is not yet a full woman.
4. The barren woman is also subjected to constant cries which are full of rhetorical questions for her 'chi'. The symbolic essence of the cries of the barren woman is to beckon on her 'chi' to remember her and give her own child.

Aside the suffering of the barren woman stated in the song Akwa-oyiri, the theme of the song for effective interpretative understanding is divided into three symbolic sub-headings such as.

Akwa Oyiri na chi ya (The cry of the barren woman to her God)

The woman is expected to ask the gods of fertility in Afikpo why she is still barren while others are giving birth in numbers. According to Mrs. ibeh in an interview, it is of their mythological belief in Afikpo that once the barren woman can cry well, she might touch the heart of the 'god of fertility' and she will start bearing children. In order to achieve this effectively, the woman is expected to do three symbolic things like; be totally faithful, avoid envying those who have children and their children and to be always submissive to her husband.



Figure 4. This dance movement symbolically represents akwa Oyiri na chi ya

Akwa Oyiri bere di ya (The cry of the barren woman to her husband)

This is another symbolic action in the dance. The barren woman is expected to cry to appeal to the heart of her husband not to marry another woman, not to rule out her chances of giving birth completely and not to address her as she-he again. At this point, Oyiri (the barren woman) is advised to always do everything humanly possible in putting a smile on her husband's face.



Figure 5. This movement represents Akwa Oyiri Bere Di ya

Dance Movement

The dance movement here is very symbolic, communicative and of great semiotic essence. The semiotic interpretation of the dance movement lies in the symbolic communicative formation of the dancers on stage. It is the symbolic communicative formation of the advanced women dancers that portrays the message of the dance to the audience, that dancer being advanced women and not young ladies is of symbolic essence. It is believed that these women dancing are real women and they all gave birth in their various husband's houses exactly nine months after their marriage and all their first issues are all males. So they are seen as complete women and not 'she-he' (barren woman). Another effective essence why women are the only dancers is because it shows strength of women irrespective of their age, to prove their fertility and also to prove their readiness to give birth to more children if age permits them. The communicative semiotic essence in the dance is divided into three symbolic dance formations such as:

Aka ije oyiri

This dance movement based on its symbolic interpretative essence centers on women of Afikpo especially the married ones. It exposes the negative effects of been barren for years after marriage and not being able to conceive in the first nine months after marriage as the tradition demands. It is of great belief in Afikpo, based on the interpretation of the dance movement, that any barren woman in the community is yet to be accepted by her husband, her husband's siblings and husband's kinsmen based on the fact that anything can happen to the fate of the woman. The use of the tale of a black horse as a prop during the dance movement is of great significance. The black horse tale symbolizes the uncertainty in the married life of the barren woman in the community. The symbolic hand movement with the black horse tale during the dance reminds barren women of the following:

1. Husband has the right to return her back to her parents.
2. Husband can still keep her as a wife but totally ignore having any sexual intercourse with her.
3. Husband can still keep her while he remarries.
4. On no account is she allowed to send the child of the favored wife on any errand. All these can be witnessed with the symbolic throwing of hands by the women with the tail of the black horse in their hands during the dance movement.

Oyiri nnoo

This dance movement is highly symbolic and communicative in nature. The symbolic, communicative and interpretative potency of the dance movement centers on the following; the two women, black horse tail and the white handkerchief. This dance movement communicatively portrays the total acceptance of any married woman in Afikpo community in her husband's community. The total acceptance is always effectively based on the mutual understanding between her and whatever she meets in her husband's house. The following portrays the yardstick for measuring total acceptance in oyiri-nnoo dance movement formation. Those yardsticks are as follows:



Figure 6. This dance step symbolizes Oyiri Nnoo

The black horse tail

The use of the black horse tail as props during the dance is very symbolic. It is symbolic because its communicative essence reminds the co-wives the consequences of disobeying the eldest wife. The black horse

tail, based on its interpretation, stands for the following punishment from their husband if they disobey the eldest wife. These punishments are as follows:



1. Total isolation.
2. Rejection of their food by their husband.
3. Lack of favors from the husband.
4. Denial of the disobeying wife's children from seeing their father.
5. Returning the bride price paid if the situation gets worse.

The black horse tail also reminds the wives that the sole aim of their husband marrying them is for peaceful co-existence and nothing more

The Iconic Significance of Performance Arena

The performance arena for the dance Nkwanwite is an open space arena. The use of the open space arena is very symbolic in the dance. The open space arena for the performance reminds every married woman in Afikpo community that she was married into her husband's house without having any foresight on how her husband's kinsmen, siblings, parents or friends will accept her. It is now left for the woman to exhibit good characters that will give her a firm stand in the community she is married into. The symbolic interpretation of the open arena during the performance shows the following things a man has in mind before marrying his wife. Those things are:

- a) wants his wife to be a motivator;
- b) wants his wife to be a master planner;
- c) wants his wife to be an achiever;
- d) wants his wife to be a goal-getter.

These are symbolic meanings placed on the open performance space which any woman married into the community is expected to fulfill throughout her stay in her husband's house. The performance arena transcends from being a mere venue to a serious reflective space for married women in Afikpo community that's helps them imbibe and continues in good character in their homes.

The Costume

The required costume for the dance is George wrapper, white blouse, neck beads, hand beads and a head tie; all these costume symbolically mark a sign of powerful transition from spinsterhood into to motherhood. It is believed that this dance portrays motherhood and fruitfulness for women who are ready to sacrifice everything they have in order to provide for their husbands and their children. The costume of this dance reminds every single young lady in Afikpo community that before her husband buys all these expensive costumes for her, she must be fruitful, caring and totally submissive to her husband. It is also important to note that the women of Afikpo community judge how peacefully a woman lives with her husband based on how expensive she dresses for any occasion and how beautiful and smart she looks in any occasion. All the costumes used in Nkwanwite dance performance are very expensive, so the ability of any woman to afford them portrays how much her husband loves and cherishes her.



Figure 7. A cross-section of symbolic costume of Nkwanwite dance

The Instrument

The instruments used during this performance are very symbolic as each instrument performs a particular function during the performance. The use of these specified instruments asides giving cues to the dancers on stage passes meaningful information to the women and audience. These instruments are as follows:



Figure 8. A cross-section of Nkwanwite instrumentalists and their symbolic instruments

a. *Ikpali*

This is a cemented stone, beaten with a pestle. It is used to remind every married woman in Afikpo community that the key to their husbands' heart is good food. The ability of the woman to cook well will help her to hold her husband's love and care. But in a situation whereby a woman cannot cook well, she stands the chance of losing her husband to the hands of another woman who can cook better than her. It is an abomination for a married woman to allow her house help to cook for her husband, because it is believed that if maids cook better than their madams, there is a very good reason that the husbands will fall victim to the maids' charm. So to avoid any married woman losing her husband, she tries her best to be a good cook.

b. *Udu*

The use of udu as an instrument in this context is of importance. The udu stands as the man, while the instrument used in beating it stands as the woman. The symbolic interpretation placed on the udu is to remind the women that it is their duty to be supportive, understanding and motivating to their husbands, because the more they protect and support their husbands, the more the husbands will live long for them; but if they start nagging and comparing their husbands with other men, they will end up losing them. So the best way to protect their husbands from premature death is by guiding them exactly the way the udu is been beaten during the performance.

c. *The Bottle*

The essence of the bottle as an instrument is to remind especially newly married couples the dark side of marriage if they start listening to gossips, or cheating and lying to each other. These will automatically destroy their marriage. The bottle as an instrument symbolically can stay for years but if there is a crack, it can be thrown out. That is exactly how long and sweet any marriage can last if there are no intruders. So based on the symbolic long-lasting life span of any bottle when compared semiotically with marriage, married couples should try as much as possible to avoid anything, human, actions or places that would serve as cracks on the wall of their marriages. The use of the bottle as an instrument at this point stands as the walls of marriage while the instrument used in beating it stands as the dangerous “soldier ants” fighting seriously to destroy the walls.

Conclusion

From findings of this paper, signifying symbols is an indispensable tool in any traditional performance in Nigeria and beyond. What should always be the working metaphor of any choreographer is to make use of communicative iconic symbols to avoid myopic misinterpretation. At this point if possible, the choreographer should always alert the audience before and after production that beyond the mere props used by the dancers there is an interpretative undertone in them. It is through these undertones that dance (especially Nkwanite) will be appreciated as having didactic values. Dance scholars should therefore put more effort in analyzing, documenting and preserving symbolic cultural symbols before they are been misinterpreted as mere performance cultural enhancer.

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**“OMO T’O MO ‘YA’RE LOJU”
(A child that despises his mother)
narratives cultural value of motherhood
in Jimi Solanke’s music**

ABSTRACT. Within the traditional African setting, the values of an African mother in the domestic and societal ambience have called for great concerns. Akinjobi (2011, p. 2) examines African Motherhood as a sacred as well as a powerful spiritual component in the nurturing and development of an African child. The scope of this paper therefore, is to examine the position of Jimi Solanke on the values of African mothers as advocated in some of his purposively selected songs which address the values and position of motherhood as caretakers of children and strongholds in African homes. The paper adopts oral interview, the theory of Womanism and Feminism as rightly observed by Sotunsa (2008, pp. 227–234) as its methodological approaches and largely concentrates on the experience of an African mother, the family relationship as well as the importance of motherhood in her role as an African child nurturer and developer. The paper finds out that Jimi Solanke has not only appraised the values of African mothers, but also expressed severe consequences on any African child who despised or despoiled an African mother.

KEYWORDS: child, despise, mother, cultural value and motherhood

Introduction

The culture of a people is what marks them out distinctively from other human societies. In Africa, the cultural values accrued to motherhood are vested in the domestic responsibilities as a child nurturer and develop-

er. This is however; quantified in her relationship to family and the society in general as expressed by Jimi Solanke in his purposively selected songs for this paper. Other musicians in Nigeria have sung about the female gender, but Jimi Solanke is specifically concerned about the values of mothers in the society and he relates these values to mothers as nurturers and caretakers of the home and the society. This is culturally understood to entail a totality of traits that are peculiar to African mothers. Values here are to be understood as beliefs that are held about what is right and what is wrong and what is important in life.

Leith-Ross (1967, p. 34) emphasizes that culturally, African women were the transmitters of the language, the history and the oral culture, the music, the dance, the habits and the artisanal knowledge, a position which Jimi Solanke also subscribed to in his music, '*iya lo lu gbo'wo mi*' regards mothers as the first teachers and the caretakers of children from infant even to adulthood. Jimi Solanke opines that mothers are equally responsible for instilling traditional values and knowledge in children. Apart from within the African traditional culture, religions all over the global circle, whether Christian, Judaic, Hindu and Islam accord very important place to motherhood, it is widely an exalted realm for the woman hence religious imagery sentimentalizes and idealizes motherhood. The image of Madonna characterizes Christianity; there is the Devi-Ma in Hindu tradition. Africans talk about the creation goddess often depicted as a mermaid or a beautiful woman and associated with the moon and ocean. The idea of self-sacrifice emphasizes the centrality of motherhood in African society (Ogini, 1996, pp. 11–19).

In another song, Jimi Solanke refers to mothers as gold; this song further affirms the golden position of African motherhood because it is considered in African culture that children are more intimate with their mothers. This societal conceptual stand on motherhood has made mothers to be collectively considered as a symbol of the nation-state. Most nationals today address the nation-as-mother symbolism to mobilize patriotic sentiments (Akinjobi, 2011, p. 2). Other writers of literary works have attested to the importance of mothers in African culture in various published books. Camara Laye (1954a, 1954b) and Senghor (1965) express their love for African women in terms of the love for motherhood.

Obiechina (1973, pp. 98–104) echoes this idea in his book review 'Mother is Gold'. David Diop's poem 'Africa my Africa' (1957) glorifies mother in his poems where he states of three African women honored with the Nobel Prize for Peace to express the grand position mothers are

attaining in Africa and Christopher Okigbo’s poem “Before you, mother Idoto, naked I stand” (1967) recognizes the power of his mother “Idoto”. The motherhood symbolism was also evident in the anti-colonial nationalist struggles in Africa in the 1950s and early 1960s up to the point of independence. Ngcobo (1988, p. 143) observes that this was much more evidenced in South Africa especially after Mandela went to prison and in the 1980s and 1990s until the all inclusive election that brought Nelson Mandela to power in 1994. There are also patriotic songs from musicians like Miriam Makeba and monuments in many countries that celebrate the nation-as-mother. There are also patriotic songs and monuments in many countries such as Nigeria, Ghana Liberia that celebrate the nation-as-mother, these patriotic songs often invoke sentiments of loyalty toward the land of birth.

Africana “Womanism”

Africana Womanism is an ideology which is grounded in African culture. The term Africana Womanism was coined by Hudson-Weems in 1997 and it rightly discards the term feminism. According to Lyons-Ruth (2008, p. 23), Africana Womanism was born out of a debate between Third World Women and Western Feminists in which according to Lyons (2008, p. 28) “one perspective laid blame on Western Feminists for silencing the African Woman in the very speech intended to liberate her from oppression” (Lyons-Ruth, 2008, p. 28). Hudson-Weems (1997, pp. 77–97) acknowledges that she did not create the legacy of Africana Womanism but has “observed Africana women, documented their reality, and refined a paradigm relative to who they are, what they do, and what they believe in as a people”. Africana Womanism accepts some elements of mainstream Feminism’s female-centred empowerment agenda. It however, criticises Western Feminism for its “caustic beginnings and inapplicability for women of African descent” (Hudson-Weems, 1997, p. 91). The need for a theory that is Africa specific was brought about through sentiment by women as Marta Bennett (1995, pp. 23–35), who notes that as an African woman: I must remember that:

what I do affects the status in society of my husband, my father-in-law, my mother-in-law...Therefore (African) woman...will always look back and ask, ‘am I carrying the family with me?

With Bennett's submission, African women therefore have peculiar cultural expectations which control their actions and so there is the need for a theory that caters for their special differences. In as much as Africana Womanism is global in its approach and has managed to isolate the African woman from the general category of "women" that includes non-African women, it still has some major weaknesses which need to be addressed. Mangena (2003) states it aptly that the major challenge remains that Africana Woman, just like the term woman is not a monolithic bloc. What is particularly problematic is combining and having one approach that addresses the problems of one category but two separate realities of the African continent and that of its diaspora. In as much as women in the continent and its diaspora belong to the same category their realities are quite different. Whereas Africana women in the diaspora may still be existing in racist societies, those in the continent may not identify race as an immediate problem in their daily encounters because most of the African nations are independent from political imperial rule.

Africana Womanism also does not consider the differences in ethnicity among African women and even women in the same country from belonging to different ethnic groups.

Motherhood and African cultural stand

In most cultures, expectations of mothering roles intensify social pressure to conform to what the culture says or what the tradition decrees. In Iyuku in Estakor (west of Edo State of Nigeria), culture continues to perpetuate highly prescriptive notions of motherhood. In this community of farmers, women are made to pass through some unhealthy practices in the name of motherhood. Women are expected to undergo certain rituals during pregnancy, especially first pregnancy. The woman must go through circumcision when she is seven months into the pregnancy; for this reason, the practice of circumcision and clitoridectomy, now seen in many quarters as a violation of human rights, is vitally placed in Iyuku. Mbiti (1970, pp. 24–36) recognizes the power in the blood which he says binds the individual to the land and consequently to the departed of the society. In this case, the circumcision blood is like making a covenant, or a solemn agreement, between the individual and her people and until the individual has gone through the operation, she is an outsider. While much of our lives involve the enactment of socially constructed cultural representations

which take gender specific forms, motherhood stands out as a construct imbued with extraordinary ideological and cultural significance (Kruger, 2006, pp. 198–204; Phoenix & Woollet, 1991, pp. 13–45). It also provides a pertinent illustration of the way in which some constructions come to assume an identity politics which homogenizes and naturalizes social categories and groupings.

In Africa, like elsewhere in the world, motherhood has been an important theme (Oyewumi, 2001, pp. 1–12; Sudarkasa, 1991, pp. 34–47), informing women’s social identity and shaping their political involvement (Walker, 1995, pp. 417–437). Within the African context, the construe of motherhood is heavily implicated in the network of ideological imperatives (gender, ‘race’, class, culture, nation, and empire) in response to which the Black, female subject is constructed (Mama, 1995, pp. 343–345). In South Africa a number of contextual factors, but perhaps most explicitly the system of Apartheid, has informed the ways in which White and Black women have put possibly common notions of motherhood (under patriarchy) to different political uses (Walker, 1995, p. 433; Hassim, 1991, pp. 65–82).

Motherhood in Africa is seen as a God-given role and for this reason it is sacred, the spiritual power of women especially as mothers must be recognized whether one sees African women as victims or actors. (Christian, 1982, p. 147), whether or not one depicts women’s travails especially, in domestic and cultural responsibilities that are endowed upon them (Ojo-Ade, 1983, p. 161; Chinweizu, 1990, pp. 78–84) further argues that mothers have exploited her biological superiority and has consolidated her power by taking over the role of mother, cook and nurse in the household. In this sense, (Ngcobo, 1988, pp. 140–149.) believes that generally, Africans take motherhood to be all about children, as she puts it “every woman is encouraged to marry and get children in order to express her womanhood to the full. Motherhood is so critical in most traditional societies in Africa that there is no worse misfortune for a woman than being childless”. In a complimentary statement (Mbiti, 1970, p. 144), writes that a barren woman is seen as incomplete and a “dead end of human life, not only for genealogical level but also for herself”.

Feminists in Africa, while conceding that motherhood may at times operate in an oppressive manner, have tried to read other meanings to motherhood, meanings that are empowering for women. Within these meanings, they agree that giving birth bestows a certain status on women, even mystical powers. Yoruba traditions point to this fact. Among the Yoruba people, motherhood is said to confer privileges that give credence to the

very foundations of society and women's presumed roles in it and thus symbolize fertility, fecundity, and fruitfulness. The Yoruba saying, "*Iya ni wura, baba ni jigi*" ("mother is gold, father is a mirror") as also expressed by late Dipo Sodipo (a popular musician in the Southwestern Nigeria) goes a long way in showing the importance of motherhood in African society, the choice of Jimi Solanke music was as a result of his use of African musical instruments and tonality of the lyrical content. Mother is gold: strong, valuable, true and of whose importance is central to a child's existence.

Yoruba concept and values of '*Ikunle Abiyamo*'

The Yoruba concept, belief and value of *ikunle abiyamo*, the kneeling position assumed at the moment of birth confers special spiritual privileges on a mother. Badejo (1998, p. 95) posits that although the reality of motherhood is experienced by women, the institution is ably controlled by men, because the experience is being interpreted by men and the structure they control. Emecheta (1979, pp. 23–38) dwells on the concept of motherhood in most of her books, especially in *Joys of Motherhood* and *Second Class Citizen*. Flora Nwapa mirrors this concept in her *Efuru*, where childlessness and failed marriages mandate a literary criticism that mirrors the importance of children in the African family. Going further in this discourse, most African communities have their own idea of motherhood and how a woman should experience it. Emecheta (1979, p. 32) looks at how sexuality and the ability to bear children may sometimes be the only way by which femininity and womanhood are defined, the same woman has to work and support her family because the so-called bread winner cannot provide any bread for the family, so she is forced to support the family and at the same time be responsible for the children. Mbiti (1970, p. 32) tries to convey the importance and joy of birth, how the mother nurses her infant, and he talks about celebrations and rituals that herald and welcome the birth of a baby. It is fundamentally conceived that the importance of children to the African family is very vital and the nursing of such children rests principally on the African mother.

Ogundipe-Leslie (1994, pp. 23–36) accounts for the importance of motherhood in Africa as due to the theme of extreme relevance to African societies and for this reason; it is widely documented in most of the works by African singers including Jimi Solanke. There are other issues now that are of utmost importance to women in Africa, but the issue of motherhood

is still very important. Musicians, both males and females have always encouraged every woman to bear children and women without children are seen as evil. With motherhood, a woman is considered blessed; she acquires a higher status in society, respected and mythologized. In an interview with Jimi Solanke, the position of mothers in the society was further stressed as encompassing the following:

1. Mothers are custodians of physical beauty, intelligence, tenderness, compassion, patience and tolerance for the benefit of the society.
2. A home without a mother today is looked down upon and often the object of ridicule by people in the society. The home is also shunned by people because it is considered unblessed hence, cursed. Who in his right mind would want to visit a home not graced by presence of a good mother?
3. Not all women in Africa are regarded as mothers. Not in the limited sense of bearing children, but in the larger sense of beings the one’s God blessed with the gift of continuity of the life line and the linking of man with fellow man. A woman, who even though may have not borne children of her own, is often referred to as a mother in most African societies. A man who beats up his wife is considered by society to be weak in mind and utterly lacking in moral character.
4. Mothers play a complementary role together with their husbands in the society for entrenchment of better societal values.
5. Mothers are also called to be great leaders in the society. To take up leadership positions so as to stop corrupt practices in the society, and
6. Mothers are to teach morals in the society. They are called to be good teachers, not just about education but also about culture and disciplines.

The power of mothers’ breasts in the concept of motherhood among the Yoruba

In any African community, the power in and of the breast of mothers is very strong. When a mother tells a child that “I will bring out my breast,” it means a lot as this is enough to caution any erring child. The power in the breast is so significant in the sense that everyone is considered to have suckled the mother’s breast. No child will be so stubborn to the extent that he/she will not dread the mother’s breast, given all of these about motherhood, mothers command so much respect and at the same time awe.

The importance of these cultural and religious symbols of motherhood is borne out of the fact that they are repeatedly alluded to in life and literature. Literary and artistic works through the ages dwell on the attributes of motherhood and depictions of self-sacrificing mothers, mothers as creators who must bear pain with patience and nurture selflessly.

Jimi Solanke and African mothers

Several musicians have released musical tracks with the theme of mother and motherhood. The position of Jimi Solanke on the values of motherhood especially with regards to an African mother, mothering and motherhood have been well expressed in his purposively selected songs where strong advocacy for the importance of mothers in African societies is given uncompromising priority. This campaign has also been well channelled in several folk songs credited to Jimi Solanke. A perusal of several musical activities of Jimi Solanke reflects a supermom nature of African mothers. Attesting to this fact, St. Clair (1994, p. 27) writes that the fact remains that no degree of stereotyping against women existed in traditional Africa. The woman possessed the power to organize the family and the society at large. Clair's position confirms that there is an existing enormous task and responsibility conferred on African womanhood and motherhood. Expressing few considerations of Jimi Solanke's advocacy on the values of African mothers, an interactive session with 'Baba Agba' as he is popularly referred to reveals some of his standpoints as reflected in quotes and figures in this chapter.

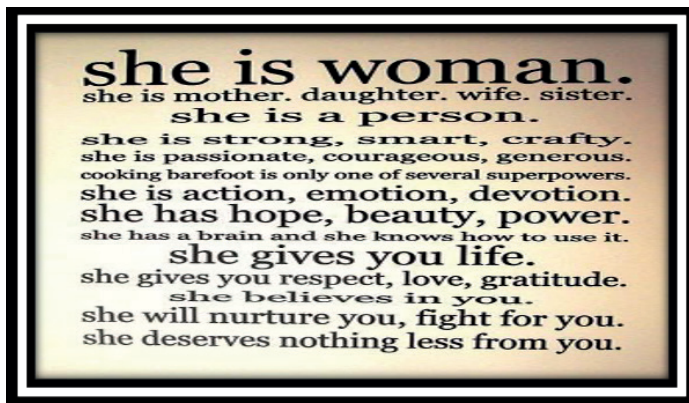


Figure 1. An art work captured during an oral interview with Jimi Solanke on Saturday, February 25, 2017

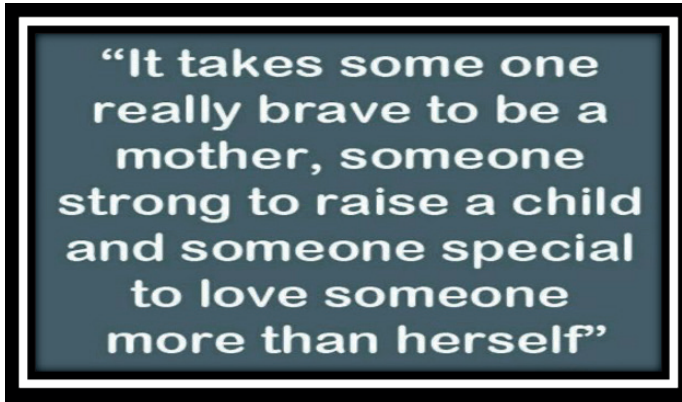


Figure 2. An art work captured during an oral interview with Jimi Solanke on Saturday, February 25, 2017

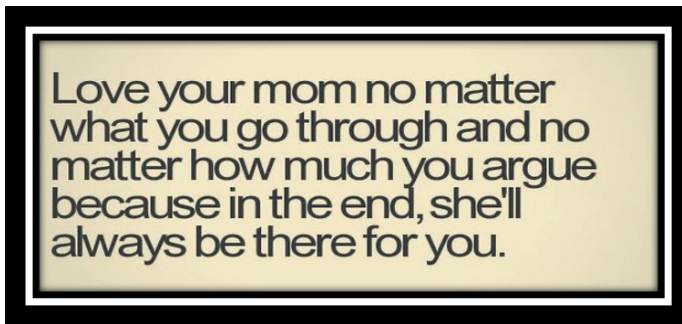


Figure 3. An art work captured during an oral interview with Jimi Solanke on Saturday, February 25, 2017

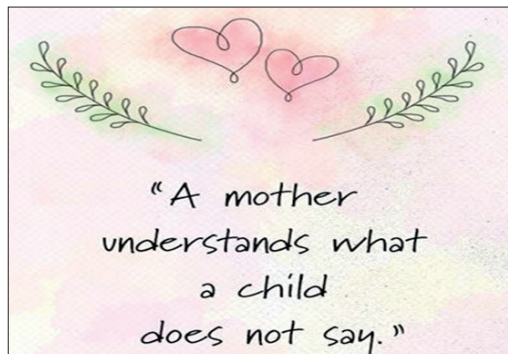


Figure 4. An art work captured during an oral interview with Jimi Solanke on Saturday, February 25, 2017

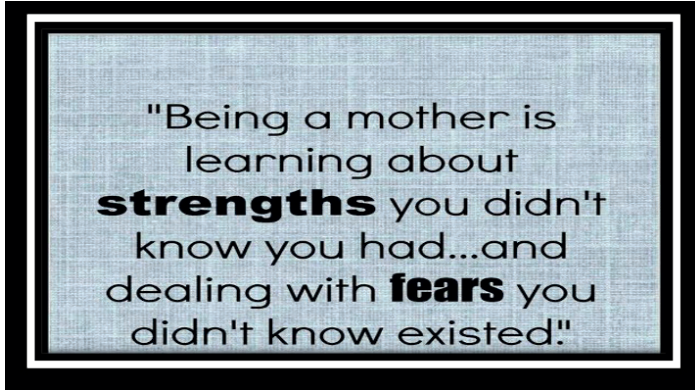


Figure 5. An art work captured during an oral interview with Jimi Solanke on Saturday, February 25, 2017



Figure 6. An art work captured during an oral interview with Jimi Solanke on Saturday, February 25, 2017

An appraisal of the selected songs as expressed below would be necessary as factual evidence to concretise his position on the plates/figures cited above.

Musical and cultural analysis of Jimi Solanke's selected songs

There are three selected songs which are considered for analysis in this study. The first is '*Iya lo'lu gbowo mi*' meaning 'mother is my caretaker'. Below is notational score of the song as sung by Jimi Solanke:

Iya lo lu gbo wo mi

Jimi solanke

I ya lo lu gbo wo mi tin to ju mi ni ke ke re e yin re lo fi po mi i

7
ya ku i se mi e mi ki ya mi ku' se pe lu' te ri

12
ba mo le e mi ko le ko' se fun i ya mi mo i yao i yao i yao

Musical text and translation

Text

Iya lo'lu gbowo mi
Ti n'toju ni kekere
Eyin re lo fi pon mi
Iya ku ise mi
Emi k'iya mi ku ise
Pe lu'teri ba mole
Emi ko le ko'se fun'ya mi mo
Iya, iya, iya o

Translation

Mother is my caretaker
Who took care of me from my infacy
She puts on her soft back
Mother well done for caring for me
I salute my mother for this great care
With humbleness and humility
I will never refuse her errands
Mother, mother, mother

Cultural analysis of the song

Culturally, mothers have played and are still playing a significant role in Africa in which Yoruba culture is also embedded. Mothers are highly respected and adorned in many fashions throughout several clans in Nigeria. African mothers are culturally bound to their children, with strong intimacy from birth to breast feeding, crawling to walking, schooling to graduating and apprenticeship to freedom. A child remains a child to African mothers. It is on these premise that Jimi Solanke pitched his value advocacy for African mothers and gives a strong salute to the mother for all her efforts on him with a '*codetta*' conclusion of hailing and addressing her as 'mother, mother, mother'.

The second song is '*Iya ni wura Iyebiye*' meaning 'Mother is a precious Gold. This is a metaphorical statement which adds value to the importance of the African mother who is as precious as gold. Below is notational score of the song as sung by Jimi Solanke:

IYA NI WURA IYE BIYE

Jimi Solanke

I ya ni wu ra i ye bi ye ti a ko le fo wo rao O lo yun mi

6
fo' su me san O po mi fo' dun me ta

9
I ya ni wu ra i ye bi ye ti a ko le fo wo rao

Musical text and translation

Text

Iya ni wura iyebiye
Ti a ko le f'owo ra o
She conceived me for nine months
Iya ni wura iyebiye
Ti a ko le f'owo ra o

Translation

Mother is a precious gold
Which cannot be bought with money
And backed me for six years
Mother is a precious gold
Which cannot be bought with money

Cultural analysis of the song

Quintessential cultural values of motherhood in Africa cannot be underestimated. The metaphorical expression of Jimi Solanke in referring to mothers as "a precious gold of no equivalent price" is an attestation to the high esteem Africans, especially the Yoruba culture, has placed motherhood in the cultural ambience. Moreover, the position of motherhood as the only identifier of children that are legal or bastard puts her in the vital position in any family setting. In the African cultural system, mothers are again perceived to take a lot of forms of responsibilities which are able to

lead the child to be a responsible adult and a good representative of the family.

The third song is ‘Iya ni Wura, Baba ni Jigi’ meaning ‘Mother is Gold, while Father is the Mirror’. This song further affirms the golden position of African motherhood because it is considered in African culture that children are more intimate with their mothers than fathers. The fathers are the mirror that reflects the child in the society. The reason for this concept is likely predicated on the fact that the child bears the name of the father and not that of the mother and most often, they are believed to have adopted the attributes of their lineage through the father. When they behave well, the father is praised and when otherwise the blame goes to the woman. However, the dignity and vocation of mothers are respected in almost all the tribes in Africa. This is because mothers are the bedrock of the early basic acquaintances of culture for their children and thus very fundamental to the issue of moral formation in the family. A family endowed with a good mother who equally enjoys the support of a good father, impacts good moral values into the lives if the children. The result is harmonious and it reflects in the daily activities of such family in the community. Love of motherhood is in the heart of traditional African family values. Other popular folk and popular musicians such as King Sunny Ade, Dipo Sodipo and Sikiru Ayinde Barrister have also expressed their minds on the values accrued to African mothers. But Jimi Solanke addresses these values from the poetic perspectives which have made the lyrical messages more tonal and easily comprehended. Most of the selected songs are home songs which has become familiar with virtually everybody from south-western Nigeria in our early childhood days in elementary schools and villages. Below is notational score of the song as sung by Jimi Solanke:

IYA NIWU RA BABA NI DI GI

Jimi Solanke

I ya ni wu ra Ba ba ni di gi O jo i ya ku ni wu

4
ra o la ba je O jo ba ba ku ni di gi o la wo mi

Conclusion

In conclusion, the mystification of African mothers which (Ogun-dipe-Leslie, 1994, p. 23–36) refers to is due to the importance of motherhood in Africa. This theme is of relevance to African societies and for this reason; it is widely documented in many of the works by African men and women. Among the Yoruba people, motherhood is said to confer privileges that give credence to the very foundations of society and women's presumed roles in it and thus symbolize fertility, fecundity, and fruitfulness. Jimi Solanke's agreement with the Yoruba saying "*Iya ni wura, baba ni jigi*" ("mother is gold, father is a mirror") goes a long way in showing the importance of motherhood in African society. Mother is gold: strong, valuable, true and central to a child's existence and experience. The Yoruba also believe that *ikunle abiyamo*: the kneeling position assumed at the moment of birth confers special spiritual privileges on a mother. Thus there are powers, privileges, and entitlements that come with motherhood even in the act of giving birth, Jimi Solanke agrees with this position in his song *iya ni wura Iyebiye* where he specifically recounts the nine months of pregnancy and three years of backing the child which is a symbol of mutual relationship between mother and child.

There are other issues now that are of utmost importance to women in Africa, but the issue of motherhood is still very important in Africa. The concept of motherhood has been of central importance in the traditions of people of Africa and it has been presented by many artistes and artists. Both men and women writers have always encouraged every woman to bear children because women without children are seen as evil. Jimi Solanke states that with motherhood, a woman is considered blessed, she acquires a higher status in society, she is respected and mythologized.

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African women in search of global identity: An exploration of feminism and Afropolitanism in Chimamanda Adichie's works

ABSTRACT. Many variants of feminism have been branded over time and that has given feminism a multiple identity. One of the new revelations of feminism in recent times is "Afropolitan Feminism", a branch of African feminism conceived in this research to deal with the story of African women in the homeland and the Diaspora trying to assume the status of world citizens (Metropolitans) to de-emphasize their origins. What is the nature of Afropolitan Feminism? What is the link between Feminism and Afropolitanism? To what extent do Adichie's characters show the attributes of Afropolitans? This paper illuminates the concepts of feminism and Afropolitanism and the latter's traits in Adichie's characters in *Americanah* and *The Thing Around Your Neck*. It deals with Diaspora issues and the way African women in literary fictions try to stem the effects of global maladies like African patriarchy, Western racism and sexism. The paper further discusses social awareness and feminist tendencies displayed by the characters. It ends by noting that feminism which assumes the dimension of Afropolitanism in Adichie's works is a becoming trend rather than a fixed norm.

KEYWORDS: Afropolitanism, feminism, diaspora

Introduction

Chimamanda Adichie is a female African author who is widely known and read in contemporary African literature. Her writings as vehicle of expression for the yearnings of the African woman are well received in literary circles all over the world. This particular feat has ultimately led to her meteoric rise to fame and brought her to the center of global interest, especially since such writings are full of ancillary power of feminine activism and advocacy. Adichie's use of the recent concept of Afropolitanism to shed

new light on the literary portrayal of African women living in the Diaspora has added glamour to her achievements as a prolific writer. She deploys this concept as a tool in the creation of fictions such as *Americanah*, and five of her short stories in *The Thing around your neck*. These short stories include "Imitation", "The Arrangers of marriage", "On Monday of Last week", "The Shivering" and "The Thing around your neck". We shall use the concept of Afropolitanism as defined by Taiye Selasi, Achille Mbembe and others to analyze these works and show how Adichie tries to situate her characters, who have escaped from patriarchal practices at the homeland, in the global context in order to insulate them from crisis of identity, discrimination and racism in the West while they are there in search of better opportunities for their self-actualization.

What is Afropolitan feminism?

We in this paper define "Afropolitan feminism" as a relatively new concept which could be summed up as:

1. A type of feminism that combines the usual feminist attributes with Afropolitan ideals.
2. Portrayal of feminist characters that also possess Afropolitan characteristics.
3. Portrayal of African feminist characters born in the Diaspora or who have left the homeland to the imperial centre in search of a better life.

Feminist literature as we know it, usually treats the themes of the quest for equality between men and women, portrayal of the oppression and suppression of women in a patriarchal society as well as the portrayal of female characters who have risen above the stereotype. On the other hand, Afropolitanism or Afropolitan feminism portrays women who live in the home land, grappling with identity formation and who decide not to be confined to a particular geographical area; so they move out from the center of oppression in search of greener pastures in the Diaspora. Afropolitan feminism therefore imbues women with positive mental attitude through mode of dressing, education, venturing into unconventional careers and liberating themselves from both physical and mental "confinement".

This study therefore describes Afropolitan feminism as that in which the African woman is comfortable and at home anywhere in the world whilst refusing to take victim identity. Afropolitan feminism does not get

fixated on the injustice and violence inflicted on women in a patriarchal society, but rather provides the African woman the optimism and confidence required to assert her subjectivity. The Afropolitan feminist accepts herself the way she is. She is confident in who she is irrespective of gender, race, occupation and colour. The ability of the African woman to relinquish all feeling of inferiority complex, overcome issues of race and gender, the ability to flourish and prosper in any geographical location and refuse being stereotyped are major features of Afropolitan feminism. The Afropolitan feminist is not confined or limited to a particular geographical space. Ndioro Ndiaye rightly asserts that "From an Afropolitanist standpoint, women's participation in Africa's development is not limited to the continent itself, but rather it extends to the world, by highlighting the actions accomplished by women to build, manage and sustain the world based on their own individual African values and cultures" (Ndioro, 2014, p. 67).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this paper is feminism, Afropolitanism and Diaspora theories. Feminism advocates equal rights for women and creates a model of ideal womanhood. According to Rosemarie Tong (1989, p.1), feminist theory attempts to describe women's oppression, to explain its causes and consequences and prescribe strategies for women's liberation. Others like Jane Flax (http://faculty.ypc.edu/~dweiss/phl380_feminist_thought/what%20is%20feminist%20theory.pdf) reiterates that feminist theory has several purposes—understanding the power differential between men and women, understanding women's oppression—how it evolved, how it changes over time, how it is related to other forms of oppression and how to overcome oppression. There are many branches of feminism—liberal feminism, radical feminism, eco-feminism, Amazon feminism, social feminism, African feminism among others. This gives African feminism a pluralistic identity (Arndt, 2002, p. 31–34).

Modern feminism also known as the "first wave" of modern feminism can be traced back to as early as 1792 with Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). In her work, she posits that women and men should enjoy the same social, legal, and intellectual equality (qtd. in Gregory, 2007, p. 106). These early feminist activists, Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were mostly preoccupied with the issue of granting suffrage rights to women. Other feminists like

Virginia Woolf, in *Room of One's Own* (1929), criticize the stereotyping of women in male authored novels. Woolf (qtd. in Gregory, 2007, p. 107) not only condemned the negative portrayal of women but created a new model for female identity.

The “second wave” of Feminism, started in the 1960s, and could boast of writers like Simone de Beauvoir, Germaine Greer, and Kate Millet among others. In her book, *The Second Sex* (1949), De Beauvoir (<https://freepages.rootswebs.com/~giliamgibbs/geneology/writings/pmf.html>) laments the plights of women and notes that “we are all brought up in a world defined by men, where women are defined as the “other” or not being normal (maleness being the norm)”. She further asserts that “one is not born, one becomes a woman,” (De Beauvoir trans. 1949, p. 330). Germaine Greer (qtd. in Gregory, 2007, p. 95) in *The Female Eunuch*, argues that there is no natural distinction between the sexes. For Kate Millet (qtd. in Gregory, 2007, p. 96), the problem was fundamentally political. Also like De Beauvoir, she argued against the concept of “biologism”, which is the idea that gender difference is “natural”. Millet criticized cultural programming, especially the infantilization of women.

African women are not left out in feminist writings and activism. African women writing started in the 1970s with the main objective of dismissing the unattractive representations of womanhood in the novels of their male counterparts. African feminists seek to develop a feminist perspective that will reflect the African woman’s realities. Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie’s form of feminism is called STIWA—Social Transformation Involving Women in Africa (qtd. in Azodo, 2015, p. 9). Catherine Acholonu prefers Motherism, while Admora Ezeigbo came up with Snail Sense feminism (qtd. in Azodo, 2015, p. 10). Others like Buchi Emecheta, C. O. Ogunyemi and Ama Ata Aidoo endorse Alice walker’s Womanism. Filomina Chioma Steady’s African feminism advocates autonomy and co-operation of women; importance of nature over culture; children, multiple mothering and kinship. She maintains that African feminist literature concerns itself with the liberty of all African people (qtd. in Azodo, 2015, p. 10).

In spite of the various forms and branches of feminism, what all of them have in common is an interest in exposing patriarchal forms of power as the cause of the unequal and subordinate status of women all over the world. According to Mill (qtd. in Gregory, 2007, p. 106) in his book *The Subjection of Women* (1869) “All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission

and yielding to the control of others". It is the above notion that feminist literatures seek to correct.

Even though there are many strands of feminism, this paper is going to be explored with the theoretical lens of African feminism. Feminism highlights problems of race, sexuality, tradition, chief among which are: polygamy, abusive widowhood practices, genital mutilation, witch-hunting and woman's lack of access to property and power in a traditional African society. Other themes of African feminism include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification, (especially sexual objectification) and oppression.

The theme of Afropolitanism will be explored using Taiye Selasi's essay—"Bye Bye Babar" or "Who is an Afropolitan" as a yardstick. Selasi made up that term when she got tired of explaining and being apologetic about her multiple national backgrounds. In order to assert her identity, she opted to become a citizen of the world, not confined to a particular geographical area (Selasi, 2005, p. 3). Afropolitanism gives a sense of belonging to emigrants battling with identity crises. Contrary to some writers believe that Afropolitanism is mainly related to fashion, dance style and art, this study will show that Afropolitanism is more relevant as a literary discourse. The main characteristics of Afropolitanism are:

- The novels are set in Diaspora and the characters also live in Diaspora, they are Cultural Hybrids with multiple nationalities and a tendency to feel at home wherever they are.
- Dress sense—a combination of African and European fashion to assert their multicultural identity. There is a strong correlation between mode of dressing and freedom.
- They have unconventional careers, freedom of expression and education.
- African bond i.e. having at least one African country to call home in spite of being a citizen of the world, Identity formation and a call for experts to come back to Africa to build it. We will also draw from Achilles Mbembe's and Alpha Abebe's definitions as well as other proponents of Afropolitanism. Abebe (2015, paragraph 5) considers Afropolitanism as a contemporary response to "Afro-pessimism", which generally masks class differences and inequities within the African Diaspora, and regularly challenges gender roles and representations. Mbembe (2007, p. 26–30) on the other hand defines Afropolitanism as an aesthetic, and a particular poetic of the world. He describes it as a way of being in the world and refusing on principle any form of victim identity. Moreover, Mbembe and Nuttall, by im-

plication, see Afropolitanism as a way of overcoming the boredom of reading too much literature about Africa and therefore a necessary distraction, for which they assert:” In an attempt to overturn predominant readings of Africa, we need to identify sites within the continent ...not usually dwelt upon in research and public discourse, that defamiliarize commonplace readings of Africa” (<https://find-words.info/term/afropolitan>, paragraph 1).

The theory of Diaspora will also be used to analyze this work, since the authors live in Diaspora and the selected novels are set in Diaspora. One of the early scholars to establish the main criteria for Diaspora theory is William Safran in his article “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return”. In this essay, he suggested certain criteria for theorizing Diaspora. According to him, in order to qualify as Diaspora, there must be a dispersal from a specific original “center” to two or more “peripheral” or foreign region; retention of a collective memory, vision, or myth about the original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements; non-acceptance by their host society and therefore feeling of alienation and insulation from it; regarding the ancestral homeland as the true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate; belief in the commitment to its safety and prosperity (Safran, 1991, p. 83).

Afropolitan concepts in Adichie’s works

We continue to explore Afropolitanism to bring out its quintessential features, but not without demonstrating how Chimamanda Adichie aptly exploited them in order to illuminate her characters and finally put across her message in a succinct manner. However, the critique of the concepts and issues at stake are accomplished under the following headings, to which we have made innuendoes in the theoretical framework: Cosmopolitan Individuals, Fashion as a Means of self-Assertion, African bond and Rejection of Victimhood Identity. This section of the paper to this end discusses in details the different concepts that have emerged in the works of the author and shows how they are linked to Afropolitanism.

1) Cosmopolitan individuals

Cosmopolitanism is an important attribute of Afropolitanism. Taiye Selasi (2005, paragraph 3) uses the term “afropolitan” to refer to cosmo-

politans of African origin. In “Bye – Bye Babar”, she refers to “afropolitans as not citizens of the world, but Africans of the world.” The Afropolitan individual is usually an African who migrates to the imperial centre in search of greener pastures. According to Selasi (2005, paragraph 4) in “Bye-Bye Babar”, “It isn’t hard to trace our genealogy. Starting in the 60’s, the young, gifted and broke left Africa in pursuit of higher education and happiness abroad”. She continues that:

Some three decades later this scattered tribe of pharmacists, physicists, physicians (and the odd polygamist) has set up camp around the globe. The caricatures are familiar. The Nigerian physics professor with faux-Coogi sweater; the Kenyan marathonist with long legs and rolled r’s; the heavyset Gambian braiding hair in a house that smells of burnt Kanekalon (Selasi 2005, paragraph 5).

She notes: “Some of us were bred on African shores then shipped to the West for higher education; others born in much colder climates and sent home for cultural re-indoctrination” (Selasi, 2005, paragraph 6). The above definitions constitute major features of the novels and short stories used for this study. In these novels and short stories, the Main female characters are portrayed as cosmopolitan individuals. After one disappointment or the other in their countries of origin, these characters leave the homeland for the Diaspora in search of a better life. The protagonists are Diasporic subjects because their movement involves “a traversal of the boundaries demarcating nations and Diaspora” (Franz, 2015, p.622). The reasons for the movement of the characters vary from lack of jobs in the homeland, inequality of sexes which push female characters to seek a better condition of life in foreign countries, better university opportunities as result of incessant strike of lecturers and escape from extreme patriarchal practices. The women hope to find a better life in the Diaspora through marriage, even if it is an arranged one. According to Selasi (2005, paragraph 8), “what is manifest is the extent to which the modern adolescent African is tasked to forge a sense of self from widely disparate sources”. Education is also a major component of Afropolitanism.

The novel *Americanah* is set in Nigeria, the United States and England. The female characters are made up of metropolitan middle-class characters, academics, the educated and uneducated, rural and traditionalist as characters. In the novel, it is usually the educated middle-class characters who move away from Nigeria to the Diaspora for various reasons.

The West is presented as a place of escape for Africans who are desperate for better educational and socio-economic opportunities as well as escape from patriarchal oppressions. In *Americanah* the protagonist Ifemelu emigrates from her home country, Nigeria, to the United States; literally moving from one culture to the other. She moves because of the incessant strike actions embarked on by university lecturers. This is caused by the political situation in Nigeria where the government fails to honour agreements between them and lecturers. This causes students like Ifemelu to seek better educational opportunities abroad. She represents members of the educated Nigerian middle class who leave their homelands because they dream of having better educational opportunities in the United States (Adichie, 2013, p. 98). In the case of Ifemelu's aunt Uju, a former lover of a General of the Nigerian military regime, she moves to the United States to give birth to their child and also to escape victimization from the General's relations who at his death dispossessed her of everything the General bought for her including her house. Uju also nurses the intention of continuing the medical education she started back in Nigeria. She also hopes to find part-time work and start her clinic one day (Adichie, 2013, p. 46). Other characters like Yinka go to England often and live in Ikoyi and speak with a British accent. Ginika is also respected in school because she has "the air of away". Mariama, the owner of African Hair Braiding and her sister are immigrants from Mali, and Aisha is from Senegal. These ones belong to lower socio-economic group (Adichie, 2009, p. 11).

In the short story collection, *The Thing Around your neck*, the female characters are all cosmopolitan individuals who have emigrated to the U.S.A. "Imitation" is the story of a Nigerian family; (Obiora and Nkem) who decides to leave their country, Nigeria, for Philadelphia in the United States. The attraction of this family towards the United States is to access better medical services, better education for their children, and also acquire the prestige associated with living abroad. America to Nkem is a land of opportunity. We are told that one of the things she has come to love about America is the abundance of unreasonable hope (Adichie, 2009, p. 26). Akunna, in "The Thing Around Your Neck" travels to America because she won the American lottery. Before she travelled, she and her relations had a false conception of life in America. They erroneously believe that everybody who lives in America is rich and comfortable. In Nigeria "you thought everybody in America had a car; and your uncles and aunts and cousins thought so too. Right after you won the American visa lottery, they told you: In a month, you will have a big car, soon, a big house" (Adichie, 2009,

p. 115). "In the *The Arrangers of Marriage*", Ofodile migrates to America for his medical studies. Chinaza moves to America to begin a new life with her husband Ofodile. Her movement from Nigeria into an arranged marriage in America is motivated by the hope of escaping her life of domestic servitude in the house of her Aunt and Uncle. Like most immigrants, Chinaza is lured by the American Dream' "I imagined a smooth driveway snaking between cucumber coloured lawns, a door leading into a hallway, walls with sedate paintings." (Adichie, 2009, p.167). Her aunt and uncle also buy into the American dream. This makes them persuade her to agree to an arranged marriage: "a doctor in America! It is like we won a lottery for you!" (Adichie, 2009, p. 170). "On Monday of last week" is the story of Kamara, a Nigerian immigrant to the USA. Both Kamara and her husband are University graduates who like many others have moved to America for greener pastures. In "The Shivering" Ukamaka leaves Nigeria to the US for under graduate studies (Adichie, 2009, p. 150).

2) Self-assertion through fashion

Fashion sense is a strong and pertinent characteristic of Afropolitanism. Dressing is very intrinsically connected to identity formation. In Selsi's essay, she affirms that:

The women show off enormous afros, tiny t-shirts, gaps in teeth; the men those incredible torsos unique to and common on African coastlines. The whole scene speaks of the Cultural Hybrid: kente cloth worn over low-waisted jeans; 'African Lady' over Ludacris bass lines... You'll know us by our funny blend of London fashion..." (Selasi, 2005, paragraph 1).

We deduce from the above that in order to forge a sense of identity, the Afropolitans wear a combination of African (kente cloth) and European fashion (low-waisted jeans) to drive home their multiple identities. Opponents of Afropolitanism usually base their perception of Afropolitanism as frivolous and trivial based on the above lines. In Academic discourse fashion and dressing have been found to be very pertinent to identify formation. To buttress this point, Kawamura (2004, p. 28) reiterates that:

...fashion is an inherent part of human social interaction and not the creation of an elite group of designers, producers, or marketers. Because of its basis in individual social comparison, fashion cannot be controlled without underlining its ultimate purpose, which is the expression of individual identity. If sel-

f-identity were never in doubt and social comparison never took place, there would be no demand for fashion, and there would be no need or opportunity for style change.

Lars Svendsen (2009, p. 7) in *Fashion: a Philosophy* highlights the importance of fashion. He observes that:

since the Renaissance. It has conquered an increasing number of modern man's fields of activity and has become almost 'second nature' to us. So an understanding of fashion ought to contribute to an understanding of ourselves and the way we act. Despite this, fashion has been virtually ignored by philosophers, possibly because it was thought that this, the most superficial of all phenomena, could hardly be a worthy object of study for so 'profound' a discipline as philosophy. But if philosophy is to be a discipline that contributes to our self-understanding, and if fashion really has been—and is—as influential as I claim, it ought to be taken seriously as an object of philosophical investigation.

We therefore agree that fashion and dressing are serious subject matters used by individuals to make nonverbal statements about their feelings at any point in time. According to Malcolm Barnard (2002, p. 29), there are many different languages of dress, each having its own vocabulary and grammar. He asserts that clothes are the equivalent of words and may be combined into 'sentences'.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the author used for this study has affirmed her belief that fashion is a serious affair; she describes it as a means of conveying a political statement as well as portraying culture. In an interview with Candice Carty-Williams, Adichie asserts:

I decided to use fashion as a kind of political statement. Which is to say that I made the choice to wear mostly Nigerian designers to public events, because obviously, I want to support an industry that's full of talent, but also to make a case for how fashion can tell a story, fashion and culture are intertwined in very interesting ways (<http://www.theafroreader.com/lifestyle/thepowerful-words-of-chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-by-candice-carty-williams>).

This article also appeared in the journal, *The Earthwise*, Issue, no. 353, Fall 2018, from where the above website retrieved it. However, in the novels and short stories in analysis, we observe that when the female characters begin their journey to self-recovery, there is often a change in their

mode of dressing and personal appearance. Mode of dressing thus provides an avenue for the main characters to break away from patriarchal and societal norms. It is an expression of rebellion, of freedom and self-assertion. Fashion acts as a means of expression and resistance to patriarchal systems and racism. According to Dominic Thomas (2003, p. 954) in 'Fashion Matters affirms that: "clothing provides the occasion for the subversion of established modes and the rejection of the dictates of accepted norms". He also affirms that it constitutes the creation of a particular form of resistance through the creation of an oppositional, counter hegemonic culture (Thomas, 2003, p. 958). Julia Twigg (2009, p. 1) asserts that identity and dress are intimately linked. She affirms that clothes display, express and shape identity, imbuing it with a direct material reality. She further describes fashion as a useful lens through which to explore the possibly changing ways in which older identities are constituted in modern culture. Wilson (1992, p. 13) describes fashion as one of the ways through which women have been able to achieve self-expression.

Female characters in the works of the authors use dressing and fashion to express their rebellion and resistance against an oppressive system. In "Imitation" on hearing about her husband's infidelity back home and after her initial shock, Nkem decides to be assertive in the relationship and to rebel against her husband. Her first reaction is to change everything that Obiora loves about her beginning with her appearance. She cuts her long hair which Obiora loves, she refuses to trim her pubic hair (Adichie, 2009, p. 38).

In "Arrangers of Marriage", Chinaza travels to the USA to live with her new husband Ofodile. The latter has embraced America in a negative way; he strips himself and his wife of their Nigerian identity and heritage. He changes their Igbo names to English ones—his name from Ofodile Udenwa to Dave Bell and Chinaza's name becomes Agatha Bell. When Chinaza decides to break away from her oppressive and loveless marriage, when she decides to reassume her identity, the first thing she does is to discard the English wears her husband bought for her in favour of her traditional African wears: "that evening while he showered, I put only the clothes he hadn't bought me, two embroidered boubous and one caftan, all Auntie Ada's cast-offs, in a plastic suitcase I had brought from Nigeria and went to Nia's apartment". (Adichie, 2009, p. 184). Hair, an aspect of fashion, is also very much linked to Afropolitanism, Selasi affirms: that "the women show off enormous afros"—as such, natural hair is a very important element in Adichie's notion/concept of identity for-

mation (Selasi, 2005, paragraph 1). Chinaza admires Nia's natural hair, according to her, "it was not just her hair, held up on top of her head in a natural Afro puff, that I found beautiful, though, it was her skin the color of roasted groundnuts...." (Adichie, 2009, p. 181).

In *Americanah*, Ifemelu starts her journey to self-recovery by rejecting perm hair and deciding to go back to wearing her natural hair. This decision is significant to Ifemelu's identity. Natural hair is often associated with cultural nationalism and pride in Black beauty. Hair also has a strong impact on identity and self-perception. Ifemelu's father said that it was a "crown of glory" (Adichie, 2013, p. 41). Body image and self-esteem is extremely connected to Ifemelu's hair. In the hair braiding salon, Aisha, Ifemelu's hairdresser, asks Ifemelu why she does not have relaxer, Ifemelu responds by saying that "she likes her hair the way that God made it" (Adichie, 2013, p. 12). In an interview with Kate Kellaway in the guardian on Sunday 7 April 2013, Adichie affirms that: "Hair is hair – yet also about larger questions: self-acceptance, insecurity and what the world tells you is beautiful. For many black women, the idea of wearing their hair naturally is unbearable" (Kellaway, 2013, paragraph 8). Thus Ifemelu reverting to her natural hair is significant, it means she has come to terms with her personality and identity as black; she has acquired the confidence and willingness to be an African living in the United States, instead of an African transformed into an American. In "If You Don't like Their Story, Write Your Own: Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* and the New Postcolonial Literature" Do Espirito Santo (2016, p. 12) reiterates that "coarse hair is a symbol of black resistance when women accept their bodies and ancestry [...] In *Americanah*, hair – which bears an important role in relation to women and vanity – works as a symbol of strength and assumes a significant role against racism".

To Adichie's female characters, natural hair is intricately connected to their identity In 'Monday of last week' Tracy wears dreadlocks in line with her profession as an artist, (Adichie, 2009, p. 79) while Kamara, a Nigerian "had her hair braided in the Senegalese place in south street..." (Adichie, 2009, p. 80). In "The Thing around your neck", wearing African hair is of so much importance that Akunna's aunty "had to drive an hour to find a hair salon that did African hair" (Adichie, 2009, p. 116). Akunna herself also wears braids not minding that the whites gawped at her hair, wondering whether her hair stands up or falls down when she takes out the braids (Adichie, 2009, p. 116). Nia in "Arrangers of marriage", owns a hair salon.

Criticism of Afropolitanism

Nevertheless, some critics such as Wainana and Dabiri do not agree with the forays of fashion and lifestyle into Afropolitanism. Dabiri for one has been critical of the *modus operandi* of Afropolitanist praxis and seems not to be obsessed with this effervescence especially the emphasis on fashion. In “Why I’m Not an Afropolitan”, he declares: “That whole lifestyle of Sex And The City feminism, cocktails, designer clothes, handbags and shoes is not popularly liberating in an Anglo-American context, so I see no reason why we should transfer such models to Africa and declare it progress” (qtd. in Skinner, 2017, p. 2). Like an anointed critic of Afropolitanism, Emma Dabiri, seems not be done with this satirical attack on taste and its role in the Afropolitan philosophy. After the appearance of that first article in 2014, he goes viral with the second publication which is a rejoinder to that same position by publishing another article in a similar vein entitled: “Why I’m {Still} Not an Afropolitan” (2016). This time the gaze is also on fashion: “The dominance of fashion and lifestyle in Afropolitanism is worthy of note due to the relationship between these industries, consumption and consumerism” (<https://www.africasacountry.com/2014/why-im-not-an-afropolitan/>, paragraph 5). As a relatively new domain with both feminist, literary and social dimensions and awareness, it is expected that Afropolitanism receives this baptism of harsh criticism like other concepts before settling down. And as such there may be other critics who have said a lot about the new trend.

3) Bond to the homeland/African tie

Afropolitans maintain a strong bond to their homeland Africa even though they are dispersed across the globe. They usually have a strong desire to maintain a part of their culture even in the Diaspora. This is in line with Selasi’s description of the Afropolitan in her essay. According to Selasi “there is at least one place on The African Continent to which we tie our sense of self: be it a nation-state (Ethiopia), a city (Ibadan), or an auntie’s kitchen”. (Selasi, 2005, paragraph 3). She further states that the Afropolitan whether in the West or at home is distinguished by:

a willingness to complicate Africa – namely, to engage with, critique, and celebrate the parts of Africa that mean most to them. Perhaps what most typifies the Afropolitan consciousness is the refusal to oversimplify; the effort to understand what is ailing in Africa alongside the desire to honor what is

wonderful, unique. Rather than essentialising the geographical entity, we seek to comprehend the cultural complexity; to honor the intellectual and spiritual legacy; and to sustain our parents' cultures (Selasi, 2005, paragraph 7).

As a result, "the Afropolitan must form an identity along at least three dimensions: national, racial, and cultural—with subtle tensions in between" (Selasi, 2005, paragraph 9). In his own definition, Gikandi (qtd. in Wawrzinek & Makokha 2011, p. 79) affirms that to be Afropolitan means being connected to knowable African communities, nations, and traditions and to live a life divided across cultures, languages and states. It is also, according to him, embracing and celebrating a state of cultural hybridity as well as being of Africa and of other worlds at the same time. Eze (2014, p. 234–247) reasoning along the same line asserts that an Afropolitan is that human being on the African continent or of African descent who has realized that her identity can no longer be explained in purist, essentialist, and oppositional terms or by reference only to Africa (Eze, 2014, p. 240). In the novels and short stories under study, Tie and bond to the home land is expressed in a number of ways: language, native food, and dressing. Also of great importance is maintaining communication with people at home and making constant allusion to the homeland, whether positive or negative. Selasi (2005, paragraph 7) states that the Afropolitan is typified by the effort to understand what is ailing in Africa alongside the desire to honor what is wonderful and unique.

In *Americanah*, the African students in Philadelphia in order to keep up their tie with the homeland form the African Students Association (ASA). This is an association regrouping students from various African countries: Nigerians, Ugandans, Kenyans, Ghanaians, South Africans, Tanzanians, Zimbabweans and Congolese. They congregate to discuss:

"what ails Africa." ...and they themselves mocked Africa trading stories of absurdity, of stupidity, and they felt safe to mock, because it is mockery born of longing, and of the heartbroken desire to see a place made whole again." Among fellow Africans, Ifemelu feels at home: "here, Ifemelu felt a gentle, swaying sense of renewal. Here, she did not have to explain herself (Adichie, 2013, p. 139).

The Afropolitan seeks "to comprehend the cultural complexity; to honor the intellectual and spiritual legacy; and to sustain our parents' cultures" (Selasi, 2005, paragraph 7). In the novels and short stories under study, the parents' cultures are sustained through speaking the mother

tongue and eating native food even in the Diaspora. Ifemelu speaks Igbo to his nephew even though Aunt Uju does not approve of that (Adichie, 2013, p. 109). In "The Thing around Your Neck", Akunna's uncle's wife calls her 'Nwanne'. "They spoke Igbo and ate «garri» for lunch and it was like home" (Adichie, 2009, p. 116). Akunna visits the African store with her white boyfriend, she cooks "onugbu" soup and ate "gari" (Adichie, 2009, p. 123). In "Imitation", they talk of "jiakwukwo" instead of yam portage (Adichie, 2009, p. 33). They use "onugbu" to cook soup. In "The Arrangers of Marriage", Chinaza travels to America with Nigerian food stuff like 'egusi', 'onugbu', and 'uziza seeds' (Adichie, 2009, p. 168). Chinaza refuses to let go of her Nigerian heritage—her language and her culture. When her husband bans her from speaking Igbo, she resorts to speaking the language to herself. "We spoke only English now; he did not know that I spoke Igbo to myself while I cooked, and that I had taught Nia how to say "I am hungry" and "see you tomorrow" in Igbo (Adichie, 2009, p. 182).

In *Americanah*, Ifemelu has to travel all the way from Princeton to Trenton in order to braid her hair (Adichie, 2013, p. 3). Mariama's African Hair Braiding salon provides jobs for African women. Braiding the African hair enables the African woman to maintain her Africanness even while living in the Diaspora. Mariama has appropriated the Diasporic space to start a hair salon business of her own. This gives her a solid footing and independence in the Diaspora (Adichie, 2013, p. 9). Africans who visit Mariama's hair salon watch Nigerian movies to keep in touch with the homeland (Adichie, 2013, p. 10). Ifemelu goes as far as convincing other black women about the merits of wearing their natural hair (Adichie, 2013, p. 12). Most of the African women in the novel wear braids; the same style is made by Ifemelu, Aunt Uju, Ginika and Dorothy the Ugandan girl (Adichie, 2013, p. 139). This enables them show that they are still proudly African while living in America (Adichie, 2013, p. 104). "On Monday of Last Week", Kamara's walks "around her home with only her «abada» wrapper tied loosely around her knotted under her arm" as if she were in Nigeria (Adichie, 2009, p. 86).

The female characters in the novels and short stories live in the Diaspora but are in constant communication with people back home. They also make constant allusion to the homeland, whether positive or negative. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu keeps in touch with her friend Ranyinudo, who lives in Lagos throughout her stay in the USA. Ranyinudo gives positive reports about Nigeria to Ifemelu that encouraged her to return home. She talks about: the new sprawling modern malls in Lagos, told her that Lagos is full

of American returnees...." (Adichie, 2013, p. 14). Ifemelu keeps in touch with her boyfriend Obinze (Adichie, 2013, p. 132). Ifemelu communicates with her parents; she even sends money home for them to move to a better accommodation (Adichie, 2013, p. 201). In "Imitation", Nkem lives in America but she and her husband collect African art, they are interested in the history behind the Benin masks (Adichie, 2009, p. 23). "She has come to look forward to the art pieces, touching them, imagining the originals, imaging the lives behind them" (Adichie, 2009, p. 25). Nkem makes Constant allusion to the homeland she remembers how her mother used to rub yam peels on her skin if she wastes the yam by peeling too closely (Adichie, 2009, p. 32). In "Imitation", Nkem "misses home, her friends, the cadence of Igbo and Yoruba and pidgin English spoken around her....", she misses the "Lagos sun that glares down even when it rains. She had sometimes thought about moving back home...." (Adichie, 2009, p. 37). Towards the end of the story, Nkem realizes that only the movement back to Nigeria can save her marriage, she tells her husband that they will be moving back to Lagos at the end of the school year. She tells her husband they have to find a school for their children in Lagos (Adichie, 2009, p. 41). In "The Shivering", even though Ukamaka lives in America, she is in constant touch with Nigerian news and her people back home (Adichie, 2009, p. 142). The story begins with Ukamaka keeping abreast of the events in Nigeria following the plane crash where one hundred and seventeen people perished (Adichie, 2009, p. 142). Ukamaka is in communication with her mother in Nigeria (Adichie, 2009, p. 147).

Ifemelu is successful in America with a successful blog that is yielding money and a steady boyfriend; she still decides to return to Nigeria. This is in line with the Afropolitanism; the Afropolitans usually return home to help build their countries (Adichie, 2013, p. 6). In "The Shivering" Ukamaka plans to move back after graduate school to work with an NGO in Lagos (Adichie, 2009, p. 157). Auntie Uju joins the African Doctors for Africa who were volunteering to go on two-week medical missions to Africa in an effort to plough back into Africa (Adichie, 2013, p. 299).

Conclusion

This paper has undertaken the task of reviewing the theme of feminism in general and explored the new face of feminism known as Afro-

politanism, a concept introduced by Taiye Selasi in her pioneering article entitled "Bye-Bye Babar". Moreover, it has thrown open once more the debate on feminism in order to trace the origins of Afropolitanism, bringing back to reckon names that constitute the pantheon of the feminist movement such as the three Ws of Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, Alice Walker and Simone De Beauvoir. And we could not have failed to stress the contributions of African female writers and critics to feminism in its multivalent forms such as Stiwanism, Eco-feminism, Snail feminism and Motherism plus so many others, Afropolitanism being the latest, remains African feminism in exile. These proliferations are testimonies to the tempo of feminist polemics all over the world, especially in Africa where patriarchal domination is immense and has assigned more task of mental and physical liberation to women with greater disposition to rhetorical, intellectual, economic and political power. These qualities are evident in Adichie's female characters such as Ifemelu, Auntie Uju, Mariama, Chinaza, Akunna, Ukamaka, Kainene and others; and their behavioural, similarities and unity of purpose suggest a common goal of affirming their feminine agenda. Besides, Adichie's approach to Afropolitanism and its use to x-ray the vision of these ambitious women herald an attempt to deploy semiotic properties inherent in Afropolitanism. For instance, the use of fashion to portray protest against ill-treatment and a disposition to freedom is a perfect example of non-verbal statement and so also is the Afro natural hair which displays a new state of the mind, self-rediscovery, on the part of these women imbued with high level of social awareness and feminist emancipation. This paper has moreover shown that Afropolitanism is a departure from Africa, but with a clause, as shown by the characters. This clause entails the fact that it is only possible within the geographical sphere, not in the cultural sphere as the characters maintain their link with the homeland. That could explain why majority of the characters still retains their African names, except Chinaza. They also speak their native tongues and eat African food in America and England. To this end, they see themselves as cultural exports to the West instead of victims of cultural alienation. All in all, from Feminism to Afropolitanism, African female authors and critics such as Taiye Selasi and Chimamanda Adichie and several others have demonstrated more clearly than ever that their struggle toward total emancipation is full of dynamism. In other words, African Feminism that begets Afropolitan Feminism is rather a becoming process.

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BOOK AND JOURNAL REVIEWS





Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik. *Femininity as a source of socio-cultural anxieties. Crystallizations and Dispersions*. Poznan 2020: Adam Mickiewicz University Press. Pp. 181.

If one wishes to become conversant with recent trends in femininity research and thinking about the timeless icons of womanhood, Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik's recently published book is as good a source as one can find. The emphasis is largely on the interpretation of the literary, medical, religious, philosophical and iconography sources of the past few decades, with a focus on its ambivalences and contradictions. An attractive aspect of the publication is that the author seeks to construct substantial interfaces with the Western culture which is rediscovered with new, universal and important feminine stories.

Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik's book is the final result of her previous publications and research dedicated to gender studies, femininity and social inequalities of the last two decades. Those aspects are extensively described in the introductory chapter. Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik is a professor and the head of the Multicultural Education and Social Inequality Research Department at Adam Mickiewicz University (Faculty of Educational Studies) in Poznań. She has written numerous articles in both Polish and foreign academic journals, which are mentioned in the beginning of the book. The reviewed book is based on her long-term interests and careful observation of the dynamics of the female identity.

The publication is divided into three sections with three chapters each. The first presents classical figures: Ophelia, Salome and the Lady of Shalott, examined through literature, art and the social context. The second section focuses on the relationship between the femininity and fairy tale characters. Only in the third section does Gromkowska-Melosik examine the femininity attributes, which are presented as a confrontation between the objectification and emancipation. After the final summary, the reader will find the extensive references list. The structure of this book is chronological which makes it clear and easy to follow the author's thoughts. What is more, the language of the volume is poetic and reader-friendly from the first to the last page.

The first part of this book is a section concerning the anxieties around femininity such as the fear of women's emancipation and power. Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik describes them based on the Lady of Shalott who is imprisoned in a symbolic patriarchal tower, Salome—a femme fatale embodiment and Ophelia—a woman consumed by madness. A careful reader will notice the changes

in the social position of women in the second half of the XIXth century, which are presented by the author.

The heart of the publication is constituted by the middle section with three chapters dealing with the magic of fairy stories in terms of social norms and values as well as in the classical and sexual contexts. The following characters: Cinderella, the Snow Queen and Little Red Riding Hood are analysed and interpreted in the light of the meanings inscribed in them from the past until now.

According to the author, these popular fairy colourful characters represents the femininity-related anxieties.

The last section of the book concentrates on the symbols of femininity: red lipstick, high heels and a corset. On the one hand, these objects were perceived as sexual synonyms of women's subjugation and oppression, but on the other hand many women perceive them now as a symbol of empowerment, freedom and control or even, more importantly, their dominance over men. The section has much to offer to the readers who interprets carefully the changes in the mass culture, they will value it the most.

To step into this book is to enter the dual sensitivity of the author as a scientist and as a woman who is a part of the male dominated world. That is why this particular publication truly teaches about the femininity in the modern times maintaining the past and present perspective. It is interesting to see how this book reflects some of the current efforts and concerns in the gender studies. This publication clearly fulfills its stated purpose and serves as a valuable resource for the next generation of scientists, women and everyone who is concerned with the problems described by the author.

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