

A Study on Gender Consciousness in Nigerian Autobiographical Narratives and Power of the Interview

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Abstract

The study explores some self-created metaphors in male autobiographical writings in Nigeria. It visualizes the negation of female gender in art. The paper investigates the dichotomy of language, the use of irony and situational metaphors to displace conventional ones; it blends theories with critical evaluation of discourse. The research uses empirical methods in solving hypothetical questions with the use of extensive and relatively unstructured interviews. It examines the interviews of twenty five people independently, these people include: University lecturers, students, administrative and technical staff. The work analyzes concurrently their interview testimonies to search for congruence. Data analysis begins with a detailed microanalysis in which emergent concepts were defined and then followed by a more refined, focused analysis of broader conceptual categories and premises. By first classifying specific aspects of interview testimonies and later exploring the interrelationships between concepts and examining the overarching patterns and themes, an inductive, grounded theory approach to the study of autobiographical narratives and gender imperatives.

Keywords: Gender Consciousness, Power of the Interview and autobiographical Writings

1.0 Introduction

The term “gender” which is derived from a Latin noun “genus” is now until recently used to denote masculine, feminine and neuter. However, gender is not the major theoretical framework of male autobiographical narratives in Nigeria. The onus of gender is celebrated by Nigerian male actors. Studies have shown that both male and female populations in Nigeria now want a gender sensitive writing that propels good economy. People should be gender sensitive and the scientists “*gender construents*” in the words of Francis Enemuo. This paper examines the role played by autobiographical writers and the various reactions of the respondents which point towards personal and literary opinion about the autobiographical themes. The work demonstrates that the differences between males and females are just natural, other phenomena are critically invented by society and such invention is constantly kept in the collective memory of the people.

Extant research has proved that criticism on autobiographical writing is inadequate because more male writers still write for self-glorification (Hes and Handle 1994:17). The prevailing assumption that men are equal to women is still celebrated in autobiographical art. The way and manner through which critics demonstrate gender equality help in

re-shaping “the autobiographical truth” (Balzac 2008:114). The relationship between “male” “autobiography” “narratives” “gender” and “imperatives” are unclear because researchers frequently examine one or two of these components, (Behringer 2008:71) “but not all five”. At present, what we currently perceive as autobiographical narratives is typically derived from quantitative analysis or one self-report. The combination of these five components which my research celebrates is a contribution to scholarship because no extant research has the pains to look at these exploitations in a whole. The paper uses explanatory model to explain how interviews portray various interpretations of male writings. It examines independently what each person has in stock. The paper blends autobiographical approach with other models in explaining the findings accumulated from the various interviews conducted. Theories would be blend with traditions in showing how gender consciousness becomes a panacea in the understanding of various autobiographical narratives in Nigeria.

2.0 Blending Theories and Models

An excellent research marries theoretical framework with research methodology (Becker 1994:95, Denzin 1989:54, Garfinked 1967:140 as quoted by:72). Rather than relying entirely on one methodological strategy, the reciprocal nature of theory and methods must be appreciated in order to select methods that mirror and capture the theoretical postulates of human interaction (Behringer 2008). It is the underlying theory of narratology that creates the appropriate criticism for narratives. This is dependent upon its content, structure and symbolic interpretation, which enable us to decode its complete and denotative application. Hence, it is applied with autobiographical approach in order to delineate its scientific implications. First, I want to comment that the term male autobiographical narratives and gender imperative is a rare phrase that seldom goes together in extant scholarship. I decide to bring everything together in order to evaluate the superstructure that informs the phrase. There are myriads of mutual and formal experiences that this phrase examines. “The pluralistic nature of this research is explored succinctly in my research design, and particularly emphasizes how individuals react to gender imperatives.

3.0 Autobiographical Approach: The Power of the Interview

One of the primary goals of this research is to fill a large void in the contemporary understanding of male autobiographical narratives and gender imperatives. For this reason, the research is inductive. It relied on qualitative autobiographical approach. The “conceptual understanding” this work portrays is to address concrete realities (Charmz 2002). The purpose for this is to

ensure that each research question is addressed while at the same time guaranteeing the interviewee considerable flexibility in reporting what they deem relevant which requires the use of in-depth qualitative interviews (Behringer 2008).

Specifically extensive, focused interviews were selected for this method which enables the interview to obtain pre-designated types of information from each respondent while still creating a conversational environment questions that may be asked in order and these may be phrased differently based on the characteristics of each respondent. However previously unconsidered questions may be raised and unanticipated topics developed. Though other methods of inquiry exist, none is more viable for assessing the question of gender than in –depth qualitative interview. Employing a highly structured and scandalized questionnaire could measure respondent’s comments on the issue of gender disparities. However, a prior assumption would need to be made during survey construction. The nature of my research questions warranted an open, exploratory interview environment that facilitates elucidation of gender definitions and subsequent interpretations that follows. In this research, my interviews were structures to be long because “one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative research is for a long extensive interview which often produce rich data that can be more revealing than ordinary methodological strategies (McCracken 1988:9). A qualitative interview, however, allows for previously unconsidered angles to merge as well as for various aspects of male autobiographical narratives to come to the forefront in explaining levels of gender imperatives in Nigeria. However “without a qualitative understanding of how culture medicates human action, we can know only what the number tells us. The long qualitative interview is useful because it can help us to situate these numbers in their fuller

social and cultural contexts (McCracken 1988). Extensive interviews allow the interviewer to enter the interviewee's subjective world, combine symbols and interaction, take the role of the respondent, and reflect on change and process (Dezin 1989:12). Following a large quantitative academic account of male autobiographical narrative in line of narratology, the research would clearly rely on the narratives self-reports or an observation of the narrative techniques used by different autobiographers. From a typically contrived experimental setting, I will use various comments and worldviews of the people interviewed. First, the narrative itself portends its own voice: the subjective and evaluative content of the narrative shall be explored. Second, I shall delve into the subject matter in a text format. These would be "analysed in tandem" (Behringer 2008:77). The perceptions about gender imperatives must be established and visualized in the Nigerian autobiographical writings propelled by men. Third is the application of the additional information accumulated from the diverse interviews. My research does not only examine gaps in the current sociological and theoretical literature on gender and autobiographical studies but also the current methodology and theory used in evaluating gender perspectives.

4.0 The Interviews: Methods and Operations

Multiple methods of subject recruitment were employed in order to generate a diverse cross-section of respondents. Some respondents were interviewed at the Joseph Ayo Babalola University where I lecture English and literature. Some respondents were approached in Port Harcourt: Emarid College and Champions World Institute of Creative Studies respectively. Academic, non-academic staff and students were first recruited through the e-mail. We circulated fliers so as not to retain a purely academic or educated group of respondent. I used some additional methods in circulating fliers by posting them in the cyber cafes, supermarkets, and barbers shops. I also used some business centres at Ilesa in Osun State of Nigeria. I also conducted private interviews of men and women who show special flair for autobiographical narratives and the question of gender. Individuals were typically contacted by relative intervals (some respondents pleaded not to be mentioned in the research, so I used fictional names to code their findings, example is Helena Hostrom from Denmark and Kimberley Davis from Dallas. (USA). Academic and non-academic staff was interviewed separately and some participants that could not read or write were also interviewed separately. This is because it is expedient to

Stress the explorative nature of the research so that individuals would be confident that their views would not be held to any pre-established standard but rather that anything they had to contribute about the subject would be appreciated and beneficial (Behringer, 2008:79).

At this juncture, I explained succinctly the 'potential benefits of participation' to the participants. The overwhelming majority agreed to participate in the study. Participating individuals were advised to select a convenient day, time and location for the interview. It was emphasized that each participant is at liberty to select an interview environment that would be most comfortable for them. A wide range of interview setting endured, I conducted interviews on everyday of the week except on Sundays. Interviews take place beginning from 8.00am in the morning to 10.00pm at night. My office is used for interviews when I am not out for lectures. I used the conference room, interviewee's office, bookstores, public libraries, my car, restaurants, university cafeteria, and students' union complex. Some interviews were conducted in August 2007, September 2008, and December 2008 to October 2009 and August 2011. Before engaging the participants, they were first asked to read and sign an informed consent waiver, which highlighted the nature of participation. It listed the possible benefits and cost associated with the study, detailed compensation and explanation on how participants' information is voluntary and confidential. I could not make effective tape recording because of the erratic and epileptic power supply in where I reside as at the time of this research. But I ensured strong documentation of my data by writing and printing samples on my file and proper storage of data on my personal computer. Participants were ensured that all information would remain confidential and that I would not disclose their personal contents. I informed all the respondents that I should be informed in case anyone develops a contrary opinion from what they had earlier documented. This would enable me fine-tune its inclusion in the joint interview during the evaluation of findings. The average interview lasted 40 minutes while some lasted over one hour; students' interviews typically lasted for 45 minutes. Some individual interviews lasted for one hour. The time gap between individual and joint interviews was dependent on the number of interviews. Two hours each were spent interviewing four elderly men and women in Yoruba language.

The finding and analysis were later translated into English language for the purpose of documentation and easy dissemination of facts. I provided some scholars who find more interest in doing advance research with recommendation and some suggested reading list in the subject. Two of them handed in a cheque for N3,000. Overall, 25 participants were recruited for the study. Although individual completed an individual interview, 7 completed a joint interview that forms the analysis of male autobiographical narratives and gender imperatives in Nigeria. It is important to stress that only the black race dominates the research, as Nigeria is the most populous black nation in the world with about 140 million people. The only foreigners are Helena Hostrom, a white Danish scholar and Kimberly Davis an African American scholar from the University of Dallas who was in Nigeria on sabbatical leave. 7% of the respondents obtained a bachelor's degree and above or are about completing studies for bachelor degree, 28% obtained high school diploma or above while 2% are those that cannot read and write. The financial status of my respondents varied according to their class they vary with income ranging from \$0 (unemployed or stay at home parents) to over \$75,000 per annum. (The conversion is from Naira to dollars for easy understanding). About 8 individuals have advanced degree (see Appendix A for brief biographies of each respondent). Participants ranged in age between 22 years old to 96 years old. Most of the adults are married or are into serious relationships leading into marriage. Most of the respondents are either Christians or Muslim except Helena Hostrom who is a freethinker and Kimberly Davis who claims to be a believer in God but holds sway to no religion. All my respondents have read one male autobiographical narrative in Africa and the Caribbean. All believe in the need for marriage between both genders. But Helena Hostrom totally disagree in marriage between male and female genders and insisted on homosexual relationship. The results and findings were sometime applied to narratological theory and evaluative criticism.

5.0 Constructing the Individual and Group Interview

Though the most advantageous research method for this project is the interview, it is not without limitations. Interviews are typically gendered productions for the interview environment can reflect unequal social arrangements between women and men, and gender can shape the conduct and interpretation of the interviews as well as the interviewer, thus reflecting how conversations unfold in art (Behringer, 2008:83). Individual and group questions were designed to tap the conceptual fields, which the research questions attempt to ask (see appendix B for a detailed interview schedule). During these extensive interviews, respondents were explicitly ask to define "male autobiographical narrative" and "gender imperatives" forging their symbolic interpretations with definitions of literary concepts, I systemically ask the respondents to x-ray their notions of gender disparities in any autobiographical narrative they have read. The reason is to avoid bias judgment based on their answers; I am able to identify traditional and conventional ideas with regards gender imperatives in autobiographical writings. These terms are what Behringer tags "traditional and egalitarian.

6.0 Gender Consciousness *Per Excellence*

Predominantly, the literature on gender often neglects the importance of communicative context as Marie Behringer (2008:176) rightly put it. She observes that though numerous studies indicate that men and women often differ in their communicative styles with reference to Bradoc at al 1995:195, Crawford 1995:18, Hawkins 1980:585, Maltz and Borker 1982:196, Mulac et al 1995: 641). These changes in speech have caused greater misunderstanding among both male and female genders. Male autobiographical writers assigned different tones and communicative styles to their male and female characters. "The master tone is attributed to the male gender while the servant tone is associated to the female gender" this is the position of Mrs. Abiye Amachree one of the respondents that was interviewed in Lagos. She further observes that

Honesty should be reflected in any written autobiography either the work is written by male or female writer. Nigerian male autobiographical writer did not reflect truth and total reality because they are one sided: they frequently celebrate their glory. Wole Soyinka is a good example, just take a good look at his work which he entitled The Man Died and ask yourself. Did the man really die? I think he meant that Nigerian women have died because he was just telling us how his friends and the government exercised their masculine prowess.

Similarly, her husband Augustine Amachree shares some opinions with her. The only area of divergence is that Augustine believes that Nigerian male autobiographical writers are not one sided, they celebrate the experiences of both male and female. He cited Festus Iyayi's *Violence* to substantiate his position. According to him:

Iyayi is a good example of Nigerian male autobiographical writer. In Violence, Iyayi probes into the societal truth by showing the impacts and the roles played by both male and female. He never meant evil when he shows how Idemudia's wife goes into prostitution. He only wants to tell us that both male and female are integral aspects of Nigerian economy. It is an overstatement for us to see all the writers as being chauvinists.

Furthermore, autobiographical works in Nigeria reflects "cross-sex pseudo communication" (Cahill 1981:75). Cahill is of the opinion that "words exchange" between the male and female character may drastically vary and this factor can be seen in the words of Dr. Mrs. Sotonye Henry:

There's work to it. We have to keep the communication open. Word exchange between male and female characters is very important here. Male dominates everything: their cultures and; even the woman's mind. We should be very careful of this fact because the woman has a voice

7.0 Scope and Concept

Autobiographical narratives in Nigeria employ different scopes in their writings and in worldviews. Lofland and Lofland (1995:14), observe that "certain codes and concepts appear more frequently than others in autobiographical works. However, Charmaz (2002:109) views some of these "codes and concepts as overlapping and synthesized while others less constructive. It is the scope and concept which respondents have reacted to that this section would attempt to investigate. Afolabi George, a respondent from the garden city of Port-Harcourt has this to say:

When I read some Nigerian autobiographical narratives, I discovered that each writer projects the Nigerian culture, our way of life and our conception of women in different dimension. The way Soyinka sees the woman is different from the way Elechi Amadi sees the woman. It is a common knowledge that the woman needs attention and assistance. These writers are highly constructive though they over celebrate the scope of their works a times.

Francis Olowoyemi in Port Harcourt is particular about the younger generation of writer in Nigeria. He looks through their works and the materials that inform their writings and submits that:

The like of Kole Omososho is rare! He uses the ironic twist in narrating his autobiographical art. He is different from Olusegun Obasanjo, Soyinka or Elechi Amadi because he is more aware of the culture and myth in the land. He focuses on contemporary issues without major interest in the differences that exist among genders.

To Benita Alfred:

These male writers think that women lack economic value. An economic value is by definition a value with two faces: not only does it play that role of a constant vis-à-vis. The concrete unit of money, but he also plays the role of a variable vis-à-vis a fixed quantity of merchandise which serves it as a standard. These writers feel that women have nothing to offer like their male counterparts, so there is no need celebrating women in art.

Margaret Dada, Cynthia June and Loretha Crowther believe that these male writers are found of classifying women with children. This has become their scope in literature. Even the children literature in Nigeria is a metamorphosis of the plight women and children face in art. They went further to observe the place of women in Nigerian society. In politics and commerce, women have no place. They wait on men to assign them with roles and responsibilities. Loretha Crowther is more axiomatic in her reactions:

The fact that I am a woman does not make me a fool or a person without reaction. When I read these desperate writers, I just feel that they are hungry, they are hungry for recognition. They forget the madness which they involve in frequently. In Nigeria, men go to beer parlours, get drunk and even sleep there. They come home to beat up their innocent wives, the next minute they want to write their autobiography. Autobiography about the plight of an idiot! I don't want to mention the name of any autobiographical writer because they are all the same!

Olusola Davies claims that she loves autobiographical works so much that she adores them. According to her:

Autobiographical writings in Nigeria are usually written to glorify male and their achievements. Check out all the male autobiographical writers in Nigeria, they have one thing in common. They have many wives and concubines who constantly make them happy. Is it Olusegun Obasanjo that you want me to mention or the Nobel Wole Soyinka or Elechi Amadi? They are pretentious; they fail to reflect the real autobiographical truth as Balzac rightly puts it. Their writings are basically academic set to show their ability in writing.

To Victoria Loveday:

I am not opposed to men getting married to many women or men celebrating their glory in autobiographical writings, what I hate is their failure to express these things in their narratives. I love autobiographical narratives that embody purpose, setting, theme and people's idiosyncratic norms.

Ned Lovely and his wife Virginia see gender as a universal phenomenon. They both agree that the issue of gender is a contemporary theme in European literature, American literature and in African Literature. They state that we should not over-celebrate these things in literature and in our social life. They believe that if gender consciousness is not of paramount significance, they would not go as far as celebrating equality in European countries and in their place about who gets what and how. Mazi Obinna observes that:

Objectivity is usually the watchword I found about autobiographical narratives that are written by Nigerian male authors. I love reading autobiographical works because of the writers use of language, symbols, ironies and the way they handled discourse not, male/female dichotomy. A woman can write anything she likes, a man can do same. It is out of sheer ignorance to begin to count the number of female character in any literary work of art.

However, Yeye Olu advises that:

We should continue to read these male autobiographical works because these works narrate the female's perception of life and the need for new awareness. As a woman of purpose, I love anything. When I was in Sweden and Denmark, I observed a high reading culture among men and women. However, the ugly portrayal of women in literature would bring awareness for new revolution in Nigeria.

The position of Emeka Jackson is different.

Reading should not have boundary. As a member of House of Assembly, I read a lot. Really, I see gender imperatives in these autobiographical writings. Some writers are sex sensitive while others are not. Some write for pleasure while others write for money. Some works are cultural biased like Soyinka and Elechi Amadi's autobiographical narratives.

8.0 The Feelings of Alienation

Alienation is an aspect of gender performance. The doing gender framework spotlights the freedom men and women poses in creating their own gender, individuals have option as to how they will perform gender, they fundamentally

have the ability to craft and mold their environments (Behringer 2008:52). Most women in Nigeria frequently complain of alienation in the autobiographical narrative. Most female respondents demonstrate the feeling of alienation. Alienation in social activities, in the distribution of values was some of the area recorded. To Lieutenant Adokiye Dokubo:

Women feel alienated in so many aspects of life. They say it and it is reflected in their behaviours. Even in the army women feel they can turn the hand of the clock around. But their physiology does not allow them access to everything. It is not just making one the president, but the capacity of ruling the masses.

However, Janet Johnson remarks:

That we complain of alienation in art is not that we are powerless. People attribute this problem to cultural influence. To be realistic, autobiographical narratives in Nigeria reflect the onus of the male writers. Elechi Amadi's autobiographical narrative is basically cultural. Women are subjected to different types of alienation. When a woman loses her husband, the husband brothers collect all her properties. She is forced to mourn the man for years in black clothing.

Mama Wale's opinion is reflected in her views. She used Yoruba language to grant the interview. I employed good interpreter to ensure that her views were succinctly expressed. She remarks that:

Autobiographical narratives reflect the totality of being. In some Yoruba narrative movies that I watched, I discovered that writers reflect masculine glory. In some Yoruba narratives, the authors reflect how their male characters used bravery to defeat some dangerous spirits and women witches. These writers celebrate their own glory to the extent that they play a one-man show throughout the plot of the story. I think modern day autobiographical writers follow the precedent of their ancestors. By ancestors, I mean those people who taught them how to read and write. Find out very well, the Whiteman too used autobiographical writings to celebrate masculine glory.

Mama Wale's opinion is partially shared by Judith Horsefall. Judith views her opinion from the perspective of political alienation. She opines that:

The name woman in Nigeria evokes pity. Politically, the woman is alienated. Most male autobiographical writers are chauvinists. From the first generation of writers to the current contemporary times, fiction and nonfiction together with autobiographical works centre on male existence. J.P Clark America (1964), Soyinka's The Man Died (1972), Amadi's Sunset in Biafra (1973) are brilliant exercise driven towards the elevation of the tentacle in between the man's lap.

This factor raised by Judith has shown more concern among political critics, gender critics etc. according to Francis Chigbo Enemuo in *Gender and Women Empowerment* (1999:226-227). Women constitute half of the world's population and have contributed significantly to the wellbeing of the human race. In Nigeria, for example, women, have always played five key roles: mother producer, home manager, community organizer, and socio-cultural and political activist. Despite their large number and crucial functions. The division of roles between the male and female sexes, as prescribed by most cultures, assigns the subordinate position to women. As a consequence, women have for long suffered various forms of discrimination, inequality, exclusion and violence. He goes further to state that:

In recent times, however, empowering women is increasingly being recognized as a precondition for and as an indicator of the level of success in the attainment of sustainable human development. It is also being accepted that women's rights are human rights. Much of the current discourse on the status of women and strategies for uplifting

their conditions has employed the term gender and its derivatives. Thus, there is now much talk about the need to upgrade the level of gender awareness in our society, for policy makers to become gender sensitive, for scientists to employ gender constructs, for the political process to be tenderized etc (Behringer 2008:226).

About 80 per cent of the respondents have continued to show that male autobiographical narratives do not show concern for equal gender balance in Nigeria. Rather, the narratives have continued to celebrate significant level of success attained by men. Francis Chigbo Enemuoh has offered to shed more light into the reason behind these intricacies. He submits that:

It is important to emphasize that gender roles are neither natural nor immutable. They are constructed and invested by society. Consequently, they differ among societies and even within a society, gender views differ over time. We may further emphasize that the term gender is not the same thing as sex because while sex reflects physical difference between males and females, gender concerns the psychological, social and cultural differences between men and women. The differences between the male and female sexes are natural, universal and largely constant. For example, each of the two sexes performs the same reproductive functions in all cultures. Their biological features are also the same. Thus women develop breast and men grow beards, etc (Behringer 2008:227).

Commenting on the creation of male metaphors in the autobiographical narratives, the observation of forum for African Women Educationists, (FAWE) & UNESCO: Gender Analysis for Educational Policy makes it very realistic because:

Gender differences are created and sustained by society through its institutions, traditions, conventions, norms and regulations. The gender notions about male and female include traditional stereotypes that characterize women as submissive, illogical, passive, talkative, emotional easily moved to tears, etc. Men on the other hand are assumed to be competent, logical, and independent. These stereotypes tend to reflect men and women as belonging to opposite ends of bipolar adjectives in which men have desirable qualities while women have undesirable ones..... societal norms and stereotypes also function as a traditional ideology and relegate women to housewife roles while promoting men as actors, providers and final authority. (Behringer 2008:227-228).

However, Amadiki London's comment is axiomatic. He reacts sharply to the questions of the interview by saying that:

although contemporary societies are male dominated. Autobiographical narratives are being reflected in contemporary societies. Anytime I read Wole Soyinka, I hear his masculine voice piercing through the dark. I am a Professor of Gender Studies. I know what I am saying. This is injustice, it is humiliating and it leads to economic exploitation. Considering the increasing number of Nigerian women, professionalism should strive regardless of gender disparity in order to eschew feminization of poverty.

Amadiki's opinion is also accepted by Francis Chigbo Enemuoh when he states that: What is to be reiterated is that these character portraits of male and female are not determined by nature but have been constructed by society. Their overall impact has been to put women in subordinate position vis-a-vis men. Notably too, the stereotypes differ among society and change with time. For example, while it is a taboo for women to drive cars in Islamic fundamentalist societies, this practice is not frowned at in Western and Westernized Societies (Behringer 2008:228). Amadiki also talks about other aspects of the autobiographical narrative. He sees the autobiographical work as being exaggerative. To him, male narrators use various coinages such as "strength" "love" "vision" to propel their perceptions about the Nigerian Society. Various coinages were used to strengthen the male *tentacle*. He also observes some disparities in job placements in Nigeria. This makes me to remember my experiences in Falun and Uppsala in Sweden. When I compared these experiences I knew that travelling is part of education. In Falun and Uppsala, male and female students use the same toilets facility (*toalet*). In Turkey, male and female do not use the same toilet facility. Nigeria is a replica of what is obtainable in Turkey. And I think that Sweden, Denmark, Norway and

Finland have the same practice of gender equality. The equality of gender is reflected even in dressing. Beneboba Allison, a respondent in Bille town of Degema Local government of Rivers State has this to say:

Some male autobiographical writers use their works to create distinction and hatred. Repetitive and stereotypic words are found in Soyinka's works. The purpose is to demonstrate male dominance at all times. Everyday expression is found in Elechi Amadi's works. The purpose is still the same thing as Soyinka or Obasanjo; it is highly ridiculous that Obasanjo who is an international figure is an autobiographical writer who prevents the world in noticing that he is a first class polygamist. He celebrates his gallantry at war and his gallantry over women on different beds.

To Harvest Sampson:

Male autobiographical works in Nigeria do not take into cognizance the economic contribution of women to the Nigerian economy. Nigerian economy is oil based; it could have been more diversified into many sectors if women are meant to contribute their faithful quota into it. Instead of using autobiographical works to harbour unseen tradition and custom, it would have been better used to reflect the totality of being in Nigeria.

Writers and governments in Nigeria are pretentious. They make discriminatory laws and customs in their writings and in practice. Olusegun Obasanjo was the Nigerian President from 1999 to 2007. He has written many articles on how to change the plight of the woman in Nigeria but in practice no significant effort is geared at this. According to Obasanjo in the *Elements of Development* (1980:44).

Women become conditioned into accepting social debasements of the type associated with widowhood rites and self-imposed abuses of the type that denies female children good food. Even in urban centres and in civilized circles, the stereotype gender roles make women over play their femininity by accepting that they are the weaker sex, over-emphasizing the dainty nature of their comportment, viewing the ambition of some members of their sex as ominous and regarding exceptional achievements as untoward competition with men (Ibid).

This is Olusegun Obasanjo and Akin Mabogunje's attempt to ridicule women by showing concern for pity without any positive strives for empowerment. Obasanjo has demonstrated this pretence in his autobiographical work and in his involvement in politics for eight solitary years in Nigeria. It is dangerous when leaders know what to do but turn deaf ears to the voice of wisdom. Practically and theoretically, women continue to suffer alienation not only in "autobiographical truth" but in "political reality" leading to "feminization of poverty".

Kimberly Davis has this to say:

Male autobiographical narratives tell the same old tale all over the world. In America, men celebrate their glory as well. I want to point here that in America people do things with caution in order not to become the victim of the law. When I read some autobiographical narratives in Nigeria, I am somehow obsessed about the tone, the mood of the author and the type of language employed. Actually no credit is given to the woman but something can still be done because the only thing that is permanent is change.

Change is also the cardinal expression in the statement of Helena Hostrom, according to her:

Change is everywhere, Nigeria, Denmark name it. People are now aware of the current trends in societies: gender awareness, globalization etc. some autobiographical works are criticized accordingly while some are not; fair judgment is good, now autobiographical writers in Nigeria would see the need for a new beginning. In Denmark, writers are cautious of things that shape our society and not just trivial issues, Nigeria too can follow the same tradition. Religion should not be used to deny women of their rights.

Francis Enemuo's observation vividly supports the position of Helena Hostrom in totality, he observes that:

It is important to note that religious percepts are sometimes used to subjugate women. The Holy Bible is sometimes quoted as requiring women to be submissive to their husbands. What is usually conveniently forgotten is that the Bible also enjoins men to love their wives sacrificially just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her...Islamic injunction are usually cited as justification for confining women in purdah as is done in parts of northern Nigeria and to give away girls in marriage and thereby depriving them out of consonance with the provision of the Sharia and the example of Sheik Usman Danfodio who established the Sokoto Caliphate. (231).

Francis Enemuo's position is practical and it best explains the need for change that Helena Hostrom advocates. Change would lead to development in art and industry. Through the combination of the voices of the respondents and some critical works, we have been able to understand what really constitutes gender imperative in male dominated autobiographical narratives in Nigeria. Most contemporary societies are male dominated in varying degrees; autobiographical works in Nigeria celebrate these phenomena. They go further to reflect beliefs, economic exploitation of women, other various forms of injustice geared at limiting the scope of women in literature and society. The study has shown that women suffer poverty on a more widespread basis than more and that their experience of poverty is quite different as a result of expectations about gender roles. Thus the term "feminization of poverty" is sometimes used to denote the propositions that more women are likely to increase the level of poverty as they stand a greater risk of being neglected in art and science. It shows various reactions of the respondents and their quest for a change. Most respondents reacted with bitter opinions the enslavements women experience in art as a result of cultural norms and societal creations. They see this as artificial.

9.0 Discussion

Research pertaining gender imperatives in male dominated autobiographical narratives in Nigeria presents largely a one-sided view of respondents. The application of narratology and autobiographical approach feature the discernable gender differences in autobiographical art. Some a priori assumptions have been made by researchers regarding the level of relegation women suffer as a result of gender disparity. Furthermore, because the importance of women in nation building is overlooked by the autobiographical writers in the narrative, this paper largely design the structural and interactive context of the analysis of gender theme in art. The innovativeness of the current analysis remedies many of the shortcomings which previous research in the field has undertaken. The innovativeness, therefore, serves to broaden contemporary interpretation into gender imperative. To recap, my findings reveal that the issues of gender in Nigeria literature and indeed, in autobiographical narratives written by male writers is complex than has been previously thought. The documentation of the words directly spoken by the respondents with scholarly works has given this research a new direction. However, my research opines that new direction can be attained when gender is eliminated in theory and in practice. Existing research in gender studies applies sociological framework. Gender distinction in literature may exist in the practice of communication, but this project exposes that the meaning of gender is only an artificial creation which autobiographical writers use in achieving their machinery of exploitation against women in Nigeria. My research goes on to posit that instead of relying solely on stereotypes and traditional beliefs on sexes, predominance should be determined by individuals' conceptualization of purpose that is devoid of gender. Our findings extend Francis Enemuo (1999) vision of women and gender in Nigeria because it provides empirical contours of *nomic* process within the understanding of gender disposition in Nigerian Literature. Subsequently, my research signifies that the characterization of women in autobiographical literature is exaggerative, problematic and misconstrued by writers in order to satisfy self-glory. The uniqueness of women in literature and nation building is well documented by interviewees, providing oral textual evidence in their presentations. By analyzing the level of parity between the individual's respondents, I discover numerous examples of concurrence, and these relatively objective observations were buttressed by participants' subjective descriptions of welded gender reality.

10.0 Methodological and Theoretical Contribution

The methodological design and theoretical framework for this research work substantially improve contemporary understating of the question of gender and autobiographical truth. A sizeable number of analyses have been limited by their methodology despite the fact that my research found high congruence amongst youths and people in their

early fifties. I combined the unit of analysis with fundamental experience of the respondents. I conducted individual interview which consequently gives me a channel to gauge levels of congruence between the young respondents and the old ones. I give all the respondents the opportunity to say their views on the question of gender and male autobiographical narratives in Nigeria, then deliberate on their subjective perceptions of the issue. After receiving their information, I presented them accordingly. The interview allows me to meet people of diverse interests and opinions. It is important to note that participating in this project yielded practical benefits to those involved. For example, the research does not unearth sociological information but also enrich the comprehension of the theme of gender and make dominance not only in literature but in other aspects of the Nigerian society. Towards this end, the first half of a joint interview was devoted to summarizing the responses of the respondents. Many respondents expressed gratitude for the chance to articulate their feelings on such important concepts.

The quantitative nature of this project also contributes to the present understanding of the question of gender in Nigeria Literature, conversational analyses, which focuses on the structure of talk and documentation of various communicative behaviours have been preferred methods of sociological theory to literary theory of narratology and autobiographical approach. This factor enables me achieve quantitative and qualitative feelings on findings. It also enables the research to achieve success in uncovering some salient themes about man in Nigerian society. The autobiographical approach employed during the analytical conversational stage of this project allowed for a more expansive evaluation of male autobiographical narratives and gender imperative. While I entered each interview encounter with questions scripted to address the research questions, they follow my hypotheses. These tactics significantly improve the research for it forces me to remain open to the possibility that documented the issue of gender in Nigerian literature. The voice of the participants guided this analysis, as a result, many of the prevailing assumptions regarding male dominance in autobiographical “reality” became clear to analyze.

The application of symbolic interaction during the design and analysis tackles and highlights the limitations of earlier research in the subject. In this paper, I discover the Derridian multiplicities of meanings by the way the participants handle gender presentations giving it various interpretations that are deconstructed. Essentially, this project formulates a tentative model of autobiographical approach that is academically valuable and result oriented. This project ideally provides convincing support for Francis Enemu (1999) testament about the question of gender in Nigeria. The theoretical design of this project supports the exploration and development of new direction and women empowerment in Nigeria. That is why Enemu remarks that” Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process involving the transformation of the economies, social psychologies, political and legal circumstances of the powerless. In the specific case of women, empowerment entails not only positive changes in these critical respects but also the dismantling of the cultural norms and traditional practices that devalue, disempowered and disposes women. The process must necessarily also include the expansion of women’s access to educational opportunities, facilities for skills acquisition and positions of authority (Behringer 2008:233).

The project supports the total equality of gender since it is an artificial creation. Critically, changes should be reflected on the conceptualization of gender and future researchers must draw new theoretical framework in analyzing women transformation. This research is distinctive because it explores new grounds in social and psychological literature as a whole. In sum, future researchers would be advised to consolidate on social and psychological meanings with its multiplicities of interpretations in realizing a gender free society that is devoid of male dominance in Nigeria.

11.0 Sociological Contributions

The tendency for sociological discourse to spotlight major differences and imbalances raises the question of whether scholars even deliberate on the possibility of similarity and balance when designing or analyzing research (Behringer 2008:261). Certainly I observed differences in the statements of the participants and I also observe the similarities which exist in their statements. But the noticeable presence of similarity in opinion suggests that the prevailing theories of difference dates back to Bernard’s (1796) depiction of “his and her” in scholarship, and even further back to early functionalist theories of social relations (e.g. Parsons) the vast majority of contemporary social scientific literature on gender relations in autobiographical literature in Nigeria continues to rely on this rhetoric difference, drawing either from the two-culture of multiple theory of difference or the dominance model of difference, but strict adherence to those frameworks may evade the capture of some principal features of gender relations in literature.

Furthermore, a one-dimensional slant on gender issue may circulate inaccurate or incomplete appraisals and more importantly, taint future inquiries. Again, gender and power differences unquestionably impact some social imbalances to some degree. I argue that the most accurate depiction and comprehension of women in literature can only be accomplished by crafting a design that encompasses measurement of the symbolic nature of social structure as well as gender similarity and gender difference. The project extends the current literature on gender studies from these multiple angles. In African literature, some scholars have generally illustrated the gender differences in languages and proposed that men's and women's dissimilarity in art causes recurrent misunderstanding during intimate talks. The genesis of this project is a desire to critically respond to the extant body of literature on the subject, especially authors such as Deborah Tanneh and John Gray and critics such as Charles Nnolim, Francis Enemuo and Sandra Parquet who demonstrate gender imperatives in body literature. My findings reveal that much of the professed and circulated knowledge about the place of women in scholarship is as a result of obnoxious cultures and traditions resulting in the creation of stereotypes which writer see as instruments.

12.0 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

It is very clear to say that this paper is bound by time and place, and because this study is markedly different from past research on gender imperatives in African Literature. One severe limitation of this study is the inability to substantiate my finding or compare these trends to those that have been present in earlier years. The symbolic meaning of the gender imperative fluctuates over time, and thus the result of my analysis likely reflects modern perception of gender consciousness. But the inability to substantiate and compare these trends to those that have been present in earlier years would constitute future research in the subject because knowledge is not static. The contemporary understanding in gender relations should have stressed mutuality, equality but it does not, future research, probably would examine these variables. Future research, probably would examine the mutual relationship between male and female styles, in communication, in marriage etc as regards the portrayal of Balzac's autobiographical truth. Twenty-five participants contributing to the research relatively give quantitative result to the findings of this work. In future, I would like to double this number and broaden the pool of participants until the work is fully replicated. In this paper, I was able to examine the meanings of gender, its artificial status and its relationship in literature. In future, I intend to delve deeper into the phenomenon by designing an ethno methodological study of gender as an artificial phenomenon in autobiographical literature.

13.0 Conclusion

This research makes valuable contributions to the current body of literature on male autobiographical narratives and gender imperative in Nigeria. The work provides a compelling argument for the conceptualization of the question of gender. As Solomon Akinboye (1999) rightly portend. He submits that:

It is the instrumentality by which Nigeria influences the global environment and through which she realizes objective that are in conformity with her perceived national interest (Behringer 2008:365).

When researchers begin to approach the study of gender relations in literature with multiple methodological and theoretical trajectories, holistic strategic will amplify academic understanding of gender and literature, but may also establish new cultural awareness when stereotypes and norms are totally forgotten. The research celebrates the place of *man in society*. The study examines the methodological standard in delineating the issue of gender and autobiographical narratives through the power of the interview. Although, male autobiographical narratives tend to move towards "self glorification" and self assertion, the work tends to move away from extant research by combing two methodological standards: narratology and autobiographical approach. Autobiographical approach is more scientific because it enables us engage some participants on interviews that literarily explains the concept of gender in Africa. "These interviews are gendered productions ". It lends axiomatic credence to the literary implications behind the creation of both conventional and personal male metaphors in situating "autobiographical truth" (Balzac 2008:114) to the development of social literature in Nigeria.

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