The Intersectionality of Culture in Gender Relation in Nigeria

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Abstract
Africans are cultural conservatives. These conserved cultures are handed over from generation to generation. Man is not just the product of nature but a product of his culture as well. His culture informs his upbringing and also forms his philosophy of life. His culture also informs his relationship with members of his community. Gender is an aspect of the social identity of men as well as women. Just as there are cultural norms and expectations about women's roles, there are also cultural norms and expectations of men as leaders, husbands, sons and lovers that shape their behaviour and opportunities. Culture shapes the prevailing gender relationship especially in Nigeria which is strongly embedded in patriarchal traditions. One cannot exclude culture from gender because gender is a product of culture. Culture informs how we're expected to act, speak, dress, groom, and conduct ourselves based upon our assigned gender. Women are naturally assigned the second person role in ever African society and this has contributed greatly to their marginalization in almost all African societies. Culture affects variation in relationships. This paper using the philosophical methods of hermeneutics which has to do with interpretations, wishes to interpret various ways by which culture has intersected in gender relation. Its findings will recommend positive values to be emulated that will improve gender relation.
Keywords: Intersectionality, Culture, Gender, Gender relation, Feminism

Introduction
Paulo Freire in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed',(2000:88) noted that;

> Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words,
> but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world.
> To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world
> in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new
> naming. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in
> action-reflection. [1]

The above quotation of Paulo gave us insight on the foundations of bell hooks philosophy. A philosophy that fought for a just society where we can all co-habit (if possible) in unity. Such a dream would not be bad in a Nigerian situation. bell hooks philosophy spoke of: "hooks ethical stance, pedagogical vision, political sensibilities around the importance of transgression, philosophical anthropology informed by an anti essentialist framework, passion to help to create a world where multiple sites of oppression and dehumanizing are challenged and overthrown, and belief in a collective movement toward spiritual and existential enrichment. Guadalupe & Yancy (2009 [2.] bell hooks was speaking against collective silence of all to the factors that has combined efforts to dehumanize and oppress us as individuals and collectively as a people. hooks perceived our collective voices so powerful that it could be taken to be a vehicle in terms of which we create our own destinies. hooks was simply opening our eyes to the choice before us, to either remain in the position we are in or change our position. The words of Beauvoir, "one is not born but becomes a woman", is applicable to gender problems that we have in our Nigerian society. Problems of inequality, discrimination, segregation, ethinicism, sexism, patriarchy and social economic inequalities that exist between the rich and the poor etc. These are known as 'factors of oppression'. What these factors oppression have done to us is to widen gender gap and stifling of good gender relation.

Nigerian society like every other African society is embedded in patriarchal tradition. A position that puts men in charge of every affair in the home and outside the home. Nigerians are also closely connected to traditions and religious values that vary between the northern and the southern parts of Nigeria. In the north, we have mostly Muslims Nigeria and in the south we have mostly Christian. These traditions, societies and cultures have their own peculiarities which inform their gender relations. Gender relation in the north is not the same in south. Freire asks "how can one begin to question "That which had existed objectively but had not been perceived in its deeper implications (if indeed it was perceived at all) begins to 'stand out,' assuming the character of a problem and therefore of challenge". We should be ready for the consequence or outcome of everything we hold dear including our culture and traditions. We must begin to go deeper than what ordinary eyes can see to determine the cause of our problems. hook noted that "Naming is a way of actively breaking through forms of imposed silence. Naming our world, naming our reality, is a mode of problem-posing, problem solving and a way of calling attention to the social world and its appearance of fixity". Nigerians should call to bear that which has impeded on their growth and developments as a people and that which has widened gender gap among genders.

Conceptual and theoretical analysis
Intersectionality
Oxford advanced learned dictionary defined intersectionality as: "The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise". YW Boston Blog (2017) said that: Intersectionality is a framework for conceptualizing a person, group of people, or social problem as affected by a number of discriminations and disadvantages. It takes into account people's overlapping identities and experiences in order to understand the complexity of prejudices they face". Explaining further , the Blog said that :

> In other words, intersectional theory asserts that people are often
> disadvantaged by multiple sources of oppression: their race, class,
> gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and other identity markers
> Intersectionality recognizes that identity markers (e.g. "woman" and
> black") do not exist independently of each other, and that each informs
> the others, often creating a complex convergence of oppression. For instance
> a black man and a white woman make $0.74 and $0.78 to a white man's dollar
> respectively. Black women, faced with multiple forms of oppression, only
> make $0.64. Understanding intersectionality is essential to combating the
> interwoven prejudices people face in their daily lives

Looking at the above definitions of intersectionality, one can deduce one predominant factor. The factor that women who are being oppressed are mainly black women. The factors that have intersected itself to oppress them is embedded n their societies. They are social identities made up by one's culture. The term was first used by Kimberlé Crenshaw, law professor and social theorist in her 1989 paper "Demarginalizing the Intersection of race and sex: A Black Feminist Critique Of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory And Antiracist Politics". It is an online paper that can easily be accessed.

Crenshaw, who provided legal analysis of cases of discrimination against black women, was of the opinion that the term be used as a means of addressing the marginalization of African American women in both anti-discrimination legislation and feminist and anti-racist theory and policy. The notion of considering *race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis*, that is, to make use of analytical perspectives which do not reflect the interaction between the systems that generate oppression and privilege, results in making invincible those social positions marked by multiple oppressions. Adopting an intersectional view for Crenshaw is an imperative benchmark in the fight for human rights and social justice, given that we require frames that allow us to appreciate the social problems of all members of a given group (male and female). This is necessary where those who

are least protected are also those who are most marginalized by the systems of oppression. Intersectionality makes sure that all receives fair justice and at equal margin. The bad experiences of the most privileged members in each social category is the one that tends to be more visible, and discussed extensively while that of the minority doesn't seem to receive any attention at all. This was the case of the white women and the black women in America those days. Black women were excluded from feminist theory in cases of sexual discrimination, for example, in which the subject of reference is a white woman. The white woman receives privileges within the racial system and class structure in the society. At the same time, when it comes to politics, the subject given much visibility is the black male. It was as if the female slave does not exist at all.

Crenshaw gave an example when she cited the case of Emma DeGraffenreid, one of five black women who in 1976 sued General Motors for discrimination, alleging that the company was excluding black women. Emma's case was dismissed by the Court, on the grounds that, as the company hired women (white, for administrative positions), the company did not discriminate on grounds of gender and, as it also hired black people (men, for industrial work), nor did it engage in racial discrimination. However, the real problem, which the judge was unwilling to acknowledge, was what Emma was actually trying to prove: that black women, as a group were affected by two systems of discrimination. Despite being doubly affected, however, she received no attention from either group: neither from the markedly masculine civil rights movement, nor from an American feminist movement led mostly by affluent white women. Crenshaw noted that:

> Such exclusion cannot be resolved by simply embedding black
> women within already-established analytical structures. Given
> that the intersectional experience is more than the sum of racism
> and sexism, any analysis which does not take intersectionality into
> account cannot sufficiently address the specific subordination of
> black women.

The intersectionality perspective further reveals that the individual's social identities and relations largely influence one's beliefs about gender. As a result, feminist researchers have come to the conclusion that if gender relation is to be understood, the individual's social location (culture) as reflected in intersecting identities must be at the forefront in any investigation of gender.

Culture
Culture is the foremost defining feature of a person's identity as we had earlier noted. Culture is the mirror through which we see ourselves and also the social group we belong to. How we are able to understand and forge our identities is shaped from birth by the values and norms that surround us. Hall, S. (1996) noted that:

> Culture plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' identities, as it
> provides a framework for understanding the world and one's place
> within it. Identity is a multifaceted concept that encompasses a range
> of social categories, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and
> nationality, among others. In this sense, culture intersects with individuals'
> identities in complex ways, as it shapes their perceptions, experiences, and
> social interactions.

One influential scholar who have written extensively on the relationship between culture and intersectionality is bell hooks. In her book "Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism," hooks (1981) explored the intersections of race, gender, and class in the experiences of Black women. She argued that:

> the dominant culture in the United States is rooted in white
> supremacist patriarchy, which has historically excluded Black
> women and other marginalized groups from full participation in
> society. By recognizing and challenging these oppressive cultural
> norms and values, hooks argues, we can work towards a more
> just and inclusive society.

In the traditional Igbo society, it is difficult to discern any strict separation between the reproductive and productive roles of men and women but rather these roles were seen as an integral part of life experiences that starts from cradle even to adulthood (Oyekanmi 2004). For the typical Nigerian woman, Williams (1990) considered three roles to be very important, namely; the procreative roles, the domiciliary roles and the indirect political influence. The relationship between culture and intersectionality is complex and multifaceted. Culture can both reinforce and challenge systems of oppression, and can also serve as a site of resistance and empowerment for marginalized groups. Intersectionality provides a framework for understanding the complex ways in which cultural norms and values intersect with other social identities and power structures, and can inform more inclusive and equitable cultural practices and policies.

Gender
Gender is the social, psychological, cultural and behavioural aspects of being a man, woman, or other gender identity in the society. Gender in this context is a social phenomenon. The concept was first developed by Iill Matthews (1984) in her study of the construction of femininity. According to Mathews, the concept of gender gives "recognition to the fact that every known society   distinguishes between women and men". This is evidence from creation when even God himself created them male and female. The recognition of the differences in sex also connotes recognition in the different roles one is expected to play according to one's sexual identity.

Societal expectations are cultural expectations and it is expected that none should be found wanting. Simone de Beauvior (1949:15) said that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman". Judith Butler (1986:35-4) was of the opinion that "Simone de Beauvoir's formulation distinguishes sex from gender and suggests that gender is an aspect of identity gradually acquire". Butler continued her explanation of gender and argued that it is not natural in her differentiation between sex and gender when she said:

> The distinction between sex and gender has been crucial to the long-standing feminist effort to debunk the claim that anatomy is destiny; sex is understood to be the invariant, anatomically distinct, and factic aspects of the female body, whereas gender is the cultural meaning and form that that body acquires, the variable modes of that body's acculturation. With the distinction intact, it is no longer possible to attribute the values or social functions of women to biological necessity, and neither can we refer meaningfully to natural or unnatural gendered behavior: all gender is, by definition, unnatural.

At this point, one could as well say that gender is an aspect of the social identity of men as well as women. Just as there are cultural norms and expectations about women's roles, there are also cultural norms and expectations of men as leaders, husbands, sons and lovers that shape their behaviour and opportunities. In CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) questions as was prepared by Johanna Schalkwyk (2000) , one could note the interrelationship and intersection between gender and culture in the under listed questions and answers:

1. What do we mean by "culture"?
   When we talk about "culture" we often mean intellectual and creative products, including literature, music, drama, and painting. Another use of "culture" is to describe the beliefs and practices of another society, particularly where these are seen as closely linked with tradition or religion. But culture is more than that. Culture is part of the fabric of every society, including our own. It shapes "the way things are done" and our understanding of why this should be so. This more comprehensive approach is proposed in the definition of culture adopted at the World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mexico, 1982) and used in ongoing discussions on culture and development: "Culture… is… the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes not

only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs."

2. How is gender related to culture?

   Expectations about attributes and behaviours appropriate to women or men and about the relations between women and men – in other words, gender – are shaped by culture. Gender identities and gender relations are critical aspects of culture because they shape the way daily life is lived in the family, but also in the wider community and the workplace. Gender (like race or ethnicity) functions as an organizing principle for society because of the cultural meanings given to being male or female. This is evident in the division of labour according to gender. In most societies there are clear patterns of "women's work" and "men's work," both in the household and in the wider community – and cultural explanations of why this should be so. The patterns and the explanations differ among societies and change over time. While the specific nature of gender relations varies among societies, the general pattern is that women have less personal autonomy, fewer resources at their disposal, and limited influence over the decision-making processes that shape their societies and their own lives. This pattern of disparity based on gender is both a human rights and a development issue.

Gender relation

Scholars have explored gender relations from various perspectives and have offered diverse opinions and theories about the nature of these relations. Judith Butler (1990), a prominent feminist philosopher, has argued that gender is not a fixed or innate characteristic, but rather a social construct that is continually created and reinforced through everyday interactions and cultural practices. R.W. Connell, a sociologist and gender scholar, has developed the concept of "hegemonic masculinity," which refers to the dominant form of masculinity within a particular society or context, and the ways in which this form of masculinity is reinforced and reproduced through social practices and institutions (Connell, 1995). Raewyn Connell and James Messerschmid (2005) have proposed a broader understanding of masculinities, arguing that there are multiple forms of masculinity that are shaped by factors such as race, class, and sexuality. Joan Acker, a sociologist and gender scholar, has explored the concept of gendered organizations, highlighting the ways in which gender shapes the practices and structures of organizations, and the impact that these practices have on individuals' experiences and opportunities (Acker, 1990). Maxine Hong Kingston, a writer and feminist activist, has explored the intersection of gender and race, highlighting the unique experiences of women of color and the ways in which they are often excluded from mainstream feminist discourse (Kingston, 1989).

Feminism

bell hooks, an influential feminist scholar, defined feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (hooks, 2000, p. viii). She went further to explain how feminism seeks to challenge and transform systems of domination and inequality, aiming for social justice and liberation for all genders. Simone de Beauvoir: "Feminism is a way of fighting against the oppression of women in all its forms and manifestations." (de Beauvoir, 1949. Audre Lorde: "Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression." (Lorde, 1984). Patricia Hill Collins: "Feminism is a social movement that seeks equal social, economic, and political rights for women and an end to the social construction of gender categories that maintain women's subordination." (Collins, 1990). Judith Butler: "Feminism is the movement to end all gender-based oppression, not to become the new oppressors." (Butler, 1988). These definitions highlight the shared objective of feminism to challenge and eliminate gender-based oppression and advocate for equality and social justice. Each author offers his or her unique perspective, contributing to the diverse discourse within feminist scholarship. Intersectional feminism, therefore, refers to an approach that recognizes the ways in which different social identities intersect and compound to create unique forms of discrimination and disadvantage. It emphasizes the need to consider the experiences of marginalized groups within feminist movements and address the intersecting oppressions they face.

For example, a black woman may face discrimination not only based on her gender but also due to her race. Intersectional feminism recognizes that her experiences are shaped by both racism and sexism,

and advocates for her rights and equality in all dimensions. Intersectionality expands the feminist analysis beyond solely gender, acknowledging the diverse experiences and perspectives of individuals and the importance of addressing the interconnected nature of oppression. It promotes inclusivity, solidarity, and a more comprehensive understanding of social justice.

How culture intersect with Gender relation in Nigeria
In the context of Nigeria, the intersectionality of culture in gender relations is a significant factor to consider when examining issues related to gender inequality and women's rights. Nigeria is a culturally diverse country with over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own cultural practices, norms, and traditions. These cultural factors intersect with gender, influencing the experiences and opportunities available to women and shaping gender relations in the country. Traditional gender roles and expectations often place women in subordinate positions within Nigerian society. Many cultural practices and beliefs reinforce these gender inequalities.

For example, in some regions, women may be expected to prioritize marriage and motherhood over education and career pursuits. Women's access to resources, decision-making power, and participation in public and political life can also be limited by cultural norms.

Religion, particularly Islam and Christianity, also plays a significant role in shaping gender relations in Nigeria. Religious beliefs and interpretations can influence attitudes towards women's rights, their roles within the family and society, and their access to education, employment, and leadership positions. In Nigeria, the intersection of culture, gender, and other factors such as socioeconomic status, education, and rural-urban disparities further complicate the experiences of women. For example, women in rural areas may face additional challenges due to limited access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities compared to their urban counterparts. They may also encounter cultural practices that perpetuate harmful norms, such as female genital mutilation or child marriage.

Addressing the intersectionality of culture and gender in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach. It involves challenging discriminatory cultural practices, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, advocating for legal reforms that protect women's rights, and engaging with religious and community leaders to promote positive change. It is crucial to foster dialogue, education, and awareness to challenge harmful cultural norms and promote gender equality and women's rights in a culturally sensitive manner.

Organizations and activists in Nigeria are working towards creating change by engaging communities, advocating for policy reforms, providing education and skills training, and promoting women's leadership and participation in decision-making processes. By recognizing and addressing the intersectionality of culture and gender, progress can be made towards achieving gender equality and empowering women in Nigeria.

How intersectionality can help to improve gender relation
Intersectionality can help improve gender relations by providing a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the experiences of individuals who face multiple forms of oppression and discrimination. Here are a few ways in which intersectionality can contribute to improving gender relations:

1. Recognizing diverse experiences: Intersectionality highlights that individuals' experiences of gender inequality are shaped by various intersecting factors such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, and more. By recognizing these intersecting identities and experiences, intersectionality promotes a more inclusive understanding of gender relations. It acknowledges that different groups of women face unique challenges and disadvantages and that gender inequality cannot be addressed without considering the broader social context.
2. Challenging stereotypes and biases: Intersectionality helps challenge stereotypes and biases by exposing the complexity of individuals' experiences. It challenges the tendency to view women as a homogenous group and highlights the diversity of experiences and perspectives within the

category of "women." This understanding promotes more nuanced and accurate portrayals of women in society, breaking down stereotypes and challenging biases.

3. Centering marginalized voices: Intersectionality emphasizes the importance of centering the voices and experiences of marginalized groups within gender discourse. It recognizes that individuals who face intersecting forms of discrimination, such as women of color or LGBTQ+ women, often experience compounded disadvantages. By giving space and visibility to these voices, intersectionality helps address the power imbalances and ensures that the needs and perspectives of all women are considered in discussions and decision-making processes.

4. Policy and advocacy: Intersectionality informs policy and advocacy efforts by highlighting the specific needs and challenges faced by different groups of women. It helps to develop targeted interventions and initiatives that address the intersecting forms of discrimination faced by marginalized women. For example, policies that aim to improve gender relations may need to consider the unique challenges faced by women of different racial or ethnic backgrounds or women with disabilities.

5. Building coalitions and solidarity: Intersectionality encourages the building of coalitions and solidarity among diverse groups. By recognizing the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression, intersectionality promotes collaboration and collective action. It helps foster alliances among individuals and communities who share common goals of gender equality and social justice, leading to stronger movements for change.

How intersectionality can help in improving our culture for good gender relation to exist
Intersectionality can contribute to improving culture for better gender relations by challenging discriminatory norms, promoting inclusivity, and amplifying marginalized voices. Here's how intersectionality can help in this regard:

1. Challenging harmful cultural practices: Intersectionality highlights the ways in which cultural practices can perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination. By recognizing the intersections of gender with other social identities, such as race, class, and sexuality, it can shed light on harmful practices that disproportionately affect certain groups of women. Intersectionality provides a framework to critically examine cultural norms and challenge practices that perpetuate discrimination, such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, or restrictive gender roles.

2. Promoting cultural inclusivity: Intersectionality emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing diverse cultural experiences and perspectives. It calls for inclusivity within cultural spaces and encourages the inclusion of marginalized voices in shaping cultural practices and norms. By acknowledging the multiple identities and experiences of individuals, intersectionality can foster a cultural environment that respects and celebrates diversity, challenging monolithic and exclusionary representations of gender and culture.

3. Amplifying marginalized voices: Intersectionality centers the experiences and perspectives of marginalized individuals, including women of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, disabled women, and others facing multiple forms of oppression. By amplifying these voices, intersectionality challenges dominant narratives and power structures within culture. It provides a platform for marginalized individuals to share their stories, contribute to cultural dialogue, and advocate for change. This inclusion and amplification of diverse voices can lead to a more equitable and representative cultural landscape.

4. Promoting dialogue and education: Intersectionality encourages dialogue and education about diverse experiences and identities. It facilitates conversations that challenge cultural stereotypes, biases, and misconceptions. By fostering dialogue, intersectionality can help bridge gaps in understanding and promote empathy and respect across different cultural perspectives. It also promotes education that incorporates intersectional perspectives, helping individuals develop a more nuanced understanding of gender and culture and fostering a culture of equality and inclusivity.

5. Collaborative cultural change: Intersectionality recognizes that cultural change is a collective effort that requires collaboration and solidarity. By bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds and communities, intersectionality can facilitate collaborations that challenge

discriminatory cultural norms and promote positive change. It encourages collective action, advocacy, and community engagement to address systemic barriers and work towards inclusive cultural practices that support gender equality.

Evaluation and Conclusion

In summary, intersectionality can improve culture for better gender relations by challenging harmful practices, promoting inclusivity, amplifying marginalized voices, fostering dialogue and education, and facilitating collaborative cultural change. By incorporating an intersectional perspective, we can create a more inclusive, respectful, and equitable cultural environment that supports positive gender relations.

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