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Parents' Promotion of the Battle of the Sexes in the Training of Children

Ebifaghe O**. FAWEI**

Abstract
The male and female genders have engaged in a battle for a long time. This paper investigates the subject of "the battle of the sexes" as a phenomenon that has pervaded human relationships for centuries. This study is important because the issue of battle of the sexes promotes gender-based competition and inequality in Africa; especially in Nigeria. It argues that parents promote the culture of sexism by passing on wrong perceptions to their children through the training and socialisation processes. It accounts for why the study explores the methods and practices parents use to impart gender roles and expectations, and highlight the significant impact these early lessons have on the development of children's identities and behaviours. This study is necessitated by the fact that serious scholarly attention has not been given to the subject. This study deploys an analytic approach to investigate the question of parent's role in the promotion of the battle of the sexes in the training of children. This is with a view to unearth the concept of battle of the sexes based on gendered stereotypes and to highlight equality of opportunities and privileges as panacea to solving humanity's problem created by this phenomenon. The study therefore, challenges traditional gender norms and emphasises the need to dismantle gender disparity, through the medium of the home as the primary training ground for children. It consequently recommends the training of male and female children alike as viable approach to prevent gender disparities, and foster a more inclusive global environment.

Keywords: Parents, Promotion of the Battle of the Sexes, Children, Training, Gender role.

Introduction

The "battle of the sexes" is a term that captures the enduring and often contentious dynamic between male and female genders, reflecting societal perceptions and interactions that are frequently framed in terms of competition and opposition that create standard upon which women's roles and duties in life will be measured. Obviously, the contention between the male and female gender is seen by evaluating the values created by the dominate group specifically in the area of social relationship and responsibilities. This collectively held belief has become the medium through which the battle of the sexist is being promoted consciously and unconsciously. The crucial point made here is that sexist discrimination is a clear reason for many of the interlocking forms of oppression in society. This dichotomy is deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and social constructs that have

long influenced human behaviour and societal norms. Despite significant strides toward gender equality in recent decades, the remnants of these traditional gender roles and stereotypes continue to shape our interactions and perceptions. “From the very beginning...male power over women is centralized through state policies, which make women caring for others in the home financially dependent on men, as well as its being embedded in other structure of the workplace and the home.” (Segal, 211). In the enforcement of these policies, gender gap is entrenched in parenting. Parents play a pivotal role in the early socialisation of children, serving as the primary agents through which societal norms and values are transmitted. From a young age, children are exposed to a myriad of gendered expectations through both explicit instruction and implicit modelling by their parents. These early experiences are crucial, as they lay the foundation for children's understanding of gender roles and their place within the social hierarchy.

With the realisation that parents are key players in the promotion of sexism, this paper delves into the various ways parents contribute to the upholding of the battle of the sexes. We explore the conscious and unconscious methods used by parents to instil gender-specific behaviours and attitudes in their children. By examining the impact of parental influence on children's gender identity formation and social interactions, we aim to shed light on the broader implications for gender relations in society. Also, through comprehensive analyses, we will highlight key factors that drive parental behaviours and attitudes regarding gender. Additionally, we will consider how cultural, economic, and social contexts shape these practices.

Conceptual Interpretation of the Sexes

The concept of sexism has evolved significantly over time, influenced by biological, psychological, and socio-cultural perspectives. Traditionally, the distinction between male and female has been viewed through a binary lens, primarily based on physical and reproductive characteristics. This binary framework has historically informed societal roles and expectations, often leading to a rigid division of labour, behaviour, and identity based on one's sex. Biological theories have long posited that inherent differences between males and females, such as hormonal variations and neurological distinctions, account for divergent behaviours and abilities. These theories have been instrumental in reinforcing gender stereotypes, suggesting that men and women are naturally predisposed to certain roles and traits. For instance, men are often perceived as more aggressive and dominant, while women are seen as nurturing and passive.

These biologically deterministic views have contributed to a social structure that promotes certain attributes and behaviours based on sex.

Psychological interpretations of gender have introduced more nuanced understandings, emphasising the role of individual experiences and developmental processes in shaping gender identity. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, for example, proposed that gender identity is formed through complex interactions within the family, particularly through the resolution of the Oedipus complex. Later theories, such as those proposed by cognitive-developmental psychologists like Lawrence Kohlberg, suggest that children actively construct their gender identities through a process of observation, imitation, and reinforcement. Socio-cultural perspectives have further expanded the understanding of gender by highlighting the significant influence of cultural norms, socialisation processes, and institutional structures. Feminist theorists argue that gender is a social construct, shaped by power dynamics and cultural narratives that perpetuate inequality. Evwierhoma, a feminist theorist connotes similar ideas in her analysis of traditional gender practices, where she confirms gender as a social construct. She avers that:

> Gender construct in terms of African societies, is social and regulates relationships and behaviour between men and women. Gender roles are dynamic and they change from one indigenous settlement to another. Some women are providers and vice versa i.e. some women are strong in some areas and others are passive in other indigenous settlements. (24)

This view challenges the notion of fixed, inherent gender differences, this shows that gender roles are historical, as such there cannot be specific and clearly spelt out expectations as a result of gender construct. Unlike sex which is biological; a person is either a male or female. Gender roles being learned behaviours, constructed by societal expectations and norms are being enforced by parents on children leading to the creation of asymmetrical foundations that produce detrimental, unwarranted and unhelpful acts that compels women to conform to hegemonic rules at the long run. Sociologists like Butler have gone further to suggest that gender is performative, meaning that it is an ongoing process of enactment rather than a static identity. These evolving interpretations underscore the complexity of the sexes, moving beyond simplistic binaries to embrace a more fluid and dynamic understanding of gender. They highlight the interplay between biology, psychology, and socio-cultural factors in shaping gender identities and roles. Evwierhoma reiterates that:

> Within households, gender constructs affect women and men in terms of work and reproduction. Equality hardly exists in terms of work done by men and women and the value ascribed to it e.g. cooking, farming, cleaning childcare, lactation and childbearing. Tradition considers the woman to be of subordinate status in the home even when she contributes to its upkeep, or has greater access to finance or resources e.g. the factors of production (land, capital or physical prowess) (22-23).

This comprehensive approach provides a more inclusive framework for analysing how parents influence the development of children's gender identities and perpetuate the battle of the sexes. In the context of parenting, these conceptual interpretations suggest that parents' attitudes and practices are not merely reflections of biological imperatives but are deeply embedded in cultural and social frameworks as "culture plays a major function in the socialization process of any society." (Agbor and Ejue, 206). From the foregoing, gender roles are dependent on the influences and practices existing within cultures from time immemorial and uphold by parents as leaders of the home. Different training is given to the male and female gender which becomes the traditional knowledge displayed in the future. In the "domestic units, women's lives are viewed in relation to those of men, as regards the housework they carry out, kinship ties, as well as subsistence agriculture." (Evwierhoma, 22). Thus, parents nurture their children in a manner that gives confidence to one gender over another from childhood. These antecedents are sources of inequality that promote the entrenched battle of the sexes in the larger society. Alba posits that:

> ...Sexism pervades society in many more subtle ways- and its impacts are not always so tangible. This discrimination is committed not just in the workplace and on the streets, but in social settings and in our own homes, sometimes by people who love us. It can also start young, like when parents enlist daughters to serve guests at a family gathering, and sons are free to relax with their male relatives. (https://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/articles).

Alba gives a vivid account of the factors that triggers the battle of the sexes. This account implicates parents' role in the training process of their children. It implies that the combat between the male and female gender is a by-product of gender

stereotyping in the up-bringing of children. Although, this battle is mostly felt in the social political settings; dominated by men but it appears that the home is the primary source of discrimination amongst the male and female gender. The fact remains that the training children receive in their younger age, constitutes the foundation for which their actions and inactions thrive. Parents in many subtle ways have created the monster called sexism in their children who have grown into adulthood, upholding those ideas. As a reaction against the battle between femininity and masculinity, the feminist movement was established in 1848 at the Seneca Fall Convention (SFC) where a rally of about three hundred women and men clamouring for equality for women took place. Despite feminist protests against such acts that have now become custom and culture that infringes on women's right and position in the family and society at large, the patriarchy doggedly held on to the culture of superiority. They continue to intentionally create social boundaries, in the attempt to make themselves more culturally, economically and politically relevant than their female counterparts. Manne with the understanding of this selfish patriarchal ideology asserts that:

> Sexism should be understood primarily as the justificatory branch of a patriarchal order, which consists in ideology that has the overall function of rationalizing and justifying patriarchal social relations, with women being positioned as subordinate in relation to some man or men. (45)

Indeed, the notion of women as subordinate to men is a social-cultural order of the patriarchy that promote cruelty and dominance of women in all facets of society. Right from the pre-advocacy period, the patriarchy has leveraged on the restrictive training given to the female gender from childhood by parents. Thus, sought to continue to limit their productivity and sustain patriarchal dominance on women even when women have recognised their self-worth and seeks a revolutionary change. There is no arguing the fact that this thinking induces the battle of the sexes.

Some Factors that Imbued Parents with the Sense of Gender Role Socialisation

The impact of parental influence on gender role socialisation is complicated by cultural and socioeconomic factors. Different cultures have varying norms and expectations regarding gender, which parents transmit to their children. Additionally, socioeconomic status can affect the resources and opportunities available for children, influencing how gender roles are taught and reinforced. For instance, in some cultures, economic constraints may necessitate more rigid gender

roles to ensure family survival, thus intensifying the parental reinforcement of traditional gender norms. The early socialisation of gender roles by parents has profound long-term implications for children's personal and professional lives. Gendered expectations can limit the opportunities and choices available to individuals, reinforcing systemic inequalities. By understanding the mechanisms through which parents influence gender role socialisation, we can begin to challenge and change these patterns, promoting a more equitable and inclusive society.

Cultural practices impact on parents and goes a long way to determine parental influence and extends to differential treatment and expectations based on the child's sex. Studies have shown that parents may unconsciously hold different expectations for their sons and daughters, influencing their development and self-perception. For example, in Africa, parents might encourage boys to be assertive and independent, while expecting girls to be more compliant and empathetic. These expectations can shape children's self-esteem, interests, and career aspirations. In different cultures, gender roles may be more or less rigidly defined, affecting how parents socialise their children. It is against this background that feminist scholars like Nkealah states that "...feminism in Africa, ultimately, aim at modifying culture as it affects women in different societies." (61). It can therefore be argued that cultural impositions have reconstructed the identity of male and female, emphasising feasible compromise that promote extremism of masculinity over femininity.

Additionally, economic conditions can influence the resources available to families, shaping how gender roles are taught and reinforced. For instance, in economically disadvantaged communities, traditional gender roles might be more pronounced due to the necessity of adhering to established norms for economic survival. Parental influence is pivotal in shaping children's understanding and adoption of gender roles from an early age to fit into the economic realities. This is major factor for discouraging women from the mainstream and has robbed women of great opportunities. From childhood, the female child is made to believe and resign herself to a second place. Consequent upon the above, the girl child, understudies her mother who seems comfortable in occupying an inferior status in terms of domestication and cultural restrictions. Thus, it is only expected that the operational spaces of women become limited mentally, psychologically and physically.

In contemporary African society, media has become a major source of deriving information for members of the society. Its impact on parents cannot be overemphasised. It appears that the media and societal norms significantly influence

parental practices regarding gender role socialisation. These external factors shape parental attitudes and behaviours, often reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes and expectations. Parents are manipulated by both the positive and negative information from the media which constitute nostalgic memories in them. Consciously or unconsciously, these internalised media messages are incorporated into their child-training practices. For example, parents might select activities for their children that align with media representations of gender-appropriate behaviour. The reinforcement of these stereotypes through media can limit children's opportunities to explore a wide range of interests and skills, thereby perpetuating traditional gender roles. If as a result of desire, a boy child chooses to learn how to braid hairs, he will be immediately rebuked because it is considered to be a feminine skill. This resistance is as a result of known media tradition that has become a precinct of reasoning in parents. A significant number of successful male chefs, hairstylists, musicians and dancers in Africa, faced some challenges at the initial stage of wanting to pursue their dreams as a result to parental disapproval on the context of gender roles philosophies.

This repressiveness has become so ingrained in parents and it has strongly influenced parental behaviour in significant ways. These norms dictate what is considered acceptable or appropriate behaviour for males and females, shaping how parents guide their children. For instance, societal expectations that boys should be tough and not show emotions can lead parents to discourage their sons from expressing vulnerability, while girls might be encouraged to be more emotionally expressive and nurturing. Media norms are reinforced through various institutions, including schools, workplaces, and religious organisations, creating a feedback loop that perpetuates traditional gender roles. A man is considered to be weak and tagged a woman if he is seen crying, even though a man is also an emotional being. It becomes part and parcel of the training process for the male child. If he stumbles and falls while walking or running, the child is encouraged with statements like, “don’t cry you are a man, men don’t cry”. If the child finds it difficult to hold back his emotions, then another statement like “you are a woman wrapper” will be used. Parents, in turn, often feel pressured to conform to these norms to ensure their children are socially accepted and successful within their communities. This pressure can result in the reinforcement of gender-specific behaviours and attitudes that align with societal expectations. Since it is believed that the man should be tough and the woman emotional, it justifies the options and choices displayed in their relationship which over time have proven to be oppressive and discriminatory.

Some practical ways of Promoting Battle of the Sexes by Parents

Parents' delineation of roles in the upbringing of their children have established ideologies that have sustained male hegemony particularly in Africa. This process is multifaceted, encompassing various aspects of daily life and interactions. The following are key areas highlighted as some practical means through which parents promote the battle of the sexes. These includes but not limited to the following: couching technique, role model technique, encouraging non-gendered plays and activities, and discouragement of shared responsibilities amongst others.

Coaching Technique

Parents often use direct instructions to communicate societal gender expectations. On a daily basis children are tutored on social expectancy of children for girls and boys. That is why anytime someone exhibits behaviour considered socially unacceptable; the parents are blamed for failing in their responsibility of raising a proper child. Couching techniques highlights some core areas of children's lives. Parents make it a point of duty to teach their children on acceptable conducts. For instance, a male child is expected to greet differently from his female counterparts. If a girl should assume a position of bowing her head instead of her kneels to greet, she will be immediately corrected by the parents to do what is considered as appropriate. That goes on to regulate the manner of sitting, talking and many more ways. These instructions are frequently reinforced through "praise or correction" in the view of Kohlberg, which over time becomes part of their way of life further considered to be a lifestyle. Knowing that children learn by repetition, parents intentionally make it a point of duty to inculcate in them the social expectancy of male and female as stereotypical characteristics. These generally accepted behavioural patterns socially constructed in turn become the social norm and standard of assessment of peoples' conduct.

Role Model Technique

Children also learn gender roles by observing and imitating their parents' behaviour. This modelling effect is powerful, as parents' actions provide a blueprint for children to understand and enact gender roles. There is a common notion that children tend to learn faster from what they see than what comes as instructions. Through the ages, parents create the first avenue for the training of children. In words, character and other core aspects of life. They are the mirrors that reflect an acceptable social imagery for the child. For example, if a girl child observes her mother consistently performing household chores, she will naturally imbibe such practices and believe that a woman is meant to be devoted to house shores rather than getting involved in handling financial decisions. Likewise, if the mother is

disorganised and lazy, she will take it as the right thing to do. A lot of ladies learnt how to be abusive from their mothers.

This is also true of the case of the father, if a father constantly beat up his wife, abuse her at the slightest provocation, drink, and smoke and lead an irresponsible lifestyle, you can be sure of raising another nuisance. Whatever a parent does, or whatever decisions made register in the children. Kohlberg reiterates that a boy haven being told of the conventional activities associated with a boy would always try out such activities that call for flexing of muscles in display of his masculinity as relates to the operational meaning of the concept "male". This mentality is captured even in an Africa tales common sang be children; "mother in the kitchen cooking rice, father in the parlour watching match, sisters in kitchen watching plates and brothers are outside playing ball, this is the end of the game". From this formative stage, children have come to accept what their roles at home should be. This system of learning highlights the implicit messages about gender that parents convey through their everyday actions.

Encouragement of Non-Gendered Plays and Activities

Parents promote gender inequity by discouraging their children from participating in a wide range of activities, even in school. Specific games and activities are seen as feminine or masculine. Equal access to sports and art programmes should be provided for children irrespective of their sex. They should be made to offer variety of extracurricular activities such as cooking, baking and sawing. For instance, parents may explicitly encourage boys to engage in activities deemed masculine, such as participating in sports, while steering girls towards activities considered feminine, like playing with dolls or engaging in nurturing behaviours. Maccoby in her view maintains that:

> If parents who consistently offered masculine toys to their sons, and never gave them dolls, had sons who were more "masculine" than other boys on the measure of sex-typing, this would be seen as evidence that the children's sex-typing had been "shaped" by the parental management of children's play environment. (7)

There is therefore no doubt that children trained on the measure of sex-typing, will see themselves as superior and more confident in the play environment. Such differential treatments could prompt disrespect from the male to the female counterpart due to selective play objects and activities. Children ought to have an open mind towards learning and exploring the numerous possibilities in working

together as a term. By so doing, diverse interests will be encouraged, inclusive behaviours fostered, and gender barriers will naturally be neutralised.

Discouragement of Shared Responsibilities Mothers as well as fathers can take active roles in all aspects of parenting and household management. This includes sharing responsibilities for childcare, cooking, cleaning, and other domestic tasks. By promoting an equal division of labour, parents help normalise the idea that these responsibilities are not inherently gendered and can be performed by either parent. Fathers as well as sons should be part of the house shores; mothers should be part of handling financial responsibilities. When everyone is seen carrying out different duties without having them tied to a particular sex, it sends a direct message to the children on how things should be done. Examples are found in contemporary realities, examples of people raised in a system of inclusiveness and those raised by parents who discourage shared responsibilities are never the same in their disposition to things. The foregoing implies that while equity and fairness will be experienced in the home that practice inclusiveness, the other will most likely be dominated by discriminatory behaviours.

Conclusion

In it all, promoting gender equity in parenting is essential for fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. Parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's understanding of synchronisation of purpose and complementarity even before these young ones grow into adulthood. This paper advocates that parents should make effort to take an uncompromising stand in the training of their male and female children. Parents should promote more inclusive and conscious parenting practices that challenge entrenched gender norms in the raising of their children. By addressing these foundational issues, we hope to contribute to a future where the concept of battle of the sexes is reduced to a tolerable state or better still becomes an outdated practice of the past. This article has highlighted the various ways in which parental practices contribute to the reinforcement of traditional gender stereotypes, emphasising the long-term implications for gender inequality.

This paper, recommends the encouragement of children to explore a wide range of interests that promote their potentials that align with their personalities as humans, free from the constraints of stereotypical gender roles. The finding of this paper is that by adopting more conscious and equitable parenting practices, parents have the power to challenge and dismantle these traditional norms for the betterment of society. The paper recommends that ultimately, the journey towards gender equity begins from the private space to the public spaces. As parents become more

aware of the impact of their actions and attitudes, they can make deliberate choices that support their children growing into confident, empathetic, and open-minded individuals. Through these efforts, we hope to move towards a future where the concept of the battle of the sexes would be replaced by a more inclusive approach of gender complementarity.

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Of Boundaries and Borders' Nomenclature: Understanding the Origins of Demarcation Conflicts in Africa

Ezuwobomude Emmanuel **EWEKE** & Tuesday **EMMANUEL Jnr**

Abstract

The paper, critically interrogates the concepts of boundaries and borders in Africa especially as they seem to constitute a source of conflict in the nation-state configuration of the African continent. It is observed that, as the world drifts towards a 'global' village, the boundaries imposed by European colonial powers in the continent, have continued to shape the lives of various peoples. While different peoples of Africa had their perceptions and worldviews about this important factor in their everyday existence, the paper notes that, France and Germany led the European assault in micromanaging the consciousness of indigenous peoples to ensure the exploitation of both human and natural resources. This was without recourse to the historical and cultural diversity of these peoples. The work adopted the historical method in data collation and descriptive analysis in its presentation.
Keywords: Boundaries, Africa, Exploitation, Demarcation, Conflict.

Introduction

All human activities and existence are subject to boundaries and borders. The scope of historiography, that is the studying, writing and problems associated with the study and writing of history, has no border in disciplinary perspective though it has a basic delimitating instrument within it to demarcate various researches by time and territory. In other words, anything that is of concern to man, is a concern to historical studies[1]. In other words, historians can interrogate any issue emanating from human endeavours no matter the orientation of such discourse. There had been the concerted efforts of peoples of various areas, to organize their economic activities in ways and manner that, they assume would best suit their interests. By so doing, they continually evolve structures, instruments as well as institutions, which in their worldview, are necessary to manage the intricacies of their value systems.

The implication is that, humans have continually defined the idea of space and its occupation with history being their shadow, taking inventory of these endeavours. While various societies had a concerted perspective of what boundaries and borders are, it is the nation–state centred concept that now dominate the

[1]I. Eferebo, and E.E. Eweke, Scientific Influences on Historiography: An Interrogation of Interdisciplinary Approach to Historical Scholarship. *Kaduna Journal of Humanities.* Vol. 1(3). 2018. Pp. 1-17.

seeming widely accepted perspective with not just land as the basic parameter for demarcation but also the water and airspace.

The African continent in general and the Nigerian state in particular, have enormous water bodies but it is noted that, they are mostly used as delineation marks than spaces in themselves. Thus, there arose the challenge of ownership of this earth-compartment which is also very fundamental to the existential reality of various peoples especially those in Nigeria's Niger Delta. Due to the vast resources found in the water space as well as land, interests have arisen on the categorization of this fluid part of the world, which is more difficult than understanding why it flows in the directions it does. This is apart from the several natural resource disputes related to mineral resources as well as land.

This paper attempts to historicize the dynamics in the understanding of boundaries and borders, through an interrogation of the etymological meanings of the main concepts as well as the evolution of intellectual pursuits on the border studies. The paper exposes that, the meanings of borders and boundaries has continued to raise very serious concerns as the concept in the present–day nation-state configuration has brought several complications to inter-group nation relations over the years especially in Nigeria where diverse ethnic groups, with independent worldviews, compose the conglomeration of the country. The protracted problems of boundary disputes all over Nigeria as well as the African continent since the colonial period, could be appreciated when a deep understanding of the discourse is comprehended.

There had been studies about the idea of Boundary, European engagements and the making of modern day boundaries in Africa as well as their implications for the continuous existence of various peoples of the continent[2]. However, it is not explicitly captured in such historiographic activities that, certain entities had triggered the process for the emergence of a complicated framework of marking not just natural margins, but also, social, political and economic benefit zones for capitalist exploitation.

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[2]T.K. Adekunle, Evolving a Harmonised Regime for Nigerian Borderland Communities, in O.I. Albert (ed.), A Social History of Conflict and Conflict Management in Nigeria. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 2012; S.A. Adesote, and O. Ajishola, A Critical Analysis of the Socio-economic Effects of Inter-Communal Conflicts in Yorubaland. in O.I. Albert (ed.), A Social History of Conflict and Conflict Management in Nigeria. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 2012.

This also paper attempts to trace the actions of definite European nation-states such as France, whose 'messaiac' postured 'French Revolution', was a smokescreen that set an irreversible chain of nationalist actions in Europe and later, other parts of the world, as regards the limits of privileges and right to natural resources embedded in various areas. The paper would reveal how France's actions, altered the idea and practice of boundary and boundary making in Europe as well as other parts of the world on one hand, and Germany's response to such imperial manipulations that occasioned the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885 that sealed collective resolve of states from outside Africa, to commence and sustain exploitation of her in an organized way through clearly identified delineations.

Etymology of Border and Boundaries

The meaning of boundaries and borders have a long history of engagement in historical studies with a western orientation. All human activities are subject to boundaries and borders which have undergone enormous mutation with the passage of time due to the ever dynamic perception of people involved. Disciplinary wise, the boundary of the History is time oriented while the border is on what man had done and impact of such actions on the society. In another wise, it is about change and continuities, albeit, human engineered change. To be more explicit on the dichotomy between boundary and border, it is pertinent to interrogate the origin of both concepts especially from an etymological dimension. When this is done, it would enable an understanding of the challenges that, the present day African nation-states face. With the creation of the nation-states of Africa on a boundary-border basis, it has become the "Black Man's Burden"[3].

Etymologically, the word border is derived from the old French '*bordure'* which means 'seam, edge, border'. This points to the idea of something being at the edge of a measured matter. According to etymonline.com, this term was expanded to embrace geopolitical perspectives in 1535 when it was used to refer to the district adjoining the boundary between England and Scotland. From the original concept, a border was expanded to include the perspective of an adjoining area between two nation-states. On the other hand, the idea of boundary was seen in 1626 as a product of the old French '*bodine'* meaning 'boundary', 'boundary maker'. The meaning of the idea seems to have been influenced by the middle Latin word, *'bonnarium'* which refers to the 'piece of land within a fixed limit'[4]. Thus, boundaries have a

[3] D. Basil, The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State. London: James Curry. 1992.

[4] http://www.etymoline.com

fixed status while borders do not essentially seem so. Borders are subject to alteration while boundaries are not especially in the modern-day nation-state configuration in Africa. As would later be seen, France has played critical roles in the crafting of the present-day meanings of concepts under interrogation from the post-Revolution era.

Related term 'frontier' is most times used interchangeably with border and boundary respectively. However, Prescott has argued that, it is intellectually lame to use these terms incorrectly, by assuming they mean one and same thing. A frontier is essentially a military term[5]. According to Anderson, a frontier could be designated a 'zone where the enemy meets'[6]. In other words, a frontier can be rightly termed a battleground for adversaries to settle their scores. Some examples of frontiers include the *Alsace* Frontier between Germany and France. Put differently the idea of warfare, has also affected human comprehension of space for that important activity to ensure its peculiar engagement outside the regular daily activities of everyday peoples. Again, Prescott opined that, frontiers are zonal in composition[7]. France's desire to wholly own the *Alsace* and *Lorraine* areas due to their natural resources, as well as other areas in Europe where they extended their imperial reach to carry their economic burden, resulted in pushing home the expansion of where they could claim title of, in a bid to accomplish their economic projections.

On the other hand, frontiers are considered being soft, fluid and zonal[8]. Put differently, borders are not subjects of debate or expansion by any country within the discourse of international relations. However, that for frontiers are quite different. Frontiers are subjected to debates due to the fact that, any nation-state that has an overlapping boundary to such environment, could claim ownership as a result of the cultural mix of the zone.

From a critical analysis of intellectual engagements, certain deductions could be made concerning boundaries and borders. First;

a. boundary for Prescott and Anderson, is a line of demarcation between two territories, linear in nature and narrowest of both terms. However, Parker

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[5] J.R.V. Prescott, Boundaries and Frontiers. London: Croom Helm. 1978

[6] Anderson, M. (ed.), Frontiers Regions in Western Europe. Routledge. 1983.

[7] Prescott, Boundaries and Frontiers. 1978.

[8] B.J. Parker, Towards an Understanding of Borderland Processes. *American Antiquity*, Vol. 71 No. 1. 2006. Pp. 77-100.

advocates boundary to be the general term. This is the most contested concept amongst African peoples who see to have working operations of this idea that was compromised by European imperialism. Second,

b. borders are fixed in particular spaces and are designed to mark the division between political and/or administrative units. For example, the *Seme* Border as a division between Nigeria and Benin Republic. Third,
c. frontiers are zones of overlapping political, economic and cultural boundaries. This makes it an engaging framework for anthropological research.

Both borders and frontiers could be seen as boundary sets, with borders being seen as hard and static as manifested in the borders between various nation-states. In the nation-state configuration, the concepts of borders and boundaries are critical instruments of inclusion and exclusion. In terms of inclusion, the boundaries of a country show areas that make up the nation-state geographically while as exclusion, the territorial space that does not belong to the nation-state. There is a border (point of entry and departure) when the nation-state, Nigeria for example, has a boundary with another nation-state, say, Niger Republic. However, when there is no country immediately close to the country, say, the Atlantic Ocean in the southern part of Nigeria, there seems to be no border in that area. Although there are security apparatus and control mechanism around the Gulf of Guinea, the Nigeria authorities does not have any claim to the Gulf. It must man its territorial waters to wade off unauthorized entry, movements and settlement around the boundaries of the state. In other words, a border becomes a 'big deal' when there is a neighbouring state that bounds the other.

The consciousness to create barrier in interacting with various peoples of the world, was began by France in the period after their 'messianic' postured revolution which saw French expansion into other parts of Europe in a bid to sort her economic needs. Should we recall, the French Revolution which began in 1789, was said to be essentially about the decision of her citizens to liberate themselves from economic squalor and existential misery as living was terrible as well as unbearable[9]. The people of that country, after overthrowing the Monarchy and reconfigured class structures as well as privileges associated therewith, altered their boundaries of economic rights in a bid to transfer their living burden on other Europeans as well as peoples of the world.

[9] French Revolution. www.britannica.com. Accessed 08/06/2024 @9:40p.m

This could be seen in the Napoleonic wars which spread French imperialism and collected both natural and human resources from areas being exploited. In other words, France, utilizing the powers of the nation-state, started the crusade for not just the commencement of parasitic imperial colonialism towards the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also the imaginary concept of having boundless territories that do not have physical interactions but ideological connection as seen in French West Africa and France mainland in Europe. From this point, we could see that, the French people wanted economic freedom but others have to become economic slaves to enable this happen. As such, the boundaries of the 'peoples' republic' was changed and it was essentially what France decided was her boundary, that began the demarcation in possession terms.

To counter this exploitation, other European kingdoms and states came together to stop France. The unification of German peoples in Europe, was also significant in this regard. While the aim was to stop France from overstepping her borders, the idea and practice of boundaries appeared to have changed. This was also the benchmark which utilized the Berlin Conference 1884/1885 and 'butchered' African territories into European spheres of influences for economic exploitation. The operationalization of the colonial enterprise, ensured that, African peoples in general and Nigerians in particular, would live the under the effects of these actions. These include inter-communal, inter-state as well as inter-nation-state conflicts on land and water space rights that plagued the continent over the years.
As a take away, the intellectual efforts about boundary reveals that, it is
a framework;

5. created to establish rigid identity;
6. to earmark ownership of economic spaces; and
7. to delineate political spheres of influences for imperial tele-guidance.

The Evolution of Intellectual Pursuits on Border Studies

The meaning of boundaries and borders are well known in historical studies with a Western orientation. In the academic circle, Border Studies are an inter-disciplinary field that critically examines border and identity understanding found in political and everyday discourses. It focuses on comparative historical and sociological state building, geographical perspective on the changing meanings of

borders; critical geopolitics, markets and regional development as well as quotidian life and identities in borderlands[10].

It is noted that, while many border scholars cross intellectual lines between different academic disciplines to engage in multi-and inter-disciplinary debate and cooperation with others for a more multifaceted understanding of borders, borders and boundaries were largely studied from a disciplinary specific perspective and premise[11]. It must be emphasized that, these studies are basically influenced by the perception of what borders and boundaries were and should be in Western terms. This is because the academic disciplines we have, originated in that cultural environment. The fact is that, the perspective of the Chamba, Annang, Birom, Urhobo, Ijaw, Yoruba, Ashante, Ewe, Tuaregs, Zulu and others in Africa especially south of the Sahara are not taken into consideration in such discourses.

The geographical perspective on the changing meaning of borders was initially dictated by the geo-economic interests of states in Europe. Thus, the focus of border and boundary studies, is about the intellectual discourses on not just the control of people's freedom of movement, but also the struggle for the allocation and appropriation of scarce resources.

For Dowty, government and rulers in Europe attempted to control migration by placing taxies as well as conscriptions for military services[12]. People must pay for the essential services that the nation-state provides for those that it identifies as citizens. These include, security of lives and properties, capacity to settle disputes between individuals in the society as well as healthcare. People were restricted to areas where they would work and pay taxes or were allowed to places where they cannot work and pay taxes. In other words, the state created points one could access or not. The state decided the extent of freedom of movement as well as the criteria for such liberty. For example, the Apartheid Government of South Africa, restricted black individuals to certain work environments. Also in colonial Kenya, without

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[10] J.C. Werner; "The Concept of raum and the theory of regionalism". *American Sociological* Review. Vol. 9. 1994

[11] J. Laine, et al, Introduction to Border Studies. Finland: Dalnauka. 2015. Pp14-32.

[12] A. Dowty, closed Borders: The Contemporary Assault on Freedom of Movement New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1987.

the possession of identity cards, Africans could not access or work in some areas even though they were indigenous to such places*ab initio*[13].

Studies show the Roman Empire's organization of boundaries, created hierarchy of spaces such as settlements, cities, provinces and regions which indicated territories of varied dimensions and functions. The Roman authorities extended their imperial activities to Africa, with the economic aim of utilizing the conquered territories for agricultural purposes to satisfy the demands of olive oil and wine in the metropole. Europeans were not concerned about Africa lands as regards partitioning them especially after the Renaissance period. From their perspective, the human person was viewed as 'wealth', a valuable workforce to be kept within a country's borders. This accounted for the utilization of Africans as slaves to work in the new world via acquisition in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. It is this seeming exploitation of surplus value from labour that warranted Karl Marx's postulation of the revolution of the masses against their economic slavery[14].

As regards the emergence of the nation-state in Africa, which was influenced by European idea of boundary, the peace of Westphalia is regarded as the inauguration of the modern political order based on boundaries of sovereign, internationally recognized and territorially demarcated states. The Peace treaties signed between May and October 1648, ending the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) in the Holy Roman Empire as well as the Eighty Years War (1568-1648) between Spain and Portugal, formally established boundaries for the territorial possessions of England, France, Dutch-Land, the German Princedoms, and Muscovy. Others include Poland, Turkey, Spain and Portugal.

This marked a dimension of nation-state as the essential framework for boundary and border measurement as well as principal way to divide the earth's surface. The French and American revolutions in the late 18th century, signaled the emergence of nation-state associated with the breakthrough of democracy, the victory of popular sovereignty, grounded in the principle that the legitimacy of the state is created and sustained by the will or consent of the people.

The above is in sharp contrast with the situation about boundaries in Africa from the period 1884-1885. In other words, it was what Europeans said the boundaries were, that became the reality. Prior to this period, the African peoples had various ways of demarcating their boundaries. For example, the Ijaws of Central

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[13] D.L. Imbua, et al, Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Makurdi: Aboki Book Publishers. 2007.

[14]K. Marx, K, Capital. Moscow. 1956.

Niger Delta, especially the *Mein* subgroup refer to the concept of boundary as *efin*. It was basically descriptive, utilizing
natural features such as rivers, lakes, mountains and rocks as well as
trees to indicate points of departure between various territories[15].

On another stroke, it could also be seen as 'flight', having the capacity to fly. From this perspective, one can infer that, a boundary is fluid in idea and ever increasing in operations. However, this increase does not require the Ijaw people to embark on expansionist movements in a bid to incorporate territories of interests into their controlled space. The European model of boundary utilized geographical tools and instrument in the measurement as well as assessment of African boundaries. Put differently, European model of boundary-making utilizes survey equipment with specific numerical ranges to show exactness. Although that of Africa is mostly descriptive, it is instructive to note that, the Arabian model which was in place before the Berlin Conference, was also a source of information about the shape and size of Africa.

The obvious bias of contemporary border studies towards nation-states as a reference point is a legacy of the extra-ordinary impact of Europeans State-building and state consolidation efforts in Africa[16]. The focus on the co-evolution of European styled borders and states in Africa with emphasis that borders only came into existence with nation-states, is associated with the Hamitic Hypothesis. The implication of the above is that, the consolidation of state sovereignty, was made to appear as an evident historical process thereby, neglecting the ideas about boundaries in Africa before the Westphalian episode.

In sum, European influence on African boundaries is multi-dimensional. It created very sharp division and rivalry amongst the various peoples of the continent firstly, through the instrumentality of the Nation-state which has become so sacrosanct that, it needs only the consent of the makers to undo it especially in cases of secession. Also, it entrusted a 'first class, second class' categorization to the various peoples of Africa. This 'divide and rule' tactic of the colonial enterprise,

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[15]Ethnographic evidences reveals the concept of boundary in Ijaw worldview. It entails the use of natural phenomenon such as trees, rocks or stones as well as gully spaces as boundary marks.

[16] J. Laine, J. Introduction to Border Studies. Finland: Dalnauka. 2015. Pp14-32.

metamorphosed to inter-ethnic rivalry as well as intra-group conflicts in various parts of the continent.

The European Idea of Boundary and Operations in Africa

Every society had an idea of what a boundary was. To be explicit, the African societies before Western Contact had the concept of borders but not frontiers. The claim to ownership of lands are mostly kept in oral traditions which attempts to expose who were or were not migrants to a particular environment. So long weere was a mix of various peoples in a particular space, co-existing side by side; there might be very low incidence of conflict over ownership. What would mostly be the case is the problem of right to usage and not ownership. Such people advocate cooperation than competition in the given circumstance.

O'Dowd has urged that, while contemporary border studies have given more attention to spatial analysis –space over time, it creates static mental state of its idea thereby, attempting to super impose "One" idea as the "general" idea[17]. Also, as self –determination and sovereignty became the leading foundational principles; stricter boundaries were drawn to delineate modern states. However, the resultant bounded space became regarded to enclose not just a definable population, subject to a hegemonic administration but also a particular and separate culture confined to a definite space. This erroneously contributed to the population supposition that 'nation' would be equivalent to 'society'[18].

The above accounted for European position on how Africa should be structured. Armed with the Hamitic hypothesis of Africa being a "dark, void and backward continent' that deserved European intervention, Western powers in their interactions with Africa, was basically economic in nature, sort to identify and define areas of geographical influences for their commercial exploitation[19]. The climax of this geo-economic re-ordering of the African Continental Space could be seen in the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885 where Europe used Africa and other parts of the world (except North America), as the broad sheet for settling their differences by allocating and appropriating African lands to themselves.

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[17] O'Dowd, "From a borderless world' to a 'world of borders': Bringing History back in "*Environmental and Planning: Society and Space*'. 2010. Vol. 28: 1031-1050.

[18] M. Biling, M, Banal Nationalism. London; Sage. 1995. p.6.

[19]K.O. Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta: Claredon Press. 1956. p.3

The abolition of slave trade consequent upon the emergence of the industrial revolution, made European interests manifest in African administration. Countries of European decided to shift the economic burden they had in their various countries to Africa, Asia, and the Americas as such areas where made spheres of influences. Thus, mercantilist instinctive preservation, propelled economic imperialism of Europe over Africa which was manifested as the partitioning of the continent to serve the peace efforts in Europe. The implications of the Berlin conference on African boundaries not only demarcated territories to the nation-state system according to the Westphalia model, but also, created identity crisis for the created states. For example, various people whom were hitherto, culturally affiliated and share common territories, were separated and pitched against one another. The Yoruba in Nigeria as well as Benin Republic is a case in point. In virtually all nation-states created by the Berlin conference, the crisis of separation of identity is prevalent. It could be either a group that was split within the same nation-state territory or between two or more states. For that within the nation-state, the case of the Ijaws of the Niger Delta in the Nigerian state is evident. The Ijaw people were divided between the various western and eastern provinces as well as regions during the colonial era[20]. In the post-colonial era where state-creation became the 'in-thing' in Nigeria, this group has been further 'balkanized' into about five (5) states. Thus, the majority-minority problem was created as such political spaces must be owned by a 'dominating' majority group as tailored by European democratic standards.

Another effect of such demarcation, is the arrogation of all spaces in Africa, as being owned by various European nation-states. This was against the idea of proprietorship of natural resources in the continent. For example, in the Ijaw society, ownership of natural resources (land and rivers inclusive), had categories. There were resources owned by individuals, families and communities. Every land was not domiciled with a central authority. Any land that has water composition such as lakes and ponds within its precinct, were considered communal properties. It was called *lalagha*, a descriptive idea of what belongs to everyone. Also, waterways were owned by both individuals and communities. For example, the Ijaw concept of *gbeke-buo* (name of a town in present day Delta state) which means 'pay before you pass', signifies the possession of the waterway by that community. In other words, the capacity to impose taxes and levies as well as restrict movements around that area, was solely in the hands of such indigenous peoples to make. For

[20]C.B.N. Ogbogbo, The Niger Delta and Resource Control Conflicts, 1960-1995. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. 2004.

this group, the waterways meant a lot to their existence. However, with the coming of colonialism, right to lands and waterways were confiscated from various peoples and bestowed on the Crown in England. Apart from the *gbeke-buo* concept of waterways ownership in Ijaw area, there were also other cases of waterways rights, asserted by indigenous peoples such as the *oritsegbemi* creek conflict between Itsekiri indigenes and Sapele Sawmill, owned by British citizens[21]. These foreigners in Nigeria, laid claim to utilize the environmental resources because of their perception that, all lands belonged to the crown. The people were bounded from having access to their natural resources, a dimension of European imposed boundary on the economic realities of African peoples.

The Berlin conference fallout represents the insatiable appetite of colonial Europe in annexing and controlling the vast natural and agricultural resources for the further socio-economic advancement of the imperial power. The demarcation of African territories enabled Europe to create economic zones that produces certain raw materials for industrial production purposes in the metropole. Thus, one fundamental implication of the Berlin conference was the structural alignment of African territories for the production of raw agricultural materials to service the colonizing state. Claude Ake gave a clear description of the policies and actions of the colonizing powers in the allocation and appropriation of the various resources of the continent[22]. The colonial authorities, replicated Feudal European economic structure in Africa where, the home-governments leadership are at the peak of the exploitation pyramid, while oppressed and marginalized Africans, found themselves at the feet of this hierarchy, to work as slaves (but not slaves), to satisfy imperial economic concerns. 'Might was right', and the ability to oppress as well as overpower 'vulnerable' peoples, was endorsed so long, it favoured their interests.

This was a contradiction as it created an identity crisis for Africans who were neither slaves but not free in their homelands. Their status was a very delicate one as they were 'neither bats, nor rats', a phrase to refer the hopeless situation of indigenous peoples in the colonies, no matter their educational background, religious affiliations or economic status.

A fundamental issue in the formation of a people-oriented nation-state, built on democratic principles, is the idea of self-determination especially the dissolution of the European styled nation-state. The Berlin conference ensured that, recognition

[21]Divisional Marine Officer, Marine Department, Forcados, to the Acting Secretary, Western Provinces, National Archives, Ibadan (NAI) WARPROF. 127:65.

[22]Ake, C., A Political Economy of Africa. London: Longman. 1981.

as an independent state, rests with the colonizing power. In other words, no European state was expected to interfere in the internal administration of another territory not under its control. The implication is that, even after independence, it was basically the former colonial authorities that could rule on whether there was a need for the creation of new nation-states out of what they had done *ab initio.* The criterion of international recognition, rests with these former powers who constitute the 'international' to the detriment of the 'local'. Thus, the concept of 'international' is a euphemism for 'European dominated system'.

The meaning of boundaries was what Europe said boundaries are irrespective of the perspectives of the various peoples of the various territories. According to Basil Davidson, the "Butchering" of African spaces in consonance with Western Standards that has seen the emergence of nation-states, has brought about "the Blackman's burden" as it has become more of a course then blessing to the various peoples of the continent. Africans are still at a loss on how to manage the concomitant effects of nation-state creation in Africa which includes intra and inter-ethnic rivalries, economic dependence on the west as well as the continuing impacts of colonialism and imperialism.

Conclusion

The paper has attempted to interrogate the meanings of boundary and border. It undertook an etymological examination of both concepts and also highlighted related terms that are inter-changeably used such as frontier and mark. The paper observed that, the meanings of these terms as we have today, have a Western inclination and so, does not embrace what the idea is in other parts of the world especially Africa.

The delimitation of African spaces into States and nation –states did not take into consideration the historical and environmental cultural circumstances before such was implement. This was fundamentally because, what Europe cared about was economic exploitation and only what appealed to that mercantilist drive could be seen as rational or not. It discriminates against the very basic criterion it was founded up on which is, homogeneity and self-determination. Thus, the existence of African states as well as quality of life in the continent, is included in European, American as well as Arabian hands but excluded from those that it concerns most. The 'Divide and Rule' policy which was operationalized in the 'Dark Continent', ensured that, not only African lands were demarcated in ways they could not comprehend but also, identities were given to them that continue to define their realities even into the twenty-first (21) century.

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